

## HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

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<b>Name</b>	Mia Mia Uniting Church	
<b>Address</b>	31 Matheson Road MIA MIA	<b>Grading</b> 2008 Local
<b>Building Type</b>	Church	
<b>Assessment by</b>	Context Pty Ltd	




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**Recommended** VHR No HI No PS Yes  
**Heritage Protection**

**Architectural Style** Victorian Period (1851-1901)

**Maker / Builder** Flea, Benjamin

### Integrity

High

### History and Historical Context

#### History of Shires of Strathfieldsaye and McIvor

The land around the former Shires of Strathfieldsaye and McIvor had a long history prior to the arrival of Europeans. The Jaara Jaara people are the original inhabitants of the area.

The area around Port Phillip was explored by Sir Thomas Mitchell, the Surveyor General of New South Wales, and a large party in 1836, on the homeward leg of a journey to Portland Bay. Impressed by what he perceived as the bounty of the land, Mitchell named the area *Australia Felix*.<sup>[1]</sup>

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The Port Phillip district was opened up for settlement soon thereafter, and much of the land in the Western districts of Victoria, including the former Shires of McIvor and Strathfieldsaye, was subsequently dominated by a series of pastoral runs. Most of the area around the town of Axedale and the numerous small towns in its vicinity was licensed to David Jennings as part of the Campaspe Plains run. The run covered an area of more than 144,900 acres and was populated with an estimated 12,000 sheep. A portion of Campaspe Plains was licensed to A. Jennings and George Playne in 1840 and the 67,000 acre station became known as Axedale. In the coming decade the holders of the license changed a number of times. By the time the leasehold over the land was cancelled in 1865, the run had greatly reduced in size.[2]

Following the cancellation of leasehold, land holdings were of a smaller scale and pastoralists were gradually overtaken by farmers. The discovery of gold at Bendigo and the surrounding areas changed the face of the district and brought about new patterns of settlement and expansion. William John Bulling claimed to be the first man to discover gold at McIvor, and he was granted a £400 reward for the find. By 1853, over one hundred prospectors had assembled at Wild Duck Creek in the hopes of striking it rich. This number expanded the following year, and included some 2,000 Chinese immigrants.[3]

The Strathfieldsaye Road District was proclaimed in the Government Gazette on the 12th August 1861, and encompassed within it the parishes of Axedale, Strathfieldsaye, Eppalock, Mandurang, Sedgwick Spring Plains and Lyell.[4] The process of election of the board was punctuated by rivalries between Catholic and Protestant faiths, a characteristic of the district which infiltrates much of its history. Strathfieldsaye met the criterion prescribed to become a Shire in 1863, a transition that was officially proclaimed on the 17th September of that year.[5]

In 1864, Strathfieldsaye Shire was divided into three wards; Mandurang, Strathfieldsaye and Axedale.[6]

## History of Mia Mia Township

Mia Mia township is located in the parish of Spring Plains, which developed in conjunction with the settlement at Heathcote. The small postal township developed in conjunction with the land around it that was gradually taken up for agricultural and pastoral pursuits. Mia Mia shared in some of the benefits of the gold rushes, and a number of mines were established in the vicinity of the town. The industry provided for the establishment of a number of hotels, which found the majority of their clientele in association with the mines.

## History of Mia Mia Uniting Church, 31 Matheson Street, Mia Mia

Redesdale and Mia Mia formed two communities largely divided along sectarian grounds. Redesdale was predominantly Roman Catholic, and Mia Mia largely Presbyterian.

