

## Former Prahran, South Yarra and Toorak Creche



Prahran Creche



Prahran Creche

### Location

17 Princes Close Prahran, STONNINGTON CITY

### Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

### Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

### Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO420

### Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - March 22, 2011

#### *What is significant?*

The former Prahran, South Yarra and Toorak Crèche ('Prahran Creche'), 17 Princes Close, Prahran. This two-storey red brick building of 1913 has roughcast render accents and a decorative tiled roof. The entrance is on the side, while the facade is ornamented with decorative aprons to the ground-floor windows and oriels with leadlights above. There is an impressive mature Sycamore tree in the rear yard.

The upper-storey extension at the rear and the L-shaped wing on the east side of the site are not significant.

### *How is it significant?*

The Prahran Crèche is of regional significance historically, architecturally and socially to metropolitan Melbourne.

### *Why is it significant?*

The Prahran Crèche is historically significant for its association with the nascent infant welfare movement in the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries. It was an innovative response to the needs of working women and their children. The establishment and operation of the creche by middle and upper class women illustrates the philanthropic thinking of the time with regard to working class women and their children. The Prahran Crèche was the second to be opened in metropolitan Melbourne (the first in the City of Stonnington), and the first in metropolitan Melbourne to have purpose-built premises. It has been operating in the same location since 1890. (Criteria A & B)

The 1913 building itself is architecturally significant as the first purpose-built crèche or day nursery constructed in metropolitan Melbourne. The Prahran Crèche is representative of an early twentieth century welfare institution. Its architectural form, with simple lines and domestic-type finishes and detailing which give a homely character to an institutional building meant to serve young children. (Criterion D)

Historically for its associations with the two honorary architects: Ernest H Willis and William Calder. Willis was a Prahran local, who designed a number of local landmark buildings, including the Prahran Club, Prahran Mechanics' Institute, Fawkner Mansions - early flats, and the Prahran Creche. He was also very involved in local political and community organisations. He was a member of the Prahran City Council (1908-20), serving as Mayor in 1913-14 and 1918-19. William Calder was the Prahran Council engineer and building surveyor from 1897 to 1913. He is best known in his role as chairman of the Country Roads Board, following his time at Prahran. The Calder Highway is named after him. (Criterion H)

The Prahran Crèche is of social significance for its continuous use as a local centre for child care and welfare since 1890 in this location and since 1913 in the present building. Countless local residents have entrusted their children to this crèche, or been cared in it themselves, leading to high recognition of the facility to the local community. (Criterion G)

Heritage Study/Consultant	Stonnington - Churches and Halls in the City of Stonnington - Heritage Citations Project 2010, Context Pty Ltd, 2010;
Construction dates	1890,
Architect/Designer	Willis, Ernest,
Other Names	Prahran, South Yarra and Toorak Crèche Society, former,
Hermes Number	162622
Property Number	

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## **Historical Australian Themes**

Themes from *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History*, 2006:

10.3 Helping other people

10.3.1 Neglected children and 'fallen' women

10.3.6 Philanthropists and charity workers

## **Physical Description 1**

The Prahran Crèche is set at the corner of Little Chapel Street and Princes Close, and backs onto Princes Gardens in Prahran. It is a two-storey building situated tight up at the front (south) property boundary, set back from Lt Chapel St. There is a modern, single-storey L-shaped wing which encloses the west side of the property.

The two-storey building has red brick walls and plinth, with bands of roughcast render above the ground and first floors. The roof is a gabled hip covered in Marseille tiles with decorative cresting. The eaves are open with exposed rafter ends. The front gablet has a louvered vent within it and a simple terracotta finial. A red-brick chimney, decorated with a brick stringcourse and narrow corbel at the top, is located on the west side. The building is entered on the east side, through an arched opening.

The facade is articulated with two pairs of windows. At the ground floor are two pairs of double-hung sash windows with pronounced lintels and decorative render aprons below the sills. Above them are two rectangular oriel windows with supporting brackets overlapping the lintels of the windows below. The oriels are rendered at the bottom, in continuation of the roughcast band dividing the two floors. Each has four sash windows with rectangular leadlights (green and purple rectangular lights). Above the watercourse, at the centre of the facade, is a bluestone foundation stone noting the date, architect, builder and patrons. In the render band between the oriel windows is raised lettering reading: CRECHE OR DAY NURSERY. It is not visible on the c1913 photo of the crèche held at the Stonnington History Centre, so appears to be a later alteration, probably from c1948 when the council took over maintenance and operation of the facility.

The red brick with render bands continue on the east and west elevations, though the windows are simple single double-hung sashes. There was once a fire door at first floor level on the east elevation, but the door has been replaced and the timber escape stairs and landing removed.

It is apparent that the building originally had a single-storey rear section, which has been extended upward to match the first floor level at the front of the building. The same roofline and materials were used for this upper-storey extension, but details such as the brick type and vents make it apparent upon close inspection that it is a late 20th-century addition. The L-shaped wing to the west of the 1913 building is also a late 20th-century addition.

Apart from the rear extension, and the removal of the fire stairs, the building is highly intact. The only other external alterations noted are the rendering of the area around the arched entrance, and the installation of French doors at the rear of the building.

In the rear yard of the crèche is a large and mature Sycamore tree.

*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/>*