

BARKERS ROAD, METHODIST LADIES COLLEGE: NURSES' MEMORIAL ASSEMBLY HALL

Original Use: Assembly Hall
Date of Construction: 1956-57¹
Architect: Harry Norris²

DESIGNATION A
CITATION NO.74



HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

In 1938 building plans were announced for the College which included the construction of a new Assembly Hall to accommodate 1000 students³. However due to a lack of funds, the building program did not proceed for several years and it was on Saturday 28 April 1953 that a Foundation Fair was held as a final attempt to raise money for the building⁴. In September 1957 the Nurses' Memorial Assembly Hall was opened by Sir Edmund Herring⁵.

The hall is an outstanding example of 1950s architecture, designed by the office of the leading Melbourne architect Harry Norris. Built in exposed brickwork, it has a bold interplay of masses, with the stage set in a rectangular box, from which springs the free curve of the roof of the hall. The entrance was given monumentality through the use of giant order columns set in front of a two storeyed glazed screen, and it balances the box-like form of the stage. Texture was added to the facade through the device of recessing and projecting bricks to create patterning, and the windows were set along the hall wall in a staggered pattern. The hall is one of the most confidently and successfully designed in Melbourne during the post war period and compares with halls such as Wilson Hall at the University of Melbourne.

¹ Zainu'ddin, A.G., *They Dreamt of a School - A Centenary History of the Methodist Ladies College 1882-1982*, 1982, p.310

² Working drawings submitted to the City of Kew in application for a Building Permit, received by the Building Surveyor 26 November 1956. Drawings drawn by John D. Campbell

³ *ibid.*, p.238

⁴ *ibid.*, p.310

⁵ *ibid.*

SIGNIFICANCE

The main wing of M.L.C. is of significance as one of the most commanding and successfully designed educational buildings to have been built in Melbourne during the nineteenth century and for its apparently substantially intact state.

HERITAGE LISTINGS

HBR: Recommended for inclusion on the register.

GBR: N/A

RNE: Recommended for inclusion on the register.

National Trust: Not currently listed.

¹ Architects' Index, University of Melbourne

² *ibid.*

³ Rogers, D., *A History of Kew*, p.193

⁴ *Australasian Sketcher*, 31 December, 1881, p.422

⁵ Architects' Index

⁶ *Argus*, 17 February 1885, p.7

⁷ Architects' Index

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ Zainu'ddin, A.G., *They Dreamt of a School: A Centenary of the Methodists Ladies college, 1882-1982*, 1982, p.239

The Main Building, MLC, is a clear candidate for examination and probable registration by the Historic Buildings Council as one of the most notable surviving nineteenth century educational buildings in Victoria. This significance is heightened by its substantially intact state.