The contract for the construction of a bluestone Church at Mia Mia was let to Benjamin Flea, a builder of Heathcote, in October of 1871. That month it was reported that:

*The congregation have set in earnest to erect a comfortable and commodious stone church, to seat 110 worshippers and to cost £300. Cash, and promises of cash, have already been received for over £100. Labour will be given in some instances to stand in the light of donations to the Church.*[7]

The foundation stone of the new church was laid in a ceremony held on the 27th September 1871 and led by the Reverend Robert Henderson. A bottle containing copies of several local newspapers, a Presbyterian calendar and a brief history of the progress and origin of the cause, amongst other items, was also laid.[8]

The land was granted to John Kennedy, Duncan McLennan and Donald McKindlay who presumably held it in trust for the Church.[9] The three men were all residents of Mia Mia and the holders of significant allotments of land in their own

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right. It has been suggested that this was the second allotment considered for the construction of the Church, and a previous allotment, located down the hill, was eliminated from consideration for its small size.[10]

The new Church opened on the 19th March 1872 by Reverend Henderson, and the first services conducted there on the 31st of that month. Construction had been completed for a total cost of £380, of which £150 had been received in the form of a loan from the Presbyterian Church of Victoria.[11]

Jack Ross' history of the Church notes that the congregation followed forms of worship traditional to Scotland from the opening of the Church.[12] This may imply that there were a high number of Scottish immigrants in the congregation, although it could also be due to the homeland of the minister.

Mrs Turner of Shepherds Creek donated an organ to the Church in 1898.[13]

Extensions were undertaken at the Church in 1903, with the addition of a porch and vestry. The floor of the Church porch was tiled in 1956, and stands as a memorial to Mrs Martha Duncan. The wooden dado of the Church was removed in 1961 and replaced with cement plaster. The toilet facilities at the church were constructed using stone from the ruins of old houses in the district.[14]

A memorial was erected at the Church in the early 1920s, in remembrance of those of the congregants who fought and lost their lives during the First World War. Following the cessation of the Second World War, the window in the north wall of the porch was replaced with a stained glass memorial to Emil and Doug Govey, the sole members of the congregation who were killed in the conflict.[15]

Title over the property passed to the Uniting Church of Australia in September 1980.[16]

[1] Randell, J. O. (1985). *McIvor: A History of the Shire and the Township of Heathcote*, Shire of McIvor, p. 1.

[2] Spreadborough, Robert and Anderson, Hugh (1983). *Victorian Squatters*, Red Rooster Press, Ascot Vale, p. 150

[3] Spreadborough & Anderson (1983), p. 31.

[4] Hewat, Tim (1983), *Bridge Over Troubled Waters, A History of the Shire of Strathfieldsaye*, Shire of Strathfieldsaye, Victoria, pp. 11 - 12.

[5] Hewat, Tim (1983), p. 18.

[6] Hewat, Tim (1983), p. 107.

[7] Cited in Ross, Jack (1972), *Mia Mia Presbyterian Church, 1872-1972: the first hundred years*, Centenary Booklet Committee p. 6.

[8] Ross, Jack (1972), p. 6.

[9] Certificate of Title, Vol. 1517, Fol. 337.

[10] Ross, Jack (1972), p. 6.

[11] Ross, Jack (1972), p. 6.

[12] Ross, Jack (1972), p. 28.

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[13] Ross, Jack (1972), p. 28.

[14] Ross, Jack (1972), p. 10

[15] Ross, Jack (1972), p. 35.

[16] Certificate of Title, Vol. 1517, Fol. 337.

## Primary sources

Certificate of Title, Vol. 1517, Fol. 337

## Secondary sources

Hewat, Tim (1983), *Bridge Over Troubled Waters, A History of the Shire of Strathfieldsaye*, Shire of Strathfieldsaye, Victoria

Randell, J. O. (1985). *McIvor: A History of the Shire and the Township of Heathcote*, Shire of McIvor

Ross, Jack (1972). *Mia Mia Presbyterian Church, 1872 - 1972: the first hundred years*, Centenary Booklet Committee

Spreadborough, Robert and Anderson, Hugh (1983). *Victorian Squatters*, Red Rooster Press, Ascot Vale

## Relevant Historical Australian Themes

8.0 Building community life

8.1 Maintaining spiritual life

## Description

### Physical Description

The setting for the Mia Mia Uniting Church is on a steep hill at the edge of the township.

