

**HERITAGE PLACE – CITATION ASSESSMENT**

<b>NAME OF PLACE:</b>	Former De La Salle School.
<b>OTHER NAMES OF PLACE</b>	Tramway Museum.
<b>ADDRESS / LOCATION:</b>	20 Stanhope Street, Armadale. Part Malvern Tram Depot
<b>PROPERTY INFORMATION:</b>	Volume 3043 Folio 608547.
<b>EXISTING LISTINGS:</b>	Part VHR registration H0910. Part HO23 Buildings on adjacent sites to the north and east are protected under HO377.
<b>LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE:</b>	Local significance.
<b>ASSESSED BY:</b>	John Statham, Heritage Advisor, City of Stonnington.
<b>ASSESSMENT DATE:</b>	1 April 2012.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE***What is significant?*

The Former De La Salle School is a single and double storey, early twentieth century red brick school building with a steeply pitched slate roof. The principal elevation to Stanhope Street is single storey and double fronted, featuring an arched central entry porch with a prominent gable inset with an oculus, and rows of four windows in the bays on each side. Apart from the addition of a rear wing to a very sympathetic design, the exterior of the building appears essentially unmodified since its original construction.

*How is it significant?*

The Former De La Salle School in Stanhope Street is of architectural and historical significance at a local level and contributes in a modest way to the significance of the associated Malvern Tram Depot (10.5.1 *Local History Collections*). The Depot is of identified State significance.

*Why is it significant?*

The Former De La Salle School is of architectural significance at a local level. It is a relatively (externally) intact example of an Edwardian school in an understated Collegiate Gothic mode. It is a landmark building within Stanhope Street and makes a strong aesthetic contribution to the streetscape (8.2.1 *Country in the City*). It provides an insight into educational buildings of noted Catholic Church architect AA Fritsch although it is not a key element within his oeuvre.

It is of historical significance at a local level for its associations with important Malvern institutions. It was the first purpose-built building of the De La Salle College (9.4 Catholic Schools) and was subsequently associated with the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust (4.5.2 Prahran Malvern Tramways Trust). Both organisations have been significant institutions within the Municipality since the early decades of the twentieth century. It is currently uses as a Tramways Museum (10.5.1 Local History Collections).

## LOCALITY PLAN AND SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



Figure 1 De La Salle School on Stanhope Street, marked in red. Extent of VHR registration shown in grey.  
Source: Land Victoria Interactive Maps

## PREVIOUS HERITAGE STUDIES

The former De La Salle school was not identified individually in any early Heritage Municipal Heritage Studies.

The school was constructed on a site adjacent to the Prahran & Malvern Tramways Trust (P&MTT) Depot in 1912. It was incorporated into the P&MTT site in 1929 and has formed part of the Depot since that time. Consequently, the planning history of the school and the Malvern Tramways Depot have been linked for eighty years even though the school has little in common, in architectural terms, with the transport infrastructure of the Depot.

The broad Malvern Tram Depot, incorporating the former school building, was identified as a group of 'A' buildings by the *Glenferrie Road/High Street Conservation Study* (1984). No part of the Depot was identified

in the, largely residential, *City of Malvern Urban Character Study* (1989) or in the subsequent *City of Malvern Heritage Review* (1992). Around the time of the *City of Malvern Heritage Review*, the complex was nominated to the *Victorian Heritage Register* (VHR).

Heritage Victoria subsequently assessed the Depot, concluding it to be a complex of State significance for its capacity to illustrate the development of public transportation systems in the State. The Statement of Significance for the Depot notes that the growth of the tramway system,

*... was one of the greatest municipal developments in Victoria during the first decade of this century, and the Depot remains a testimony to this period of Melbourne's transport history. The Depot reflects the expansion and change of the tramway system in subsequent decades, with several major alterations and additions until the beginning of the 1930s.*

In 1993, the site was added to the Victorian Heritage Register. The former De La Salle school building was included within the extent of the registration but was not identified as a contributory element within the context of the Depot. Council subsequently implemented HO23 over the same curtilage.

