

# FOOTSCRAY PSYCHIATRIC CENTRE



Fmr Psychiatric Hospital -  
Footscray.jpg



IMG 5948



East elevation



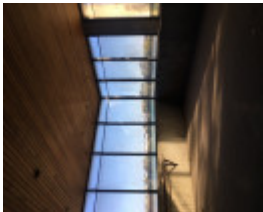
Concrete panels



Second floor



IMG 5921



Second floor



IMG 5938

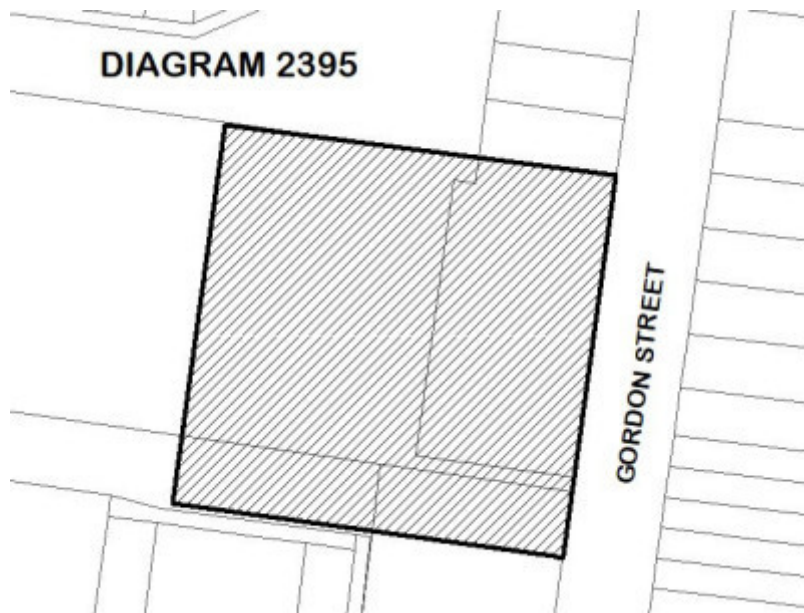


Diagram 2395

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### **Location**

160 GORDON STREET FOOTSCRAY, MARIBYRNONG CITY

### **Municipality**

MARIBYRNONG CITY

### **Level of significance**

Registered

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

H2395

### **VHR Registration**

May 28, 2020

### **Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Register

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### **Statement of Significance**

Last updated on - January 11, 2024

### **What is significant?**

The Footscray Psychiatric Centre (exterior and interiors), paving, ramps, stairs and landscaping immediately surrounding the building as well as fixtures and fittings attached to the building at the time of registration.

### **How is it significant?**

The Footscray Psychiatric Centre is of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

#### **Criterion A**

Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

#### **Criterion D**

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

### **Why is it significant?**

The Footscray Psychiatric Centre is historically significant as an important example of a facility that emerged from changes in the understanding and treatment of mental illness in the late twentieth century. It demonstrates this phase, known as deinstitutionalisation, which was characterised by a move away from treatment in large psychiatric hospitals, towards treatment within the community. This is evident in the physical fabric of Footscray Psychiatric Centre, through its comparatively small size, location separate from but adjacent to an existing public hospital and its internal layout of rooms designed for short residential stays, treatment and day-to-day activities. The phase of deinstitutionalisation is of historical importance to the State of Victoria, having had a profound effect on how mental illness is understood and treated. [Criterion A]

The Footscray Psychiatric Centre is architecturally significant as a notable example of a community mental health facility. It was purpose built to perform this function and demonstrates the principal characteristics of the class through its size, siting and internal layout. It is also architecturally significant for its dramatic Brutalist design which exhibits the principal characteristics of the style, including use of textured concrete, exterior expression of interior features and highlighting of building services and paths of travel. It is noteworthy for its particularly monolithic interpretation of the style. It is an important example of the use of the Brutalist style in Victoria and a key example of the employment of the style by the Victorian Public Works Department for a major institutional work. [Criterion D]

## **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:**

### General conditions

Exemptions from the need for a permit under the Act for categories of works and activities that may be carried out in relation to places and objects in the Register can be granted at the time of registration (under s.49(3) of the Heritage Act). Exemptions from the need for a permit under the Act for categories of works and activities in relation to places and objects can also be applied for and granted after registration (under s.92 of the Heritage Act).

