

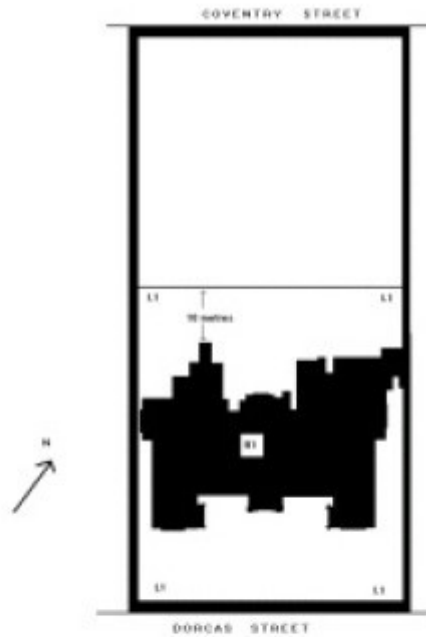
# PRIMARY SCHOOL NO.1253



PRIMARY SCHOOL NO.  
1253 SOHE 2008



1 primary school number  
1253 dorcas street south  
melbourne front view  
dec1984



primary school number 1253 dorcas street south melbourne plan

## Location

284 DORCAS STREET SOUTH MELBOURNE, PORT PHILLIP CITY

## Municipality

PORT PHILLIP CITY

## **Level of significance**

Registered

## **Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number**

H1346

## **Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO111

## **VHR Registration**

August 20, 1982

## **Amendment to Registration**

September 18, 1997

## **Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Register

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## **Statement of Significance**

Last updated on - May 13, 1999

What is significant?

The Dorcas Street Primary School is a Tudor style, two-storey, polychrome brick building in pavilion form. The school was constructed in 1880 to a design by architect Charles Webb, as a result of winning a competition, and was originally intended to accommodate over 1000 pupils. Minor additions were made to the rear of the building to provide a caretaker's residence, cloak room and store in 1924, however the school remains basically intact. The school closed at the end of the school year in 1996.

How is it significant?

The Dorcas Street Primary School is of historical and architectural significance to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Dorcas Street Primary School is historically important as a representative example of the first group of large schools constructed in Victoria after the Education Act of 1872. The expansion of Victoria's education system put tremendous pressure on authorities who had to cater for very large number of children. As a result of this development, there was an enormous increase in the number of schools constructed between 1874 and 1875. The Dorcas Street Primary School illustrates Victoria's confidence and prosperity in the years following the goldrushes when working class children of the inner suburbs were provided with elaborately designed and spacious schools, similar to private schools built for the wealthy.

The Dorcas Street Primary School is architecturally significant as the only known example of a substantially intact school designed by the important Melbourne architect Charles Webb. As a competition school, Dorcas Street was influential on the quality and style of later urban and country schools.

The Dorcas Street Primary School is of architectural significance as one of the most intact and successful examples of the Tudor Gothic style applied to a school and executed in polychromatic brickwork.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

Nil

Construction dates	1880,
Architect/Designer	Webb, Charles,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	1040
Property Number	

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## History

Contextual History:History of Place:

By the late 1870s South Melbourne was clearly established as a manufacturing area, employing large numbers of workers. In 1881 there were 59 factories in South Melbourne employing more than 2000 workers. By 1891 there were 4646 workers in 1891 representing 32.8 per cent of the suburbs workforce. 1 The workers needed to live close to their place of work because of long working hours and lack of accessible and affordable public transport. The resultant need for schools for workers' children is shown by the existence of large schools for up to 1000 children each at Eastern Road, City Road and Dorcas Street. Dorcas Street was designed for 1080 children.

The Dorcas Street school grew out of two earlier adjoining schools. One of these was a Presbyterian school in Bank Street, no. 225 and a Wesleyan school in Dorcas Street, no. 233, both founded in 1854. These were amalgamated in July 1873, following the passing of the 1872 Education Act.

In August 1877 the Education Department purchased a little over an acre of land from the Emerald Hill Town Council for £4000. It adjoined the railway station and had a frontage of 151 feet to Dorcas Street and a depth of 330 feet back to Coventry Street, In February 1878, an additional strip of adjoining land , 9 feet X 330 feet was bought for £240.

The design of the Dorcas Street Primary School was the result of a competition held in 1873 for large schools for the Education Department.

The architect of Dorcas Street South Melbourne Primary School was Charles Webb. This was designed in 1873 but not carried out until 1880. Webb also designed Yarra Park Primary School no. 1406 (1874) which is a simpler design but less intact than Dorcas Street. Webb was the architect for a number of important Melbourne buildings including the second stage of Glass Terrace, Fitzroy (1856), Royal Arcade (1869), the South Melbourne Town Hall (1880), and the Windsor Hotel (1883-8).

When the Education Act of 1872 introduced "free, compulsory and secular " education into Victoria, its implementation required accommodation for very large numbers of children. It was estimated in 1865 that there were 170,000 children in Victoria between the ages of three and fifteen, eligible for school admission. In response to this need, buildings for school use were constructed, leased and purchased. Buildings previously used for Common Schools were taken over by the Education Department. The government assumed total responsibility for the designing and building of all new schools. 3 The Education Department appointed Henry Bastow as architect in charge of building works for schools. Bastow had previously worked as architect and engineer in the Victorian Railways Department. Bastow's staff supervised the construction of all schools and designed many themselves.