## DESCRIPTION

The Malvern Tram Depot (former P&MTT Depot) occupies a large portion of land on the north and south sides of Coldblo Road. The primary entry into the site is from Glenferrie Road to the east into Coldblo Road. The site is largely enclosed by a ring of properties around its periphery facing onto Union Street to the south, Glenferrie Road to the east and Lambeth Avenue to the west, with a secondary frontage only onto Stanhope Street to the north. The former De La Salle school is located at the north-west corner of this site, along the frontage to Stanhope Street. It is situated on a large, rectangular portion of land stretching between Coldblo Road and Stanhope Street, and bounded by a laneway along its western side. The subject building occupies the northernmost section of this large allotment.

The Former De La Salle School is a single and double storey, early twentieth century red brick former school, with a steeply pitched slate roof. The principal elevation facing onto Stanhope Street is single storey and double fronted, featuring an arched central entry porch with a prominent gable inset with an oculus, and rows of four windows in the bays on each side. The gables were originally surmounted by crucifixes, which have since been removed (except for steel supporting spikes). The building is rectangular in plan and comprises three wings, each under a hipped roof arrangement. The primary wing faces north and runs parallel to Stanhope Street. Two secondary wings extend to the south. Of these, the eastern wing is of a single storey, while the western wing is two storeys. The building is believed to have been constructed in two stages, with the front and east wings constructed first, and the western rear wing, most likely, erected after the building's acquisition by the Tramways Trust. To the south, the former school abuts a much larger tramways building. A narrow curtilage of open space is located to the west, north and east of the building. This is occupied by paths, lawn, small shrubs and trees. Along Stanhope Street, the site is enclosed by a timber picket fence.



Figure 2 *Aerial view of the Former De La Salle School showing the north wing facing Stanhope Street (centre top), with the two parallel rear wings running south.*

Apart from the addition of a rear wing, the building appears essentially unmodified since its original construction. Some small brick service rooms have been added to the north end of the west elevation, and crucifixes have been removed from the peaks of the gables.

## HISTORY

The Former De La Salle School occupies land that remained undeveloped until the early twentieth century. The 1902 MMBW plan shows the site on a block bounded by Glenferrie Road to the east, Stanhope Street to the north, Lambeth Street to the west and Coldblo Road to the south. The street frontages were undeveloped, apart from a dwelling 'Coomora' on the corner of Glenferrie Road and Stanhope Streets, and another substantial house 'Coldblo' mid-way along the Coldblo Road frontage. Coldblo was set in large grounds, with street frontages onto both Coldblo Road and Stanhope Street. The vacant land to the west was a large, square shaped fenced paddock. Representatives of the Catholic Church purchased the eastern portion of this site (with frontages onto Stanhope Street and Coldblo Road) on 16th March, 1905.<sup>1</sup> Coldblo was also acquired by the Catholic Church.

<sup>1</sup> Land Title Volume 3043, Folio 608547.

Major change came to the area in 1910 with the opening of the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust on the land south of Coldblo Road on 30 May, 1910. Three Irish brothers arrived in Melbourne early in 1912 for the purpose of establishing a new boys school in Malvern, De La Salle College. They initially settled in Coldblo and commenced teaching in the parish hall. Plans were soon made to construct a new school on the land purchased in 1905. This new building cost £2000 and faced north onto Stanhope Street.<sup>2</sup> The Catholic newspaper the *Advocate* featured a full page report on the school's opening by the Archbishop of Melbourne in April 1912.



**De La Salle Brothers' Boys' School, Malvern.**

*Figure 3 The newly completed school as viewed from Stanhope Street. Source: Advocate, 9th April 1912.*

*The school is of brick construction with slate roof, etc. It is provided with a spacious entrance porch and hall, with four large class rooms, two 80 x 26 and two 20 x 26, all thoroughly well lighted and ventilated. The windows have been specially designed to give the necessary latest ventilation, and for the outlet ventilation the usual unsightly cowls have been omitted*

<sup>2</sup> Stonnington History Centre, MP 1640.

