

**Heritage Overlay**                      **096**  
**Citation No.:**                      **254**  
**Place:**                                      **Melton State School No.430**

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**Other Names of Place:**                      N/A  
**Location:**                                      Unitt Street, Melton  
**Critical Dates:**                                1869-70, 1877, 1923-24  
**Existing Heritage Listings:**                None  
**Recommended Level of Significance:**    Local



**Statement of Significance:**

The Melton State School No. 430, Unitt Street, Melton, is significant as a moderately intact example of nineteenth century State School buildings. The original bluestone building at the far end of the school complex is a rare example of one of only seven Victorian Primitive Gothic styled bluestone Common School buildings in Victoria. The early bluestone addition has significance as one of the Victorian Education Department’s “60 type” plans and the early twentieth century brick additions are representative of the Department’s interwar design philosophy. Initially built in 1869-70, with the bluestone additions constructed in 1877 and the brick additions in 1924, the school has further significance with the establishment and development of State education in the Melton area.

The Melton State School No. 430, Unitt Street, is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2, E.1). Although slightly altered and extended, the original bluestone building demonstrates rare design qualities of a Common School Victorian Primitive Gothic style. These

qualities include simple steeply pitched gable roof form clad in galvanised corrugated steel, coursed, squared rubble bluestone wall construction, and the contextually wide eaves. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the modest scale, single storey height, timber framed multi-paned windows with highlights or hopper sashes, and the narrow vertical ventilation lancet openings.

The early bluestone additions demonstrate original design qualities of the Victorian Education Department's "60-type" Victorian styled plan. These qualities include the gable roof form clad in galvanised corrugated steel, coursed, squared rubble bluestone wall construction and the timber framed multi-paned windows. The early twentieth century brick addition, with broad gambrel roof form clad in galvanised corrugated steel, face brick wall construction, wide eaves with exposed timber rafters and the timber framed windows, also contributes to the architectural significance of the place. The avenue of peppercorn trees along the school boundary further contributes to the aesthetic value of the school complex.

The Melton State School No. 430, Unitt Street, is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4, B2) as an early State School, and the only remaining nineteenth century school in the Shire of Melton. It has many historical associations with the life of the Melton community.

The Melton State School No. 430, Unitt Street, is socially significant at a LOCAL level (AHC G1). It is recognised and valued by the local Melton community for educational reasons.

Overall, the Melton State School No. 430, Unitt Street, is of LOCAL significance.

#### **Description:**

The Melton State School No.430, Unitt Street, Melton, consists of two early bluestone buildings and an early brick addition, together with substantial later additions to one side. Along the western, southern and part of the northern boundaries of the school grounds are avenues of peppercorn trees. There is a high cyclone wire fence around the school. A mature eucalypt is also situated in the school grounds.

The original School building is the modestly scaled, coursed, squared bluestone rubble, Victorian Primitive Gothic styled single-roomed Common School Board of Education building at the far end of the school complex. It is characterised by a simple steeply pitched gable roof form clad in galvanised corrugated steel. Other early features of the design include the contextually wide eaves, timber framed multi-paned windows with highlights or hopper sashes, and the narrow vertical ventilation lancet openings.

Linked to the original School building is an early bluestone addition. A "60-type" Department of Education Victorian styled building, the addition is also characterised by a gable roof form clad in galvanised corrugated steel. It is also constructed of coursed, squared rubble bluestone and has timber framed multi-paned windows.

At the rear of the early bluestone buildings is a face brick early twentieth century addition. It has a broad gambrel roof form clad in galvanised corrugated steel and wide eaves with exposed timber rafters. There are also early timber framed windows.

An early underground tank is thought to survive on the site.

## History:

### *Contextual Architectural History*

The one-roomed rural School design for the two separate bluestone school buildings at the Melton State School formed part of a broad standardized design approach that had its origins in the architectural campaign established by the Victorian Board of Education in the 1860s.<sup>1</sup> The Board had looked to England for ideas, and particularly towards the implementation of the English Privy Council system of school organization including the shape and layout of school buildings. The English Committee of Council of Education established standardized plans in 1851, and it was from these designs where the Victorian Board of Education found ideas to form the standardized schemes in Victoria in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> The original Common School building at Melton generally followed the English plan system.

According to Lawrence Burchell in *Victorian Schools: A Study in Colonial Government Architecture 1837-1900*, ‘hundreds of one-room schools were built using lithographed copies of a very limited number of designs.’<sup>3</sup> The Fifth Report of the Board of Education in 1866 included the Board's ‘Suggested Plan No. VIII with furniture as for an ordinary school’.<sup>4</sup> The size of the early bluestone addition to the Melton school is consistent with this ‘suggested plan’. The details include the basic rectangular form (based on the original configuration of bench seats), arrangement of single windows along the longitudinal wall, and centrally located fireplace.

### *History of the Place*

On 17<sup>th</sup> May 1858 a State subsidised, combined Denominational School was opened by HT Stokes, with an attendance of about 30 children. This school was conducted in the wooden Melton Combined Protestant Church, situated on ‘a creek flat’ thought to be on the north side of Sherwin Street between Pyke and Byran Streets.<sup>5</sup> It is likely that the Church had been established by 1855 and that the first minister was the Rev. Hampshire, who lived in Cambridge House on the Exford Estate. Ministers of the Protestant denominations were invited to hold services there. As there was only one resident Minister in the town (Presbyterian Mr J Lambie), laymen of the various denominations often spoke on Sundays.

