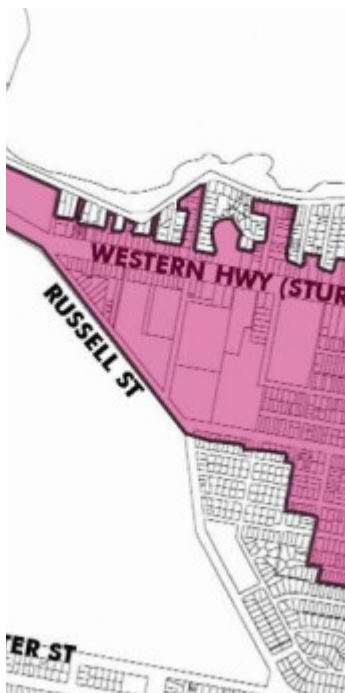

West Ballarat Precinct



WEST BALLARAT
HERITAGE PRECINCT.jpg

Location

STURT STREET, LAKE WENDOUREE, BALLARAT CITY

Municipality

BALLARAT CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO164

Heritage Listing

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 7, 2025

What is significant?

How is it significant?

Why is it significant?

The West Ballarat Precinct is **historically** significant at a **LOCAL** level (AHC criteria A.4 and H.1).

(a) The place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history;

(b)

(a3) Importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of built landscapes and cultural features;

(a4) & (h1) Importance for association with events, developments, cultural phases and individuals which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the region.

The urban development and character of the Precinct, founded in 1850s, has historic significance for its association with a number of significant activities that links together some of the main themes in the historical, social and architectural development of Ballarat.

The Precinct is historically significant for its associations with underground quartz mining that was sustained over a long period of time. The importance of the late expansion of quartz gold mining on the basalt plateau, in particular the rich Inkerman Lead that wound its way through the precinct and was the target of a variety of mining companies from the late 1850s onwards is fundamental to understanding the pattern of development in the area.

The Precinct is historically important as an early example of a highly desirable mid 19th- to mid 20th century goldfields residential area. It was surveyed by the colonial Government Surveyor W.S. Urquhart in late 1851. Its historic values are associated with the rectilinear street layout pattern which reflects typical 19th century geometric neoclassical planning style based on public order. While the street pattern in Ballarat was the primary focus of city development, in this area a number of individual buildings have become hallmark features of Ballarat. Sturt Street, part of the former cattle stock route between Geelong and Adelaide, forms the back bone of the Precinct. It was one of the earliest roads to have been surveyed in Ballarat. Its grandeur and scale moderates the form and structure of the Precinct and provides the setting for many prestigious institutions in the city. Sturt Street has become an elegant boulevard, enhanced by a ceremonial approach to its design that is defined by four avenues of exotic street trees that line the central median strip and service roads. The Sturt Street boulevard is the focus of city design in this area as the formal western gateway to the centre of the city, and to the east, it links with the commemorative Ballarat Avenue of Honour, where between 1917 and 1921, over 3,000 trees were planted along the Western Highway for 22km.

The availability of substantial crown allotments and vacant former mining sites attracted many prominent educational and religious institutions to the area towards the late 19th century as well as private residential speculative subdivisions during the 20th century. The impressive nature of these developments that were mostly designed by leading Ballarat architects, have become important individual landmark symbols of the town. They illustrate the continued prosperity and progress of the gold mining city of Ballarat throughout the 19th and 20th century, in contrast with many other Victorian 19th century gold mining areas.

The Precinct is important as it demonstrates the lasting continuity of civic pride and urban beautification schemes that had defined the 19th century structure of the city. This is illustrated by major avenue plantings, and infrastructure development such as the extensive network of significantly intact bluestone channel drains, gutters and kerbs from the 1880s. The combined works contribute to the creation of a stately provincial City with magnificent wide thoroughfares, tree-lined avenues, parks, gardens and substantial educational institutions.

The Precinct's reputation for a better class of housing was encouraged by the introduction in 1887 of a horse drawn tram service along Sturt Street as far as Lake Wendouree, linking the central business area with outlying residential pockets. Improved access promoted the attractiveness of the area for the successful merchants and business people, who had begun to establish separate residences from their places of work in central Ballarat. Many of the residences in the area were designed by leading Ballarat architects.

The West Ballarat Precinct is **aesthetically and architecturally** significant at a **LOCAL** level (AHC criteria D.2, E.1 and F.1).

(d) its importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of: (i) a class of Australia's Cultural places; or (ii) a class of Australia's cultural environments (including way of life, custom, process, land-use, function, design or technique;.

(e) its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group;

(f) its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative design or artistic excellence, or technical achievement at a particular period.

The Precinct is important for its outstanding collection of high quality denominational schools and associated buildings. They demonstrate a way of life and priorities of the gold rush citizens on which the reputation of Ballarat as a provincial city which excelled in educational institutions was founded. The size, architectural achievement and stability of these schools also indicate the strength and influence of the Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and Anglican communities in the early nineteenth century.

