

**Heritage Overlay No.:** 071  
**Citation No.:** 189  
**Place:** Melton South State School No. 3717

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**Other Names of Place:** Formerly known as 'Melton Railway School'.  
**Location:** 34-46 Exford Road, Melton South  
**Critical Dates:** 1923  
**Existing Heritage Listings:** None  
**Recommended Level of Significance:** Local



**Statement of Significance:**

The Melton South State School No.3717, 34-46 Exford Road, Melton South, is significant for its associations with the development of State education in this area of Melton. Built in 1923, the original school building also has significance as an example of a modest interwar school design, and while it has been substantially extended and altered, the original form and design is clearly discernible.

The original building of the Melton South State School No.3737, 34-46 Exford Road, is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2). Although extended and altered, it still demonstrates some original design qualities for an interwar school building. These qualities include the broad gable roof form, together with the minor gable that projects at the front. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the asymmetrical composition, single storey height, face brick wall construction, galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding, wide eaves, decorative gable infill (timber brackets, panelling and timber battening and the timber lattice ventilators),

small timber framed windows on the front gable (currently boarded over) with concrete lintels and sills, and the ‘Melton South School No.3717’ title panel between these windows.

The Melton South State School No.3717, 34-46 Exford Road, is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4). It is an expression of the State primary school system, and of the formation of the ‘Melton Railway Station’ community at the time, and of its efforts to have a purpose-built school for their children. With the railway station building itself, it is the only remaining early public building remaining in Melton South.

The Melton South State School No.3717, 34-46 Exford Road, is socially significant at a LOCAL level (AHC G1). It is recognised and valued by the Melton South community for educational reasons.

Overall, the Melton South State School No. 3717, 34-46 Exford Road, is of LOCAL significance.

### **Description:**

The Melton South State School No. 3717 building, 34-46 Exford Road, Melton South, is set on a large site with open grassed areas, garden beds bordered by bluestones, and large expanses of asphalt paving. The original building is situated to one end of the school complex.

The asymmetrical, single storey, face brick, interwar original building of the Melton South State School is characterised by a broad gable roof form, together with a minor gable that projects at the front. Late skillion and flat roofed additions interrupt the original design composition at the front, although these original gable forms are clearly discernible. These original roof forms are clad in galvanised corrugated steel. Wide overhangs are features of the eaves.

A particular early feature of the design is the decorative gable infill, including the timber brackets, panelling and timber battening and the timber lattice ventilators. Other early features include the small timber framed windows on the front gable (currently boarded over) with concrete lintels and sills, and the “Melton South School No. 3717” title panel between these windows.

### **History:**

The establishment of a settlement of Melton South was induced by the opening of the railway in 1884. This subsequently prompted a number of industries, initially sawmills, and in the early twentieth century, chaff mills. This development coincided with the Exford ‘Closer Settlement’ estate at the beginning of the new century, boosting local population and produce, and the development of the chaff industry which employed many people in the Melton area. (Around 1912 the government had brought out English migrants to settle the Exford estate.)

By c.1912 the small Melton Railway Station settlement had a boarding house (probably for chaff or sawmill employees), store, a small church and a hall. The Melton Valley Golf Club originated near the railway station in 1927 (in 1931 it moved to the present Melton links).

In 1910 the community had built the large timber ‘Victoria Hall’, which became the focus of community life for several generations.<sup>1</sup> In August of that same year AR Robertson MP and D McDonald applied for the establishment of a school on land set aside for that purpose by the Closer Settlement Board, near the Melton Railway Station settlement. District Inspector McRae recommended that a school for classes up to Grade 3 be established as an adjunct to the

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<sup>1</sup> Anna Curry ‘Victoria Hall’ (Community Development Theory and Practice essay, 1993), pp.1-2

Melton State School. And so SS3717, 'Melton Railway School', was established in the leased Victoria Hall on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1911. Thomas Lang, head master at Melton since 1896, was in charge of both schools.<sup>2</sup> As a 'prep' school only, it was necessary that the older Melton Railway Station settlement students travel to Melton SS430 at Unitt Street.

Since 1912 local residents had been petitioning for the establishment of a separate school at Melton Railway Station on the grounds that it would be better if all children from the one home could attend the same school, and that the Victoria Hall was unsuitable as a school building. As a result an area of 2 acres - Allotment 8, Parish of Djerriwarrh, Exford Estate - was reserved for a State School on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1914. However the Department wrote that a school would not be established there in the near future, as 'there is no likelihood in sight that the Railway Station settlement will increase in importance'.<sup>3</sup>

Parents persisted with their petitions to the Education Department, claiming that the Victoria Hall was too large, had no fireplace, that teachers were unable to use the wall for teaching aids, and that, being less than 20 metres away from a chaff mill employing 30 men, was too noisy. The turning point came when in 1920 the Hall Committee decided to increase its rent for the hall.<sup>4</sup>

In 1920 Head Teacher Lang advised the Education Department to discontinue SS3717 as an adjunct.<sup>5</sup> The District Inspector supported this recommendation, and the schools separated in 1923. In April of that year 41 children, comprising Grades 1-8, moved into an almost completed brick building on the present site. On the 6<sup>th</sup> July 1923 the official opening of the school took place; after a ceremonial journey from the Hall to the school, speeches were given by the Hon AR Robertson and the Chief Inspector of Education. Everyone then journeyed back to Victoria Hall for a 'bountiful repast'.<sup>6</sup> (These dates are at odds with the date of 5<sup>th</sup> March 1925 given in Blake as the date the children occupied the new SS3717 brick school building.<sup>7</sup>)

A teacher's residence had been purchased for £500 in 1923, and the school's name was changed to 'Melton South' in the same year.<sup>8</sup>

Even though the older Melton South pupils would no longer have to travel to the Unitt Street school, an additional brick room was still required at the Melton SS430 in that same year.<sup>9</sup>

In 1961 a new room was added to the school. In 1972, at the beginning of Melton's boom as a satellite town, the number of enrolments was 224.<sup>10</sup> The school has since shared in the exponential growth of the town of Melton, and at the time of its jubilee celebration (1983), 524 pupils were enrolled.

Victoria Hall, neglected and vandalised, was demolished in 1992. It had been handed back to the Council on condition that it be replaced by a new hall, with the same name, and was commemorated by a plaque.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Blake, LJ (ed), *Vision and Realisation: A Centenary History of State Education in Victoria*, Vol.3 (Education Department of Victoria, 1973), p.121

<sup>3</sup> *Melton South Primary School 3717: Diamond Jubilee 1923-1983*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

<sup>5</sup> Blake, *loc cit*

<sup>6</sup> *Melton South Primary School: Diamond Jubilee, op cit*

<sup>7</sup> Blake, *loc cit*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*

<sup>9</sup> *The First One Hundred Years, 1870-1970: Melton State School, No.430*, p.6

<sup>10</sup> Blake, *op cit*, p.122

<sup>11</sup> Curry, *op cit*, pp.4-5

Apart from the 1923 brick school building, and the railway station, none of the principal early Melton South public sites survive. Few early residential sites remain. (Further research will establish whether the house on the corner of Station Street and the railway line was the original teacher's residence.)

**Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:**

*Melton Historical Themes: 'Community'*

*Known Comparable Examples in Melton Shire:*

The school is the one of only two early twentieth century brick school buildings remaining in the Shire, the other being the Melton State School (Place No.254).

**Condition:**

Good

**Integrity:**

Substantially altered

**Recommendations:**

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

External Paint Controls:	<i>Yes</i>
Internal Alteration Controls:	<i>No</i>
Tree Controls:	<i>No</i>
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>No</i>