*and a continuous ridge ventilator substituted. A special feature has been made of the doors dividing the class rooms which fold back into recesses and leaves a room 86 x 26 without any obstructions. A verandah around two sides of the building is provided, with lavatory accommodation and cloak rooms. Electric light has been installed throughout. The work has been faithfully carried out by Mr. W H Cooper, contractor, from designs, etc., by Mr A. A. Fritsch, F.R.V.I.A., architect, 150 Queen-street, City.*<sup>3</sup>

Coldblo was demolished in 1926. By 1929, De La Salle was ready to enter a new era, with the relocation of the school to a larger nearby site located to the east of Glenferrie Road, now known as the school's Tiverton Campus. Title for the Stanhope Street school site was formally transferred to the Roman Catholic Trusts Corporation on 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1929, before the property was sold to the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board (MMTB) for £7000.<sup>45</sup> Modifications undertaken by the Tramways Board included the removal of ecclesiastical detailing from the gables, and the construction of a double storey rear wing on the west side of the rear (south elevation). The building is now occupied by the Tramway Museum.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

### The work of AA Fritsch

*The following is drawn from The Encyclopaedia of Australian Architecture, Goad and Willis.*

Augustus Andrew Fritsch was born in Abbotsford in 1866. He was articled to John Beswicke (of Wilson & Beswicke) before opening his own office in Melbourne in 1888. Initially concentrating on residential projects, a commission for a Roman Catholic Presbytery in 1894 marked the beginning of a long association with the Catholic Church. He would subsequently design churches at Rochester (1909), Kyabram (1920), Bairnsdale (1913), Flemington (1923) and Elwood (1929). As Victoria's premier church architect, he collaborated with Walter Burley Griffin on the design of Newman College at the University of Melbourne (1915-18), although it is said that he contributed little to the project. Griffin's use of rough stonework at the college may have inspired Fritsch to do the same at Our Lady of Victories (1918) a massive domed church in Camberwell. This is considered by many to be Fritsch's masterpiece. Fritsch died in 1933 although the practice enjoyed continued success under his son Adolpho.

When the former De La Salle School was constructed, Augustus Fritsch was considered Victoria's leading Church Architect. While he is best remembered for grand church buildings, such as Our Lady of Victories in Camberwell, the subject building provides an insight into his educational buildings and demonstrates his awareness of the emerging of Collegiate Gothic mode which would become a key architectural expression for school buildings through the 1910s.

### Stonnington's early schools

The Former De La Salle school may be compared to other early schools within the Municipality. A Common school was opened in 1854 by St Matthew's Church of England in a schoolhouse near the southwest corner of Chapel and High Streets. It has been suggested that a Presbyterian Common School operated near the

<sup>3</sup> *The Advocate*, April 9, 1912, p.22.

<sup>4</sup> Land Title Volume 3043, Folio 608547.

<sup>5</sup> Stonnington History Centre, MP 1640.

site of the Toorak Presbyterian Church (now Uniting Church) in Toorak Road in the 1870s. In Malvern, the Anglicans received a government grant to build a denominational school in Glenferrie Road. The schoolroom also served as an Anglican place of worship until St George's Church was built in 1865. It is understood that none of these early school buildings survive. The following provides a cross-section of the early schools that survive within the Municipality. St Andrews School House in Brighton provides a similar example in a neighbouring Municipality.

***Hawksburn Primary School, Malvern Road, Hawksburn.***

Constructed 1874-81 to designs by Crouch & Wilson (VHR H1032).

***Stonnington Primary School (formerly Windsor PS) Hornby Street, Windsor.***

Constructed in 1877 to the design of Education Department architect Henry R Bastow (part HO138).

***Armadale Primary School, Densham Road, Armadale.***

Constructed in 1886, with additions in 1891 and 1899. (VHR H1640).

***Malvern Primary School, Tooronga Road, Malvern.***

Constructed in 1885 with additions in 1891-1892 (VHR H1710).

***St Andrew's School House, Bay Street, Brighton.***

The church and school and vicarage were designed by Charles Webb and Thomas Taylor in 1857 (VHR H0124).