The collection of buildings includes the first convent of the Loreto nuns in Australia, with the establishment of Loreto School in 1875. The development of the Bishop's Palace, built in 1876 as the home of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of the Ballarat Diocese. The construction of St. Patrick's College designed by Architects Tappin, Gilbert and Dennehy in 1889, the Ballarat and Clarendon College built in 1912 as well as the present Pleasant Street Primary School. The precinct contains three churches, the former St Cuthbert's Presbyterian Church (1911) and former Pleasant Street Wesleyan Church (c.1867) and the architecturally outstanding Spanish Mission Style Catholic Church, St Theresa of the Little Flower, in Wendouree Parade (1938).

The Precinct is architecturally important for its small groups of private residential development which consist of a wide variety of substantially intact residential buildings of outstanding architectural quality that are associated with Victorian, Federation and Inter-War eras.

Examples include development in Tennis Street which was laid out in 1888 and consolidated in the 1930s, Queen Victoria Street (between Pleasant Street South and Malakoff Street) laid out in 1889, and Dawson Avenue laid out in 1894. Of particular architectural and aesthetic importance for their rarity value is the development in the western section of the Precinct, which includes a fine collection of Inter-War residences houses designed by local architectural firms including Richards, Coburn and Richards, and H.L. Coburn. These residences are of high integrity and condition and are important to the character of Ballarat. The developments occurred during the early 1920s and 1930s and include construction of houses along the north side of Sturt Street West between Gillies Street and Hamilton Avenue and Crocker Street in 1921, and on the south side of Sturt Street, west of Alfred Street in 1927 as well as adjacent land in the triangle between Sturt and Russell Streets, but individual examples are also scattered throughout the area.

The twentieth century residential developments found within the Precinct are examples of interwar prosperity in what was a growing provincial city. The harmony of colour and tone created by the predominate use of local clay textured bricks and red roof tiles, as well as individual interest provided by localized idiosyncratic detail and decoration of the residences form homogenous streetscapes of considerable aesthetic appeal. Many of the houses tend to be substantial brick residences, set in large mature gardens with rear garages. The houses are one and two storeys high, generally modeled on the English Domestic Revival style and Spanish Mission architecture of the mid 20th century with a notable absence of other architectural styles, such as American styled California Bungalow. Today these houses give us an indication of the prosperity of sections of the Ballarat community in the interwar years during periods of economic depression. While, to the south east of the Precinct, a defining factor of the urban fabric are the relatively narrow and short streets, the small allotments, scale, size and set backs and greater mix of residential architectural styles, which together with the narrow sealed pavements create distinctive changing internal streetscape views, which are unusual in Ballarat.

The Precinct has aesthetic significance for its outstanding visual qualities of its setting, urban layout and architecture. The important visual qualities reflect the historical, cultural and architectural development of the Precinct, and contribute to the contextual setting of Ballarat.

The important visual qualities of the Precinct are also enhanced by the street landscape design and layout that has contributed to the appearance of a gracious provincial City. These streetscape features include the tree-lined avenues, the soft landscaping of the gravel/grass road shoulders, turf nature strips and asphalt footpaths; the extensive network of bluestone drains, the extensive areas of grassed and landscaped public and private open space including the school grounds, parks, gardens with their mature canopy trees, all contribute to the outstanding wide thoroughfares and residential streets.

Other important aesthetic qualities include a variety of significant individual urban landmarks that stand out from the generally contextual appearance of the majority of buildings. A number of these individual buildings can be seen from outside of the Precinct such as the churches; the various educational institutions; the City Oval with its ornate grandstand and the mullock heap near the corner of Russell Street and Alfred Street South.

The West Ballarat Precinct is **scientifically** significant at a **LOCAL** level (AHC criteria F.1).

(c) its potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's natural or cultural history.

The Precinct is of importance for contributing to a history of the infrastructure development of West Ballarat, as identified by the extensive network of significantly intact bluestone channels, gutters and kerbs.

The West Ballarat Precinct is **socially** significant at a **LOCAL** level (AHC criteria G.1).

(g) the place's strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

The Precinct is recognized and highly valued by the local community for residential, educational, religious, and recreational reasons. The City Oval, home to the Ballarat Football Club and including the grandstand, tennis and croquets clubs, is of considerable social significance. It was originally the site of the Royal Saxon Company's mine and has been used for recreational activities since the 1850s.

Hermes Number 140661

Property Number

Physical Description 1

The West Ballarat Precinct is characterised by a heterogeneous combination of substantially intact residential buildings constructed generally from the 1870s to the 1940s, and by a notable collection of educational and cultural/community buildings constructed from the 1860s onwards. Almost all of the buildings in the precinct are individually significant or contributory. The precinct is also characterised by the formal layout and mature tree plantings of Sturt Street, by other notable mature street tree plantings throughout the precinct, and by extensive areas of grassed and landscaped public and private open space including City Oval, school grounds, and many mature private gardens. Furthermore, the precinct is specially distinguished by the substantial integrity of its original engineering infrastructure, particularly as identified by the extensive network of spoon drain channels constructed of bluestone pitchers.