#### *General Condition 1*

All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.

#### *General Condition 2*

Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible.

#### *General Condition 3*

All works should ideally be informed by Conservation Management Plans prepared for the place. The Executive Director is not bound by any Conservation Management Plan, and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Conservation Management Plan.

#### *General Condition 4*

Nothing in this determination prevents the Heritage Council from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

#### *General Condition 5*

Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the relevant responsible authority, where applicable.

Under s.49(3) of the Heritage Act 2017 the Heritage Council may include in its determination categories of works or activities which may be carried out in relation to the place or object without the need for a permit under Part 5 of the Act, if the Heritage Council considers that the works or activities would not harm the cultural heritage significance of the place or object. The following permit exemptions are not considered to cause harm to the cultural heritage significance of the Footscray Psychiatric Centre.

Categories of works and activities that may be carried out in relation to the Place without the need for a permit under the Act

#### *Exterior*

The following works do not require a permit provided they do not harm the cultural heritage significance of the place.

- Minor patching, repair and maintenance which replaces like with like without large-scale removal of or damage to the existing fabric or the large-scale introduction of new materials. Repairs must maximise protection and retention of fabric and include the conservation of existing details or elements. Any new materials used for repair must not exacerbate the decay of existing fabric due to chemical incompatibility, obscure existing fabric or limit access to existing fabric for future maintenance.
- Localised repairs and maintenance to the roof to prevent ingress of water.
- Works to, or removal of, the 1990s verandah on the south elevation except where it intersects with the 1970s fabric
- Removal of graffiti from concrete elements via non-abrasive methods. No high-pressure hoses or wire brushes etc should be used.
- Removal of graffiti from metal elements via non-corrosive methods.
- Removal of or maintenance to existing signage attached to building.
- Preparation and painting of currently painted surfaces in the same colour, finish and paint type provided that

preparation or painting does not remove evidence of earlier paint schemes.

- Maintenance, replacement or removal of existing heating, ventilation and air conditioning plant and making good.
- Maintenance, replacement or removal of existing services such as cabling, pipe work, ducting, plumbing (including downpipes), wiring, security lighting, antennae, aerials and fire services that use existing routes, conduits, voids or attachment points and making good, and does not involve damage to or the removal of significant fabric.
- Works and activities related to control of birds and vermin.

#### *Interior*

The following works do not require a permit provided they do not harm the cultural heritage significance of the place.

- Installation, removal or replacement of safety devices such as detectors, alarms, emergency lights, exit signs, luminaires and the like.
- Preparation and painting of currently painted surfaces in the same colour, finish and paint type provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of earlier paint or other decorative schemes. No stained or varnished timberwork is to be painted.
- Removal of paint from originally unpainted surfaces including ceilings, wall panelling, joinery, doors, architraves and skirtings by non-abrasive methods.
- Removal or replacement of existing services including cabling, plumbing, wiring and fire services that uses existing routes, conduits, voids or attachment points, and does not involve damage to or the removal of significant fabric.
- Repairs, refitting or rewiring lift cars, motors, equipment and the like.
- Works and activities related to control of birds and vermin.

#### *Public safety and security*

The following works do not require a permit provided they do not harm the cultural heritage significance of the place.

- General maintenance for the purposes of safety and security including the removal of broken glass, the temporary shuttering of windows and doors and covering of holes provided this work is reversible.
- The erection of temporary security fencing, scaffolding, hoardings, and security or surveillance systems to prevent unauthorised access or secure public safety.
- Works or activities, including emergency stabilisation, necessary to secure safety where a structure or part of a structure has been irreparably damaged or destabilised and poses a safety risk to its users or the public. If additional damage to significant fabric is required to stabilise and make safe, every attempt must be made to conserve and retain as much significant fabric as possible. The Executive Director, Heritage Victoria must be notified within seven days of the commencement of these works or activities.