When compared to other early schools within the Municipality of Stonnington, the Former De La Salle School is neither the earliest nor the most architecturally distinguished of the surviving buildings. Of the previously listed schools, three are included on the *Victoria Heritage Register*. These are more substantial than the Former De La Salle School - the earliest sections of the Hawksburn and Armadale Primary Schools being double storey structures. They are also set in more substantial grounds.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

### **Intactness, integrity and use**

The building is substantially intact to its exterior. Alterations to the exterior of the building comprise the addition of a second rear wing to the south side of the building and the construction of small service additions to the resultant west elevation. Construction of the rear wing addition has been undertaken with a high level of regard for the original design. Very minor alterations have been made to the street elevation, most notably the removal of crucifixes from the gables. The building has lost its original valued use but remains highly legible to its early state.

### **Architectural significance**

The former school is of architectural significance at a local level as an early twentieth century, Edwardian school and as an example of the work of noted Catholic Church architect AA Fritsch. It is a landmark in Stanhope Street, also making a substantial aesthetic contribution to the heritage values of the local area and the Union Street Heritage Precinct (HO377) more generally.

### **Historical significance**

The former school is of historical significance at a local level as the first purpose built school for De La Salle College, an important major educational institution that has had a presence in the Municipality since 1912. It

is also of some historic significance for its association with the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust since 1929. It is notable that the building is currently used as a Tramways Museum.

### **Building Grading**

As noted above, the Former De La Salle School is of architectural and historical significance at a local level. On the basis of the inspection and research undertaken in the preparation of this report, it would appear reasonable that an A2 grading is assigned to the building. Council defines these buildings as follows:

*A2 Buildings are of regional or metropolitan significance, and stand as important milestones in the architectural development of the metropolis. Many will be either already included on, or recommended for inclusion on, the Register of the National Estate. (These are the equivalent of B graded buildings adopted by the City of Melbourne and a number of other councils. Most of these buildings will have importance in one or more of the categories defined by the Heritage Council and outlined above, but they are not considered significant to a degree sufficient to warrant nomination to the Heritage Council. In other words, they do not demonstrate importance in a manner or to an extent which is rare or distinctive in comparison to other buildings of their type, use, era, style on a statewide basis, although they will usually be relatively rare or distinctive within their own regional or local context. They are in general important buildings within the context of the City of Stonnington and the wider metropolitan area.*

### **Individual significance**

The current assessment has not been exhaustive and has not been undertaken as part of a broad comparative survey of similar buildings. Nonetheless, there does not appear to be a strong *prima facie* case for an individual heritage control over this building. It appears to be a building of high local significance which could make a valuable contribution to a heritage precinct. Nonetheless, this could be tested as part of Council's upcoming Heritage Study which will review a number of similar school buildings.

It is even less likely that the building could be shown to demonstrate sufficient individual significance to warrant a nomination to the VHR for protection on its own merits. It does not appear to be a building of State significance. Nonetheless, it may be possible to demonstrate that it makes a contribution to the VHR-listed Depot as discussed below.

### **Stonnington Thematic Environmental History**

The Former De La Salle School can be shown to illustrate the following themes as identified in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History*:

- 9.4 Catholic Schools
- 4.5.2 Prahran Malvern Tramways Trust
- 10.5.1 Local History Collections
- 8.2.1 Country in the City – suburban development in Malvern before WWI.



## DISCUSSION

Broadly speaking, the current arrangement of planning controls for this building is not ideal. It is a building identified as being of local significance, protected under a regulatory regime designed for places of State significance. There are three ways in which more appropriate protection of this building could be achieved, namely: improved protection under the Victorian Heritage Act; or protection under the City of Stonnington Planning Scheme; or by raising Heritage Victoria's awareness of the high local significance of the building.

### **Protection under the Victorian Heritage Act**

When the Malvern Tram Depot was added to the VHR it became subject to protection under the Victorian Heritage Act. The registration mapped the entire footprint of the complex as it existed in 1993. This included the Former De La Salle School. However, the former school was not identified as a significant element within the group. Given that the subject building was not constructed as part of the P&MMT development of the site and adopts a different scale and building typology to the more highly-valued transport infrastructure across the site, this assessment was consistent with the identified significance of the place. This is not an oversight or an error. Heritage Victoria has mapped the entire site but acknowledges that some buildings do not contribute in any substantial way to the identified, tramways-related significance of the heritage place.

