

## Identification and location

**Name of place:** Washingtonia palm at Multiple Sclerosis Centre, former Tweddle Baby Hospital

**Other Name** `Washingtonia sp.'

**Address** 400-406 rear Barkly Street

Footscray

**Place Identifier** 22584

**Heritage Significance** City

**Creation date(s)** 1925c

**Map (Melway)** 42A4

**Boundary description** The trees and sufficient land around each to allow for root zone and canopy protection, nominally 1m beyond the drip line, root zone or canopy perimeter whichever is the greatest.

**Local Government Area** City of Maribyrnong

**Ownership Type** Private

## Description

**Site Type:** Tree(s), specimen

### Physical Description

Mature specimen set behind a cream brick 1950s building at the corner of Gordon St. As with other Washingtonia palms its tall distinctive outline makes it visible over a wide area.

`This genus is made up of 2 species of fan-leafed palms from arid parts of western Mexico, southern California and Arizona. Their stately appearance makes them ideal specimen or avenue trees. They have an upright, single trunk, and are sometimes called petticoat palms because the dead fronds hang down in a mass around the trunk, almost to the ground. The large leaves have many strap-like segments and spiny leaf stalks. The small white flowers cluster at intervals on long flowering branches that arch out well beyond the leaves. The fruit are small dark drupes { Botanica}.'

### Condition

good (partially disturbed, well preserved)

### Integrity

substantially intact/some intrusions

### Context

Set in an unrelated urban context

**Threats:**

Pruning for added and existing service lines, and removal with maturity, cramped environment, adjoining development.

**History**

The first infant welfare centres in Victoria were opened in 1917 in Free Kindergartens in Richmond and Carlton. The following year the Victorian Baby Health Centres association was formed and they worked with municipal councils to provide baby health centres. An alternative to the Baby Health Centres association was the New Zealand-based Society for health of Women and Children, which worked with a much smaller number of Victorian councils to provide infant welfare centres from 1920. Footscray was one of the first municipalities to open a baby health centre under the Society for Health of Women and Children, or Plunkett system. The first infant welfare centre in Footscray opened above a shop in Nicholson Street. By 1923 the Council had opened another Plunkett Infant Welfare Centre in Yarraville because of the great demand on the Footscray centre. With a donation from Mr Tweddle, a businessman and philanthropist, the Society for Health of Women and Babies also established the Tweddle Hospital for Babies in Footscray in 1924. Footscray Council donated the land for the centre in Gordon Street. The hospital served as a training school for nurses in the Plunkett system of infant welfare, but was also the first hospital in Australia that took in mothers as well as babies to assist with feeding problems, etc. It was rebuilt in the 1950s and has now been moved from its original site. { Barnard, Environmental History, City of Maribyrnong, 1999}

**Specific History**

The Tweddle Baby Hospital (400-406 Barkly St) operated on this site over a long period with the present building having been opened in 1959. In 1920 the site was donated by the Footscray Council after representations by a group including Sister Primrose, JT Tweddle, the Hon. J Cook and Dr JW Springthorpe. This group had been concerned by the prevailing infant mortality rate and wanted a training hospital for sisters specialising in the baby care. Tweddle donated £3000 for the building { FFOY}.

In 1925 the Footscray Council Curator of Parks & Gardens (Matthews) referred in his report to work at the croquet lawn connected with the Nurses quarters at Tweddle Hospital, requesting instructions from Council to proceed. The cost was approximately £60 { VPRO}. Again in September 1925 the Tweddle Baby Hospital appeals to Council to beautify the grounds in front of the new building in Sydney Street (corner Barkly St). Matthews probably planted this specimen. The 1920s building was demolished for the 1959 structure but evidently the palm remained.

The 1945 aerial view shows the site prior to the 1959 redevelopment with a large pavilion style

building and a landscaped setback to Barkly St and landscaped courts between pavilions. This palm was in one of those courts.

### Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme

PAHT Subtheme

Local Theme(s)

### Cultural Significance

The Washingtonia palm at Multiple Sclerosis Centre is significant to the City of Maribyrnong:

- for its maturity and rarity within the City ( Criterion B2);
- as an original element from the formation of the Tweddle Babies Home in 1920 which was among the first of its kind in Victoria (Criterion A4).

### Comparative Examples:

Another example is at 78 Cowper St

### 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?:

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:

The following management objectives have been drawn from the Statement of Significance:

- to conserve and enhance the listed tree at the place;
- to conserve and enhance the public view of this tree;
- to ensure that new plantings or elements or planting at the place are visually recessive and related to the tree; and
- to further research the detailed origins of the tree and maintain the link with its history, via promotion and publication of the findings.

### Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

Historic Places - Significant Trees in the City of Maribyrnong

*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.*

as an original element form the formation of the Tweddle Babies Home in 1920 as among the first of its kind in Victoria

*B2 Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practiced, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest.*

for its maturity and rarity within the City

historical significanc  architectural significan  social significance  scientific significanc

## Documentation

### References

`Botanica' CD Rom 1997 (Beaver Multimedia P/L, Random House Australia)  
`Footscray's First One Hundred Years' (FFOY)  
Landinfo aerial 1945 view

## Data recording

Assessed By:

Assessed Date:

Historic Places - Significant Trees in the City of Maribyrnong