In 1863 this building was declared a Common School with the number 430.<sup>6</sup> One of its first and most prominent headmasters was John Corr, who served from 1860 to 1864. Most of Mr Corr’s children also became teachers, including Joseph Corr, at the Rockbank school, and J Reford Corr and WS Corr, headmasters and teachers at numerous prestigious private secondary schools around Australia. John Corr purchased land alongside the school and elsewhere in and near Melton, became secretary and treasurer of the new Cemetery Trust, and by July 1861 was deputy registrar of births, deaths and marriages. He walked three miles every Sunday to teach at the Wesleyan Sunday School he had established.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> L. Burchell, *Victorian Schools: A Study of Colonial Government Architecture 1837-1900*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1980, p.75.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.13-17, 75.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.113.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.72.

<sup>5</sup> Pollitt JH, *An Historical Record of Melton* (Shire of Melton, nd), pp.48, 53

<sup>6</sup> Blake, LJ (ed), *Vision and Realisation: A Centenary History of State Education in Victoria*, Vol.3 (Education Department of Victoria, 1973), pp.33-34

<sup>7</sup> Thomson Zainu'ddin, Ailsa G, ‘The Corr Family’, in Selleck, RJW & Sullivan M, *Not So*

Despite good reports from the Education Department Inspector, and burgeoning enrolments, the local school committee recommended the dismissal of, firstly, his wife (from the work mistress position), and then him from the headmaster position. Corr saw his dismissal as an attempt to redirect state aid for education from the Combined Protestant school to the support of the Free Presbyterian Minister Rev James Lambie (by one account the owner of the land on which the Common School was erected), whose son-in-law James Scott subsequently assumed responsibility for the school.<sup>8</sup>

Rev Lambie failed in his efforts to keep the existing school, which the Education Department Inspector and the majority of Melton citizens regarded as badly situated and badly built. Following a conditional promise of state aid, local contributors in 1868-69 raised £72.10.6 towards the cost of an iron-roofed bluestone rubble building 43 ft x 12 ft. This was erected on a new site of 1.5 acres (the present site). The State contributed £120 to the new school, which opened in 1870.<sup>9</sup>

A very early (c.1874) photograph of the school shows its headmaster and work mistress / assistant teacher (probably James Scott and his wife Jessie) and its (very young) scholars. Similar photos show pupils in front of the school in c.1903, and 1933.<sup>10</sup>

In 1877 a second bluestone room costing £297 was added and further land acquired from the Agricultural Society (who only needed it two days a year) to enlarge the schoolground to 3 acres. In the early 1880s an underground tank augmented the school water supply and in 1919 a five-roomed wooden residence was added.<sup>11</sup> During this period the school correspondents often complained that the walls of the bluestone buildings were damp, affecting the plaster.<sup>12</sup>

In 1923 a brick room 26 ft 6 in by 24 ft with a fireplace and four rooms facing south, was added, and a corridor built to link the three buildings.<sup>13</sup> This served adequately for the next 40 years.

The school bell probably dates to 1883.<sup>14</sup> The school also has a memorial gate (1951) to World War One ex-students, and an honour board to the 64 ex-students who served in the First World War.<sup>15</sup>

The school roll fell to 42 in the early post war-years, but was boosted by an influx of migrants, mainly from the UK, from the late 1960s.<sup>16</sup> This presaged the boom in Melton's development, and the corresponding growth of the school, with timber and temporary classrooms added to the previous masonry ones.

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*Eminent Victorians* (MUP, Melbourne, 1984), pp.150-151

8 *ibid*, pp. 152-154

9 *The First One Hundred Years, 1870-1970: Melton State School, No.430*, p.4; Blake, *loc cit*.

10 Starr, J, *Melton: Plains of Promise* (Shire of Melton, c.1985), pp.179, 182, 186

11 Blake, *loc cit*.

12 *The First One Hundred Years, op cit*, pp.7-9

13 *ibid*, p.21

14 *ibid*, p.11

15 Blake, *loc cit*; also Parsons M, Trigellis-Smith, Bradley H, Christey B, Cook D, Williams C, *War Memorials of Victoria: A Pictorial Record* (The Returned & Services League, Victorian Branch, Melbourne, 1994), p.105

16 Blake, *loc cit*.

An endowment pine plantation established in 1930 augmented the school's fundraising activities when it was harvested in 1968. Part of the site was planted with eucalyptus trees in 1959.<sup>17</sup>

Famous ex-students of the early twentieth century included Hector Fraser (internationally successful shooter) and cyclist Sir Hubert Opperman.

**Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:**

*Melton Historical Themes: 'Community'*

*Known Comparable Examples in Victoria:*

Richard Peterson in 'Historic Government Schools: A Comparative Study' (June 1993)<sup>18</sup> states the original bluestone building at the Melton State School is one of only seven Gothic Common School buildings in Victoria. The other examples are at Port Fairy, Guildford, Faraday Street, Carlton, Bagshot (altered), Echuca and Camberwell.

The early gabled bluestone addition to the school complex represents a "60 type" Department of Education building. Peterson lists 56 of these types of school buildings in Victoria. Those constructed of bluestone include: Ballangeigh No. 118 (built 1872), Former Cobaw No. 115 (built 1893), Former Rosebrook No. 526 (built 1878), Noorat No. 1178 (built 1873-75), and Wollert No. 1861 (built 1877).

*Known Comparable Examples in Melton Shire:*

Since the destruction of the bluestone Toolern Vale school in the 1965 bushfire, there are now no similar school buildings remaining in Melton Shire.

**Condition:**

Good

**Integrity:**

Moderately intact

**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>Yes – Rows of Peppercorn Trees along school boundaries.</i>
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>No</i>

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<sup>17</sup> The First One Hundred Years, *op cit*, p.20

<sup>18</sup> R. Peterson, 'Historic Government Schools: A Comparative Study', prepared for the Heritage Management Branch, Building Division, Department of Planning and Development, June 1993, p. 21, 53-59.