Heritage Victoria revisited and updated its documentation in 2001 and again concluded that the building did not contribute in a substantial way to the character or significance of the Depot.

I have subsequently spoken with officers from Heritage Victoria who recall the subject building and noted that previous assessments found it to be a building of some architectural distinction which makes a modest contribution to the significance of the site through its roles as a social club and later as a Tramway Museum. This, and the very long association between the Depot and the school building may be sufficient to justify a change in Heritage Victoria's attitude. Heritage Victoria officers suggested that Council could test this by nominating the former school to the VHR. While they offered no guarantees, they suggested the climate may have changed since the 2001 review was undertaken and it may be possible to change the extent of the current registration to include the former school.

The extent of registration for the site currently includes 5 buildings. The administration block; car shed number 1 and substation; car shed number 2; and the tower wagon shed and bicycle shed and all of the associated land. In the event of the nomination being successful, the former School would be added to this list. In addition, a few sentences would be added to the Statement of Significance to explain the value of the former school to the complex. Once registered, Heritage Victoria's officers would be obliged to consider the impacts of future development on the character and significance of the former school.

Any individual can nominate any building to the VHR. A nomination form providing title details, history, comparative analysis and an assessment against Heritage Victoria's registration criteria is forwarded to Heritage Victoria who will consider the merits of the nomination. This can take some months. The current report provides most of this material needed to support the nomination. Once received, it is a requirement that Heritage Victoria inform the current owner of the nomination.

This represents simplest and the best way forward at this stage.

### **Protection under a local government Heritage Overlay**

In the event of this approach failing, the building would continue to be subject to unusual and somewhat unsatisfactory planning controls. The building is of high local significance but of relatively modest significance within the context of the Malvern Tram Depot. In matters relating to developments at the Depot, Heritage Victoria would continue to be the Responsible Authority and may see the former school as a building of reasonably low heritage value. Council would probably form a different point of view. While Heritage Victoria may seek Council's opinion in relation to future developments on this site, it is not obliged to accommodate Council's position. This system of management may not protect the local significance of the former school, as identified in this report.

Clearly the building would benefit from a regulatory regime in which it is viewed as an important element within Stanhope Street rather than a non-contributory element within the Depot. That is, a Local, rather than a State, Government heritage control. This outcome may be achievable. However, the process is far less orthodox and much more complex than that proposed in the section above.

In the event that the nomination discussed above is rejected, a reasonably strong argument for a reduction in the extent of the current registration could be drafted and forwarded to Heritage Victoria. That is, it may be possible to remove the school building and associated land from the extent of the current registration. If the extent of the VHR registration was contracted in this way, the curtilage of the Union Street Heritage Precinct (HO377) could be adjusted to include the former school as an A2 graded building within the Union Street Heritage Overlay area to the north of the Depot.

### **The status quo**

In the event of both of these approaches failing, Council should write to Heritage Victoria outlining Council's view that the building is an important element in its own right and within the Stanhope Streetscape which makes a substantial contribution to HO377 despite its location outside of the HO. The letter should make reference to this report and the grading and Statement of Significance contained therein. It should also make reference to Council's Heritage Policy at Clause 22.04 which

*... applies to heritage places included in the Heritage Overlay and properties immediately abutting the place. Heritage places will often include a building, grounds, outbuildings and settings.*

While this is the least effective of the three approaches discussed, it would alert Heritage Victoria to Council's views before any specific developments were proposed.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Council

1. Endorse this report, the A2 grading noted above and the Statement of Significance.
2. Nominate the building to the VHR.
3. In the interim, Council should include this site on the list of school and other buildings to be assessed in the near future.
4. In the interim, this document should be made available to planners considering referrals from Heritage Victoria in relation to the Malvern Tramways Depot site.

## REFERENCES

*Advocate*

*Blue and Gold*, De La Salle College, Malvern, The College, 1954.

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*Malvern Standard*

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Christian Moe, *God Writes Straight on Crooked Lines: The Arrival of the De La Salle Brothers*, Sydney, NSW, De La Salle Provincialate, 2007.

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