

## Identification and location

**Name of place:** **War Service Homes Precinct**

**Other Name**

**Address**

bounded by Birdwood, Mitchell, Monash and Prince Streets  
Footscray West

**Place Identifier**

22163

**Heritage Overlay Number 2000**

HA 1

**Heritage Significance**

City

**Creation date(s)**

1920s

**Map (Melway)**

28 A12

**Boundary description**

Mitchell, Birdwood and Prince Streets with emphasis on all original inter-war (c1919-38) elements, including houses and out-buildings, fences, road paving, footpaths, lot sizes and street patterns.

**Local Government Area**

City of Maribyrnong

**Ownership Type**

Private & Public

## Description

**Site Type:** Housing estate

### Physical Description

The general character is one of detached timber inter-war housing, with gabled Californian Bungalows (i.e. numbers 2-34 Birdwood Street) comprising the majority of the housing stock. There are also some Mediterranean villa style weatherboard houses with corrugated iron hipped roofs. There are common front and side setbacks and properties originally were fronted with wire fabric or low simple timber picket style fencing. Block sizes are regular, as shown in LP10486, and single 3m maximum width crossovers to garaging set at the back of the block is accessed by side drives. The precinct contains concrete footpaths, plus basalt kerb and channelling.

Alterations have depleted the period expression in the western part of the estate, making Prince Street the western border of the precinct, with Monash Street being the main focus. Of the 75 places listed, 66 sites are in the war service estate (Monash, parts Birdwood and Mitchell Streets) and 9 from the Johnstone survey. Of these 75 houses 73 are contributory to the expression of the inter-war period.

The playgrounds and parklands provided for the war service state on the south-west and north-west corners of Monash St and Gordon Street (outside of the estate) has been developed recently for units. Trees along Birdwood St include paperbarks and casuarinas which date from

post WW2.

### Condition

fair (disturbed, reasonably preserved)

### Integrity

partially intact/intrusions

### Context

Isolated beside large industrial complexes.

### Threats:

Unrelated development, changes to original fabric

### History

Despite the frantic subdivision of land in the late nineteenth century, most of the residential development of the City of Maribyrnong has occurred in the twentieth century. In the first two decades of the century housing spread out through Seddon, between Geelong Road and Somerville Road and at West Footscray. In this period and the 1920s, much of the residential development was carried out by developers { Barnard, 2000 }.

The Commonwealth War Service Homes Commission was set up in 1918 to help provide homes for ex-servicemen and their families { VYB ,1973:360 }. Finance provided for War Service Homes and 'Bank Houses' via the State Savings Bank (SSB), Credit Foncier house loans, (1910- ) were the two major credit forms for housing available to Victorians in the early 20th Century. This was particularly so after 1920 when the SSB was able to offer more generous terms to home buyers. Both bodies could buy land and supervise the erection of houses, providing easy terms for their acquisition. Both provided a selection of standard architect-designed houses, timber or brick { VYB ,1973:360 }. Hence, War Service home estates usually achieved visual homogeneity. Other similar estates exist in the metropolitan area such as at Heidelberg.

This area is the combination of two inter-war residential estates:

- the western part (bounded by Mitchell, Birdwood, Rosamond and the west side of Prince Street) declared by J. Johnstone in 1920 and
- the eastern part, bounded by Mitchell, Birdwood, Prince & Gordon Streets (a War Service Homes estate of 1923-4) declared by A. Percival { VTO, LP.10486 }.

A minor change occurred in 1932 when Summerhill Road changed its name to Rosamond Road. { VTO, LP.10486. }

By 1930 Merlyn, Birdwood, Prince and Mitchell Streets were substantially developed, with Monash Street to follow by c1935 {D1930-1935}. In this development period, in 1931, new residents in the estate urged Footscray Council to make landscape improvements to their estate. The letter was from the Footscray and District War Service Homes Purchasers Subsection of the RSSSIA (now the RSL) wanting allotments at the corner of Monash and Gordon Streets to be cleared of noxious weeds, levelled and drained for planting. They also wanted trees and shrubs to be planted on the south side of Birdwood Street to hide the iron fence of the industrial site adjoining [FCCM]. The corner blocks in question were eventually set aside for playgrounds and landscape for the estate but have been recently redeveloped for residential units.

In 1934 the War Service Homes Commission liaised with Council over a plan for two tennis courts for the use of the North Footscray Settlement Social Club. The courts were to be at the corner of Montgomery Street and Gordon Street {FCCM}.

### Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme	Making suburbs	
PAHT Subtheme	Making suburbs	Local Theme(s)
		Twentieth Century Residential Development

### Cultural Significance

The War Service Homes Precinct is historically significant to the City of Maribyrnong because:

- the War Service homes part of the precinct has a distinctive function related to events in the City and the State's history, this being the city's best example of such a war service estate (Criteria A4, B2) ; and
- the precinct as a whole is expressive of the immediate post WW1 era and thus reflects an important era of growth in the City, with well preserved, if simple, examples of single storey detached Californian Bungalow and Mediterranean villa style weatherboard houses, with common front and side setbacks and originally fronted with wire fabric or low simple timber picket style fencing (Criterion A4).

### Comparative Examples:

The precinct compares in period with the Angliss Estate (HA14) and the Queensville Estate (HA 9), both having different historical and architectural associations. Outside of the City there are many comparable inter-war housing estates, the war service aspect being more uncommon.

### 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 boundaries of the existing Heritage Overlay HA 1 in the City of Maribyrnong Planning Scheme should be adjusted to the revised boundaries as required (refer map).

