

**NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (VICTORIA)
CLASSIFICATION REPORT**

Former Independent Church, 246 Malvern Road, Prahran

1 NAME OF PLACE/ARTEFACT

[Former] Independent Church

2 OTHER CURRENT NAME

[Former] Congregational Church

3 LOCATION

246 Malvern Road, Prahran

4 DATE

1858-9 (and 1869-70, 1878, 1886, 1901, 1914, &c)

5 TYPE OF PLACE/ARTEFACT

Church

6 LISTING DETAILS

State

7 EXTENT OF DESIGNATION

Building and immediate curtilage.

8 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The former Prahran Congregational Church is of state significance as an early local example of the Nonconformist tradition, as a prominent early church work by an important firm of architects, and as the oldest surviving example of a ramped auditorium-type church interior in Victoria. This significance has survived the loss of the 1863 F W Nicholson organ and the pews, and damage to the floor.

The church was built in 1858-9 in bluestone with cement dressings, in a free version of the Decorated Gothic style, and was one of the first to be designed by the subsequently prolific practice of Thomas J Crouch and Ralph Wilson. It was intended to be completed in stages but never reached its designed final form, which was to include a masonry chancel and a tower. A wooden porch designed by C E Connop in 1886 provides entry in what was to be the tower base, and there is a timber extension at the east end, between the church and vestry, which probably dates from 1914. The absence of the tower leaves the north (liturgical west) front substantially symmetrical and destroys the picturesque effect as designed, though the porch marginally alleviates this. The most conspicuous exterior feature is the three light window in this facade, with its geometric tracery.

The nave is given further significance by the use of heavy wooden cruciform columns with distinctive foliated capitals to create an aisled effect. The ceiling, although modified by wood panelling and levelling of the centre part in 1901, remains an important visual element, with hammer beam trusses supported on the columns and on corbelled colonettes at the walls. The remains of the frieze of about 1910, and of the earlier dado, are also important.