

## Identification and location

**Name of place:**

**Other Name**

**Address**

**Place Identifier**

**Heritage Significance**

**Creation date(s)**  **Map (Melway)**

**Boundary description**

**Local Government Area**

**Ownership Type**

## Description

**Site Type:**

### Physical Description

This is a large altered two storey red brick Edwardian-era building which dominates its immediate surroundings and still expresses its former use as a public auditorium. The main ground level façade has been changed, with the exception of the inter-war wall tiles, but it is the upper level which provides the strong Edwardian-era expression, with its fanciful parapet forms, bartizan elements, moulded spandrel friezes, scrolling, and parapet balls set on piers. Secondary windows are segment arched but the main central window is a full arch which provides a distinctive neo-Romanesque character to the elevation.

### Condition

### Integrity

### Context

to the north.

**Threats:**

Increasing development pressure, unrelated ground level changes. Interior to be inspected.

**History**

Historical background

Nineteenth century recreation often centred on outdoor activities, such as sport and what would be now called 'passive recreation', such as picnics or strolling in parks, gardens or beaches. While indoor recreation was often based on private homes, as communities developed public halls became important venues for meetings, concerts, plays, balls and dances. Often church communities constructed their own small halls and, increasingly in the late nineteenth and then twentieth century, local progress associations provided halls for community activities, as at West Footscray and Maribyrnong. Youth clubs, scout and guide groups and sporting clubs also made use of local halls. Footscray, from the nineteenth century, possessed some large, privately-built halls, such as the Federal and the Royal, and some of the local churches, as they secured enough finances to fund better facilities ...

Most of the halls dotted around the City of Maribyrnong, however, are of more modest proportions and many have been recycled for a number of uses over the decades. Nevertheless, they are significant as illustrators of the development of communities at different periods in history { Barnard, 2000}.

Specific History

John McFarlane's remodelling of the Murray St hall opened 28 June 1913 { Lack: 193}. A notice appeared in local newspapers advertising GRAND OPENING of The New St George's Theatre in the presence of His Worship the mayor (Cr H Jenkins), the local member of the Legislative Council Cr WH Fielding, and other Footscray councillors.

The theatre boasted:

- A Chair for every person
- New Bioscope
- New Music
- New Screen
- New Theatre
- New Everything.

A Box Plan for seating could be glimpsed at McFarlane's confectionary next door. Fees were 1/- for the balcony and 6d for the stalls { `The Advertiser' 28.6.1913}. The new building was

stated to be the creation of its owner, J McFarlane. The evening's programme of 'splendid films' was accompanied by an eight piece orchestra of 'experienced players'. The films included the highly acclaimed Lubin Star production 'Heroes One and All', and the evening's events were completed by 'The King'. The pro war film, 'The Big Push at the Battle of the Somme' was shown there late in 1916 and fanned arguments on pro and anti conscription { Lack: 219}.

After the pomp and ceremony of the opening had faded, a new gang or push called the Cut Throats centred their operations on this theatre with more gang activity there in the mid 1920s { Lack: 217, 260}. The theatre was finally eclipsed when the Sun Cinema opened in the late 1930s { Lack: 304}.

### Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme

PAHT Subtheme  Local Theme(s)

### Cultural Significance

The former St Georges Theatre is significant to the City of Maribyrnong because:

- its creation was heralded with much enthusiasm by the community and its leaders and has been a major social gathering place within the City over a long period ( Criterion A4, G1);
- it was the setting for expression of dissent to conscription in the World War One era plus other events such as bitter conflict among the City's youth ( Criterion A4);
- its upper façade shows great architectural invention, using the Romanesque revival (Criterion F1); and
- it is a prominent landmark within the Yarraville railway precinct, relating closely with much of the adjacent significant architecture, but identifiable as a public auditorium among the commercial and transport structures nearby which make up the precinct ( Criterion A3).

### Comparative Examples:

Edwardian-era theatres in the City of Maribyrnong also include the Barkly Theatre and The Grand Theatre, the latter being on the Victorian Heritage Register but lacking the rear part of the auditorium.

### Recommendations

Heritage Victoria Register

Register of the National Estate:

National Trust Register:

Other Heritage Listings

Planning Scheme Protection

External Paint Controls Apply?:

Internal Alteration Controls Apply?:

Historic Places - Selected non-industrial significant places in former City of Footscray - not in the Planning Scheme

Tree Controls Apply?:

Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act:

Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?:

Prohibited Uses may be Permitted

### Recommendations:

Conserve and enhance the identified significant fabric, with emphasis on fabric from the early 20th and late 19th century, with enhancement including reinstatement of missing original elements, colours and finishes (removal of paint from the brickwork, reinstatement of the façade, canopy).  
Conserve the public view of the significant fabric, particularly the eastern views across the railway.  
Promote the continuing original use of the place and its amenity.  
Continue historical research into the place and provide public access to the findings.  
Assess the interior for significant elements.

### Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

*A3 Importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of flora, fauna, landscape or cultural features.*

a prominent landmark within the Yarraville railway precinct, relating closely with much of the adjacent significant architecture, but identifiable as a public auditorium among the commercial and transport structures nearby which make up the precinct

*A4 Importance for their association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, state, region or community.*

the setting for expression of dissent to conscription in the World War One era plus other events such as bitter conflict among the City's youth; its creation was heralded with much enthusiasm by the community and its leaders and has been a major social gathering place within the City over a long period.

*F1 Importance for their technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement.*

upper façade shows great architectural invention, using the Romanesque revival

historical significance  architectural significance  social significance  scientific significance

### Documentation

#### References

Lack, 1991: 193, 217, 219, 253, 260, 304;  
`The Advertiser' 28.6.1913  
Butler, Graeme 1989, City of Footscray urban Conservation Study: address 036 in schedule;  
Barnard, J 2000. Maribyrnong Heritage Review Volume 2 Environmental History City of Maribyrnong.

### Data recording

Historic Places - Selected non-industrial significant places in former City of Footscray - not in the Planning Scheme

**Assessed By:**   
**Assessed Date:**