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## Donald Street Urban Conservation Area [Area 3.1]

### Extent

The Donald Street Urban Conservation Area extends from High Street along both east and west sides of Donald Street and abuts the Greville Street Urban Conservation Area to the north.

### History

The land which now forms this precinct was once part of a large area surveyed as an Aboriginal mission station. In 1837 after Robert Hoddle surveyed the area, an Aboriginal Reserve was marked out from Punt Road to Williams Road and from the line of High Street to the Yarra River.<sup>44</sup>

Because of the swampy nature of much of this land south of Toorak Road between Commercial Road and High Street, many lots (including those in the Donald Street area) were not sold until the later 1850 land sales. More desirable allotments north of Toorak Road were sold in the first 1840 sales of Crown land.<sup>45</sup>

The area south of Toorak Road, where Donald Street is located, was where commercial development occurred along the main roads. Behind this development, however, there were narrow streets divided into small building lots on which one and two-roomed cottages were built last century. These cottages became the homes of labourers, brick workers, butchers, carpenters and others employed in the service industries established in Prahran to meet the needs of more affluent families in Toorak, South Yarra and Armadale.<sup>46</sup>

Greville Street (formed in 1852) and Charles Street, two of Prahran's smaller streets, were already lined with small shops and modest houses in Kearney's 1855 map. There was little development at this time in the Donald Street area.<sup>47</sup>

However, by the 1880s, after the formation of the railway cutting in Greville Street and the arrival of the railway line from Melbourne, more development took place in the area. Other small north-south streets between Commercial Road and High Street, Alfred, Donald and Perth Streets were marked on an 1885-86 map.<sup>48</sup> By the 1890s, Donald Street was lined on either side with single houses, semi-detached houses, and rows of cottages, all on relatively narrow allotments.<sup>49</sup>

The relatively intact streetscape along Donald Street between Greville Street and High Street, which remains today, is comprised of single storey Victorian era detached houses mainly from the late nineteenth century. These houses on their

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44. George Tibbits. *History of Prahran*, pp.22, 27. Map on p.27 shows Aboriginal Mission Station Reserve c1839-40.

45. George Tibbits. *History of Prahran*. pp. 26-29. Maps showing sequence of land sales from 1840 to 1850

46. Betty Malone. Introduction in Sally Wilde, *History of Prahran 1925-1990*, p.x.

47. James Kearney. *Map of Melbourne and its Suburbs*, 1855.

48. Sands and McDougall's Directory Map of Prahran, 1885-86.

49. MMBW 1895 drainage plan.

narrow allotments are powerful reminders of Prahran's early history when such modest dwellings were typical of this area.

## **Description**

Donald Street comprises an interesting array of smaller Victorian villas, some detached and some in small groups of attached houses. The detached houses have very narrow side boundaries. All of the houses are set well back from the street in relation to their overall size and the size of the allotment. Most of the buildings are in brick, either face brick with bi-chromatic or polychromatic brickwork, or are rendered with moulded detailing. Most have a verandah across the front facade with ornate cast iron lacework. Typically the valence of lacework is enclosed by a timber member and the brackets sit below between the chamfered posts and the timber member.

The street itself is gently sloping downhill to the north. Asphalt remains as the paving and roadway material but the kerb and guttering have been replaced, many years ago, with concrete pre-cast kerb and guttering. Bluestone guttering may, in fact, remain but is not presently visible due to high water levels. The street trees are predominantly Ash and Melaleucas with some Prunus and other species. These appear to date from the post-World War 2 period and are now a medium size, starting to make a contribution towards the streetscape.

## **Heritage characteristics**

The heritage characteristics of the Donald Street Urban Conservation Area are:

- the evidence of modest nineteenth century housing, remarkably consistent and distinctive in character, suggesting a precinct designed for an emerging class who could afford better housing than that found in the more densely settled streets nearby
- the consistent form, scale, materials and deep setback of the predominantly Victorian era housing along the street
- the architectural quality and intact detailing on many of the houses
- the consistent and continuing residential use
- the developing contribution of the street tree plantings to the streetscape
- its relationship to Greville Street and the slightly larger dwellings there.

## **Analysis**

This precinct is of a particular and unusual quality and should certainly remain an urban conservation area. Its relationship to Greville Street needs to be further analysed in terms of the form of the development and historical research into this aspect would be a valuable future research task.

## Significance

The Donald Street Urban Conservation Area has significance as a precinct exhibiting an unusual and distinctive character derived primarily from the architectural quality and consistency in form, materials and set backs of the small single storey Victorian villas and attached houses that line both sides of Donald Street.

## Sources

Kearney, James, *Map of Melbourne and Its Suburbs*, 1855.

MMBW 1895 drainage plan.

Sands & McDougall's Directory Map of Prahran. 1885-86.

Tibbits, George, *History of Prahran*, p.26-29. Map p.27 shows Aboriginal Mission Station Reserve c1839-1840; Maps showing sequence of land sales from 1840-1850.

Wilde, Sally, *History of Prahran 1925-1990*, 1993.

## Recommendations

1. Adopt the exhibited UC1 Area.
2. Encourage future research into the development and history of the area and its relationship to Greville Street.