The influence of Great Britain's experience in the provision of education, as in other areas of colonial life, was evident in the way the authorities sought ideas for school building design. Standard plans for small schools produced by the English Committee of Council on Education (Privy Council) had been the source for earlier school designs and these continued to be used. For larger schools, the advice of the London School Board was sought and plans for eight schools were sent to Melbourne by E. R. Robson, architect to the London School Board and the author of the authoritative text, *School Architecture* , published in 1874. However these plans were not used directly and in 1873 the Minister of Education, James Wilberforce Stephen, invited local architects to submit designs for large schools.4 There were three categories for which designs were sought. The first was for one thousand children on one floor, the second for one thousand children on two floors and the third was for five hundred children.

The competition schools were judged by architects Leonard Terry and Charles Webb. All the successful architects and also the adjudicators were given commissions for town schools. Thirteen competition schools were built in Melbourne between 1874 and 1881. They were to be constructed in brick with a slate roof, paying particular attention to ventilation and allowing for the possibility of future extension. 5 It is significant that although advice from England was sought, the calibre of the local architects was recognised by the Education Department for the most important large urban schools of the 1870s.

## COMPARISON

The Historic Government Schools Survey has identified a group of schools in the category 3.1 Early Education Department (1873-1883) Competition Schools. Within this group, Dorcas Street South Melbourne Primary School is recommended to be added to the Heritage Register.

There are 13 schools in this group. Each of these was designed by a prominent Melbourne architect or architectural partnership. Of these Brighton Street, Richmond No. 1396 (1874) by Wharton and Vickers has been demolished. Richmond Central No. 1567 (1877) by George Wharton was largely demolished and the remainder was altered beyond recognition by Public Works Department Chief Architect Percy Everett in 1954 to provide Richmond Girls High School No. 8268.

Brighton No. 1542 (1875) by Terry and Oakden has been much altered by the removal of the central section and additions at each end. It was not recommended in the Historic Government Schools Study for addition to the

Heritage Register.

Albert Park No. 1181 (1874) by M. Schneider is on the Government Buildings Register and has been recommended in the Historic Government Schools Study for addition to the Heritage Register.

The design of Buninyong No. 1270 (1874) by W.H. Ellerker was the prototype for 16 other schools. It has been altered in that windows have been changed, the slate roof replaced with tiles and the bell-cote removed. However, it has been recommended in the Historic Government Schools Study for addition to the Heritage Register.

Two other Ellerker designs, at Lee Street, North Carlton No. 1252 (1878) and at Gold Street, Clifton Hill (1874) are extant. Lee Street is on the Government Buildings Register and has been recommended in the Historic Government Schools Study for addition to the Heritage Register. The brickwork has been rendered and painted and there are minor additions at the rear. The site is also important for the remains of the Carlton Stockade, of which cells remain. The Gold Street building appears intact. Its design has influenced at least one other school plan. It is also on the Government Buildings Register and has been recommended in the Historic Government Schools Study for addition to the Heritage Register.

The former Faraday Street Carlton Primary school No. 112 (1876-77) by Reed and Barnes has had windows altered and some internal changes but is relatively intact. It is on the Government Buildings Register and has been recommended in the Historic Government Schools Study for addition to the Heritage Register.

Hawksburn No. 1467 (1874) by Crouch and Wilson was constructed in red brick with a bellcote. It is only one of six schools with fixed wall blackboards. It is on the Government Buildings Register and has been recommended in the Historic Government Schools Study for addition to the Heritage Register.

Errol Street, North Melbourne No. 1402 was designed by Wharton and Vickers. It was remodelled in 1916 and has had major alterations. It is on the Government Buildings Register but has not been recommended in the Historic Government Schools Study for addition to the Heritage Register. It should be protected under the Local Planning Scheme.

King Street, West Melbourne No. 1685 (1876) was designed by Terry and Oakden, It has been altered. It is on the Government Buildings Register . The Historic Government Schools Study has so far made no recommendation as to whether it should be transferred to the Heritage Register.

Yarra Park No. 1406 (1874) was also designed by Charles Webb, but is a simpler design than Dorcas Street and is also less intact. An addition was made in 1877 and there are extensive later alterations. It has recently undergone a change of use and has been remodelled into apartments. It is on the Heritage Register.

To summarise, of the thirteen, one has been demolished, one has been almost demolished, one is substantially altered, one is on the Heritage Register, seven are on the Government Buildings Register. and two more is recommended in the Historic Government Schools Study for addition to the Heritage Register. Of the seven on the Government Buildings Register, it is suggested that at least one and possibly two should be removed but should be protected under the Local Planning Scheme. This level of protection for the Competition Schools is not inappropriate for such a significant group , designed by highly talented architects and constructed at a crucial period in the history of Victorian education.

## **Extent of Registration**

1. All the building marked B1 on Diagram 603601 held by the Executive Director.
2. All the land marked L1 on Diagram 603601 held by the Executive Director, being the land extending to the title boundaries on the north-east, south-east and south-west sides of the building and 10 metres north-west from the rear of the building.

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*