The precinct is bounded on the east by Pleasant Street North and South (from Wendouree Parade to just south of Queen Victoria Street), and is terminated at its westernmost edge by Gillies Street. Running between Pleasant Street and Gillies Street, Sturt Street provides a distinctive east-west oriented axis in the northern half of the precinct, with minor streets running off it, predominantly north towards Lake Wendouree. Along much of the north side of Sturt Street the precinct is effectively as deep as the facing allotments but extends at various locations, particularly along Alfred and Service Streets, to include a number of notable residences facing Wendouree Parade. At the western end of Sturt Street, the 1920s subdivision centred on Crocker Street forms one of the most homogeneous residential sections of the precinct and is bordered to the north by Carlton Street and the Botanic Gardens, and to the east by Wendouree Parade.

The south-west edge of the precinct is bordered by Victoria Park (a separate heritage precinct in itself) and Russell Street (from Sturt Street to just south of Eyre Street). Eyre Street provides a dominant east-west axis in the southern half of the precinct, with the western section forming part of the southern boundary of the precinct (to the depth of the allotments on the south side). Along the eastern section of Eyre Street, ending at Pleasant Street South, the precinct extends further south along minor roads with parts of Murray and Malakoff Streets forming the western boundary in this area. The southernmost boundary of the precinct is formed by the southern edge of the right-of-way to the south of Queen Victoria Street.

The West Ballarat precinct is south of Sturt Street and extends from Russell Street to Queen Victoria and Pleasant Streets. The history of the West Ballarat precinct is associated with the mining, residential, educational and religious themes in Ballarat's history.

The precinct was first surveyed in 1851 and the first private land sales occurred in July 1856. Sturt, Eyre, Pleasant, Mair, Russell, Carlton and Alfred Streets were laid out in 1851. Substantial residential development occurred in Ballarat in the 1860's- 1870's, however, residential growth in this precinct occurred much later. This may be due to the continuing presence of deep lead mining, the large size of the initial crown allotments. Additional roads were laid out in the 1870's and by 1881, work began on installing the bluestone drainage channels in Sturt Street, between Gillies and Pleasant Street and street tree planting between Pleasant and Alfred Streets. In 1887, the horse drawn tram service was established along Sturt Street as far as Lake Wendouree, linking the central business area with outlying residential pockets. This spurred development in West Ballarat, which built on the precinct's reputation for a better class of housing, attracting businessmen and merchants. Further residential subdivisions occurred during the inter war period north and south of Sturt Street, forming lots in Croker and Carlton Street and Hamilton Avenue.

The precinct also contains some of Ballarat's key educational institutions. Their beginnings commenced during the gold rush. The size and stability of the schools show the strength and influence of religious communities in the early nineteenth century and are an indication of the priorities and attitudes of the gold rush citizens. The success of the schools was consolidated with the withdrawal of state aid from church run schools in the 1880's. The schools offered boarding facilities as a means of assisting funding and came to play an important role in the western district. No secondary state school existed in Ballarat at this time.

The precinct also includes a number of recreational facilities that had an important role in the precinct. The City Oval is the site of the Royal Saxon Company's mine. The grandstand erected in 1898 is of high historical and architectural significance and the complex now encompasses the City Oval Bowling Club and the Croquet City club. Other croquet clubs and tennis facilities were nearby.

The precinct is important as it retains a high number of individually significant detached Victorian, Federation and Interwar era residences. Typically, residential buildings are single storey in the southern part of the precinct or predominantly 1 ½ to 2 storey in the northern part of the precinct. Houses feature hipped and/or gabled roofs, clad with corrugated iron, Marseilles pattern terracotta tiles or slate, horizontal weatherboard or brick, unpainted chimneys, eaves, projecting verandahs or porches, decorative detailing, timber doors and windows, with some original metal framed windows in inter war homes. The Victorian, Federation and Inter war educational and cultural/community buildings are generally more than one storey in height, a dominant scale, brick, with tile, slate or galvanised iron roof cladding, timber framed windows and generally complex and individual detailing and decoration.

The precinct also features a number of key landmarks and views including the boulevard form of Sturt and Pleasant Streets, to the Arch of Victory, Lake Wendouree, Victoria Park, Western Oval, the churches and educational institutions, the City Oval grandstand and its landscaped setting and the mullock heap situated on the department defence land in Russell street.

Mature and juvenile street tree planting and gardens in private residences, the grass median strips, gravel/grass road and pockets of open space in the school grounds and Department of Defence land are important features of the precinct. Together, these gardens and open space compliment the dominant garden setting of the precinct. Some other features are the early timber tram shelters along Sturt Street and the wrought iron drain guard railings and the bluestone kerb and channelling throughout the precinct.

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/>