

## **Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramway Board Offices, 103-93 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy**

Heritage overlay: HO334

City of Yarra Property Number: 267940

### **What is significant?**

The Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramway Board Offices at 103-93 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy was created in 1934 for Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramway Board and has close historical with the board and tramway operation. Nearby at the corner of Brunswick St, there is a former cable tram engine shed, providing a connection between the new and old tramway operations.

The place has a good integrity to its creation date.

Fabric from the creation date at the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramway Board Offices is locally significant within the City of Yarra, compared to other similar places from a similar era.

### **How is it significant?**

The Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramway Board Offices at 103-93 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy is historically and architecturally significant to the locality of Fitzroy and the City of Yarra.

### **Why is it significant?**

The Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramway Board Offices is significant as:

- A two storey rendered, custom designed Neo-Georgian style office building, with fine Regency character wrought-iron and cement detailing; and
- An historical milestone, located on one corner of a block shared with the former cable tram engine house at the other, Brunswick St, corner, as a mark of the historical development of fixed rail transport over a half century- from cable to that of electrical powered traction.

## **References:**

### **Municipal rate books:**

93 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy

VPRS 4301/P/0001

City of Fitzroy / West Ward

Rate year	Rate no.	Occupier	Owner	Description	NAV
1944/45	29	MMTB	MMTB	93 Victoria Parade, wood store	40
	30	Robinson Joseph Hugh, Tramway employee		MMTB 95 Victoria Parade, Wood house,	40
	31	MMTB	MMTB	97-101 Victoria Parade, Office, store and land	240
1940/41	30	MMTB	MMTB	93 Victoria Parade, wood store	40
	31	Robinson Joseph Hugh, Tramway employee		MMTB 95 Victoria Parade, Wood house, 5 rooms	40
	32	MMTB	MMTB	97-101 Victoria Parade, Office, store and land	240
1935/36	31	MMTB	MMTB	93 Victoria Parade, wood store	40

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32	Robinson Joseph Hugh, Tramway employee	MMTB	95 Victoria Parade,
Wood house, 5 rooms	40		
33	MMTB MMTB	97-101 Victoria Parade, Iron Store, Brick Offices and land	
240			
1934/35	30	MMTB MMTB	93 Victoria Parade, wood store 40
31	Robinson Joseph Hugh, Tramways Board	MMTB	95 Victoria Parade,
Wood house, 5 rooms	40		
32	MMTB MMTB	97-101 Victoria Parade, Iron Store, Offices and land	215
1933/34	29	MMTB MMTB	93 Victoria Parade, wood store 40
30	Robinson Joseph Hugh, Tramway employee	MMTB	95 Victoria Parade,
Wood house, 5 rooms	40		
31	MMTB MMTB	97-101 Victoria Parade, Iron Store, Offices and land	140
1932/33	29	MMTB MMTB	93 Victoria Parade, wood store 40
30	Robinson Joseph Hugh, Tramway employee	MMTB	95 Victoria Parade,
Wood house, 5 rooms	40		
31	MMTB MMTB	97-101 Victoria Parade, Iron Store, Offices and land	140
1931/32	29	MMTB MMTB	93 Victoria Parade, wood store 40
30	Staer Eleanor, Home Duties	MMTB	95 Victoria Parade, Wood house, 5 rooms 40
31	MMTB MMTB	97-101 Victoria Parade, Iron Store, Offices and land	140
1930/31	29	Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramway Board	Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramway Board 93 Victoria Parade, wood store 40
30	Staer Herman Charles, Engineer	Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramway Board	95 Victoria Parade, Wood house, 5 rooms 40
31	Vacant	Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramway Board	97 Victoria Parade, Brick House, 4 rooms 40

### Melbourne or Victorian directories:

103 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy  
Sands and McDougall

#### North Side

1952 97 Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramway Board offices  
1940 Brunswick St  
91-3 Penfolds Wines Pty Ltd, wine merchants  
95 Robinson Joseph H. M. and M.T.B. (nthn System Trffs and Perm Way)  
1935 Brunswick St  
Tramway engine house  
95 Robinson Joseph H.  
1930 Brunswick St  
Tramway engine house  
95 Staer, Herman  
1925 Brunswick St  
Tramway engine house  
95 Staer, Herman C  
1920 No Listing  
1921 Brunswick St  
Tramway engine house  
95 Steel Archbd. M

### Other references:

VPRO: Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board 1919 – 1983 (VA 2694)  
<http://www.tmsv.org.au/papers/nmetl.htm>:  
`State Parliament passed two key bills in 1918. The first bill, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board Act 1918 (No 2995), provided for the creation of the M&MTB. It also empowered the M&MTB to acquire the tramway from the Essendon and Flemington Councils, but specifically excluded electricity generation from the Board's activities, so the M&MTB could not acquire the entire operation of the NMETL.

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The second bill created the framework for the State Electricity Commission of Victoria, which was to be the state monopoly electricity generator, distributor and retailer. It was authorised to acquire private electricity companies and incorporate them into its own operations. '

<http://www.railpage.org.au/tram/melbhist.html>:

`Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board

Then the MMTB took over from the cable system and the various municipal trusts (1920), it was faced with a unified fleet of cable cars but an excessive number of differing electric tram designs. It quickly classified all the tram designs with letter codes, allocated in the same order as each trust numbered its trams, as follows:

Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust (PMTT) A - K

Hawthorn Tramways Trust (HTT) M - P

Fitzroy, Northcote and Preston Tramways Trust (FNPTT) R

Melbourne, Brunswick and Coburg Tramways Trust (MBCTT) S and T

North Melbourne Electric Tramway and Lighting Co. (NMETL) U and Verandah

It then renumbered all the trams, using roughly the same order.

A need for new trams quickly led to the MMTB building a number of single-truck straight-sill closed combination cars (Q-class). Later it was realised that many of these different letter codes were really the same tram designs, so the codes were rationalised and trams re-classified in 1928. The trams are described here under their post-1928 classifications.

The MMTB needed a standard design. It came up with the famous W-class design which is still running. A couple of Birney cars were imported, which started the X-class series, and the Board experimented with saloon cars suitable for one-man operation in the Y-class.

The two tram lines operated by the Victorian Railways were not taken over by the MMTB. On the closure of the VR lines in 1959, three trams, called VR class, were purchased by the MMTB and operated for another 20 years.

After the Second World War, when all that was shiny and new (like the motor car) was embraced, and all that was established and old-fashioned (like the tram) was rejected, Melbourne alone stood against the tide. The Chairman of the MMTB, Sir Robert Risson, far from having a taste for tramway closures like his opposite numbers elsewhere, stoutly defended the trams against a hostile press. He upgraded track by setting it in mass concrete (when this was still politically possible) and even the Government could see that removing trams would be a waste of the investment. He argued that trams would always attract more patronage than an equivalent bus service, and proved it in 1956 when the Bourke St bus service (which had replaced a cable tram line) was upgraded to a tram in time for the Olympic games, despite the wailing of the newspapers.

No doubt the cause was aided by an intransigent union, who were so determined that any bus which replaced a tram must have two-man crewing, that the economics was not really weighted in favour of the bus anyway. The other factor in Melbourne's favour that is often mentioned is the wide main streets, which meant that there was less obstruction of cars than in other cities.

By the mid 1970s, Melbourne could see how lucky she had been not to follow the fashions of the '50s, and even the conservative government, normally given to starving public transport to death, agreed to the purchase of new trams. These were the Z-class, which are a mixed success, but were good enough to be followed by the A-class and B-class trams in the 1980s'