The following objectives have been drawn from the Statement of Significance where contributory places or elements are generally those which derive from the inter-war era (c1919-38) and include:

- detached Californian Bungalow and Mediterranean villa style weatherboard houses, with common front and side setbacks and originally fronted with wire fabric or low simple timber picket style fencing;
- regular block sizes, as shown in LP10486;
- garaging set at the back of the block accessed by side drives; and
- concrete footpaths, basalt kerb and channelling.

It is recommended:

- to conserve and enhance the contributory elements in the precinct and individually significant places, as an expression of war service housing in Footscray, where elements include buildings, objects, landscape, land and street works and enhancement includes the reinstatement of missing original elements;
- to conserve and enhance the visual relationship between contributory elements in the precinct;
- to conserve and enhance the public view of these contributory elements;
- to conserve and enhance the amenity of the precinct to aid in its heritage conservation;
- to ensure that new elements within the precinct are recessive and related to the precinct's contributory elements in roof and plan form, external materials, front and side setbacks from property boundaries, and building bulk as viewed from public areas;
- to maintain the link with the precinct's war service home history; and
- that Council investigate preparation of an incorporated plan for the precinct which will embody the above objectives.

## Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

*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.*

the War Service homes part of the precinct has a distinctive function related to events in the City and the State's history, this being the city's best example of such a subdivision;  
the precinct as a whole is from the immediate post WW1 era and thus expresses an important era of growth in the City.

*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.*

City's best example of a War Service homes estate

historical significanc  architectural significan  social significance  scientific significanc

## Documentation

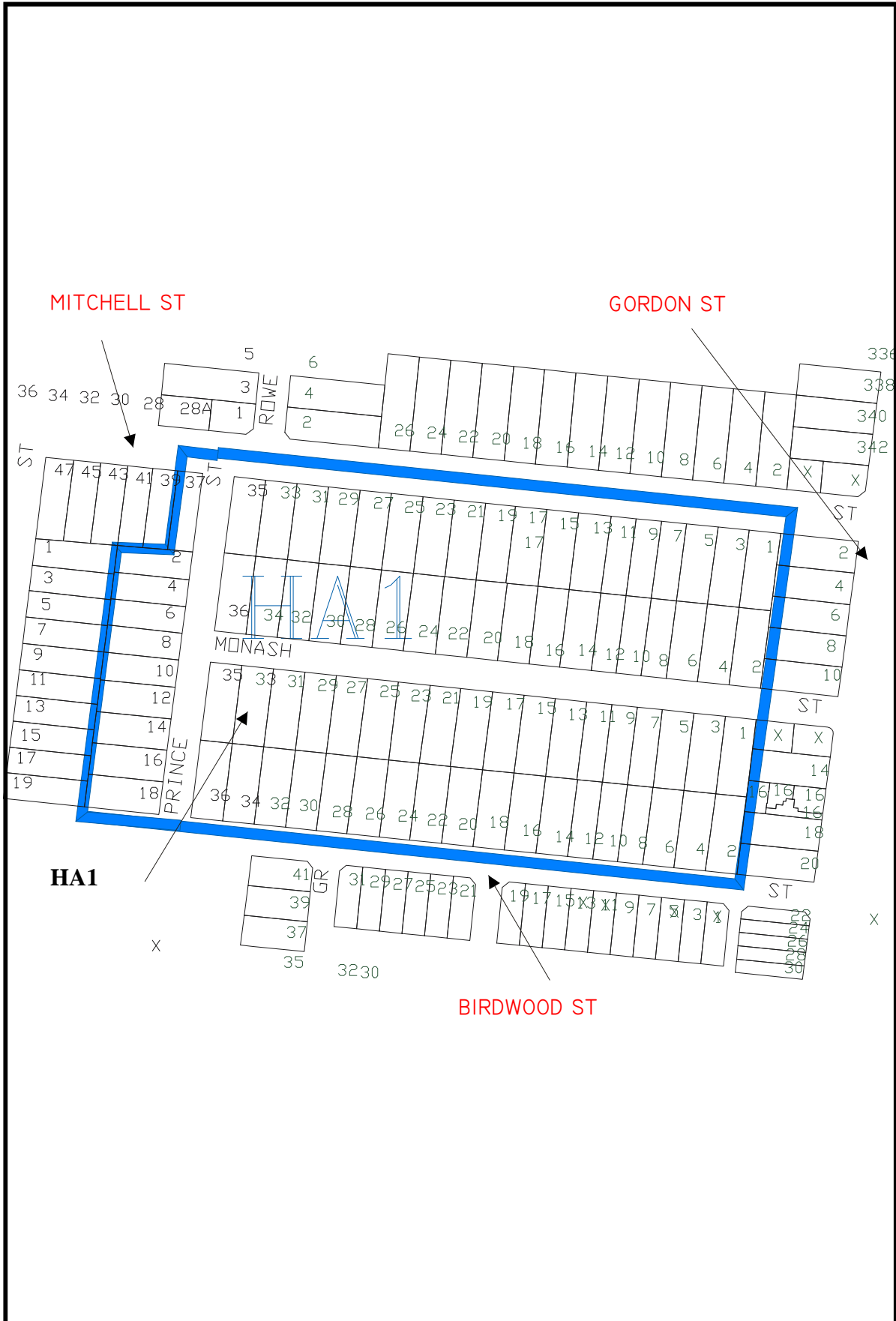
### References

Butler, 1989, City of Footscray Urban Conservation Study, Vol.3:10  
Barnard, 2000, Historic Places Review Environmental History City of Maribyrnong  
Victorian Titles Office (VTO)  
'Victorian Year Book' (VYB)  
R Cocks, 2000, notes that J Johnstone may have been the Footscray mayor of the time.  
VPRO Footscray Council Committee Minutes (FCCM)

## Data recording

Assessed By:

Assessed Date:



HA 1: War Service Home precinct