Mia Mia Uniting Church is designed in the Primitive Gothic style and constructed in 1871. Elements of the style include the use of gabled roof and pointed arch windows. Often there is a small round window or oculus that becomes a feature of the gable end, as is the case for the Mia Mia church. Variations to the style include whether a porch has been added and whether the entry is to the side or end of the porch. At Mia Mia the porch was added in 1903 in matching style. The Mia Mia church has a large vestry with fireplace and chimney constructed at the same time as the porch in 1903.

Variations in building materials are evident across the Bendigo region and the Mia Mia church is constructed of bluestone which is used throughout the Mia Mia and Redesdale locality. The bluestone was quarried locally from the Ross's property near Mia Mia.[1]

Other alterations include the addition of a commemorative window to the porch. All of the window and door openings have cement rendered dressings and the parapets are constructed with rendered cappings. The render appears to be an alteration as the openings have been formed in orange brick that is visible where the render has been damaged.

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Of note is the second door to the side, which is unusual in a church of this small size.

The interior consists of a white painted timber ceiling with scissor truss roof structure, a memorial stained glass window and an early light fitting of some interest. The church contains pine pews and the interior of the doors are unpainted pine. The organ was donated in 1898.

The site contains a number of mature pine trees but a number of these are under stress from extended dry conditions.

[1] Information from parishioner Mary Bennett, October 2008.

## Physical Condition

Good

## Conservation Policy

None Specified

## Comparative Analysis

There are a number of small churches in the study area including St Andrews Uniting Church and St Pauls Anglican Church, Axedale - which are also built of bluestone.

## Statement of Significance

*What is significant?*

The former Presbyterian, now Uniting Church at Mia Mia built in 1871 and including the porch and vestry built in 1903 are significant. The memorial window of post 1945 and mature pine trees are also significant. The toilets are not significant.

*How is it significant?*

The Mia Mia Uniting Church is of local historical, aesthetic and social significance to the City of Greater Bendigo.

*Why is it significant?*

Mia Mia Uniting Church is of historical significance for its association with the Scots Presbyterians in the district, and in particular with the Rev. Robert Henderson who was its first minister. *Criterion A*

Mia Mia Uniting Church is of aesthetic significance for its demonstration of the principal elements of the Primitive Gothic style including the gabled roof, porch and pointed arch windows. The church demonstrates the use of local building materials in the form of bluestone. The pine trees add to the sense of enclosure of the Church in its setting. *Criterion D*

Mia Mia Uniting Church is of social significance for the Mia Mia community as a continuous place of worship for over

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130 years. This is demonstrated by the undertaking of local families in adding to the building, donating an organ, and in the installation of the memorial window to the Govey family. *Criterion G*

## Assessment Against Criteria

### HERCON CRITERIA

Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history. *Criterion A*

Possession of uncommon rare or endangers aspects of our cultural or natural history. *Criterion B*

Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history. *Criterion C*

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments. *Criterion D*

Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics. *Criterion E*

Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period. *Criterion F*

Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions. *Criterion G*

Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history. *Criterion H*

## Recommendations 2008

**External Paint Controls**

Yes

**Internal Alteration Controls**

No

**Tree Controls**

Yes

**Fences & Outbuildings**

No

**Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted**

No

**Incorporated Plan**

Yes

**Aboriginal Heritage Place**

No

## Other Recommendations

It is recommended that the Mia Mia Uniting Church at 31 Matheson Street, Mia Mia be added as an individual place to the Heritage Overlay of the City of Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme with the schedule entry as shown above. The extent of registration is the whole of the property as defined by the title boundaries. The recommended Incorporated Plan is the 'Permit Exemption Incorporated Plan - Former Shires of McIvor and Strathfieldsaye.'