#### *Landscaping*

- The following works do not require a permit provided they do not harm the cultural heritage significance of the place.
- Maintenance and repairs to existing roads, service roads, driveways and car parks.
- Installation, removal or maintenance of features required for car park operations such as bollards, speed humps, wheel stops and boom gates.
- Subsurface works involving the installation, removal or replacement of watering and drainage systems or other services provided there are no visible above ground elements. Landscaping, paving and other surface treatments are to be returned like for like on the completion of works.
- Erecting, repairing or replacing existing signage (directional signage, road signs, speed signs) and installing new signage which does not obscure heritage fabric. Note: Interpretive signage requires a permit.
- The processes of gardening, including mowing, hedge clipping, bedding displays, disease and weed control, maintenance of existing plants and replacement with similar species.
- Management and maintenance of trees including formative and remedial pruning, removal of deadwood and pest and disease control.
- Repair and maintenance of existing paving, gutters, paths, stairs and garden walls.
- Vegetation protection and management of possums and vermin.
- Clearing and maintenance of drains and gutters.

## Theme

### 8. Building community life

Construction dates 1974,

Heritage Act  
Categories Registered place,

Other Names Footscray Psychiatric Hospital, Former Psychiatric Hospital, Former Footscray Psychiatric Centre, Former Footscray Psychitric Hospital,

Hermes Number 199432

Property Number

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## History

### Mental health treatment in Victoria

In nineteenth-century Victoria, the response to mental illness was characterised by large asylums and hospitals, often removed from population centres. In the early twentieth century, modes of treatment and the nature of institutions changed but government support for services was intermittent. The response to mental illness shifted after the conclusion of World War II. Government responsibility and funding for mental health grew, and treatment within the community, rather than large psychiatric hospitals, gradually emerged as a preferred approach. This approach was aided by developments in pharmaceutical treatment, and the growing role of psychiatry. A different kind of institution was required for community-based treatment and smaller facilities emerged, providing outpatient and rehabilitation services alongside accommodation services for short-term stays. This phase, known as deinstitutionalisation, saw the number of patients in psychiatric hospitals reduced by a third between 1963 and 1973. It culminated in the closure of large psychiatric hospitals and other mental health facilities throughout the 1990s.

### The Mental Health Authority

After public criticisms of the Mental Health Department in the 1940s, the Victorian Government established an enquiry into the mental health system which found improvements were needed in many areas. In 1950, the new Mental Hygiene Authority Act was proclaimed and a new authority with responsibility for psychiatric hospitals was proposed. In 1952 the Mental Hygiene Authority was established and later renamed the Mental Health Authority. Its first Chairman was the prominent British psychiatrist Dr E. Cunningham Dax. Dr Dax was Chairman of the authority until 1969 and in that time ushered in major changes in the provision of mental health services in Victoria. The influence of Dr Dax has been recognised by the inclusion of the Cunningham Dax Collection in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H2201). Staff training, conditions and patient ratios were a focus of reform for the Mental Health Authority, alongside updating infrastructure and providing new facilities where people could access treatment with their community. The reduction of resident populations in larger and older hospitals was a key goal for the commission and one that was well underway by the 1970s. In 1975 the Health Commission was formed, and the Mental Health Authority was eventually integrated with the new body.

### Footscray Hospital

In 1920 a committee known as the Hospital Movement formed in the Footscray area to campaign for the establishment of a local public hospital. In c.1921 the committee raised £2500 from community funds to purchase the two-hectare site for the hospital. The Charities Board subsequently refused to grant permission to establish a hospital on the site. Around 1930, the Hospital Movement opted to instead open its own Outpatients' and Welfare

Centre on the site. In 1947 construction began on the new Footscray and District Hospital. On 27 June 1953 Lady Violet Brooks, wife of Governor Sir Dallas Brooks, officially opened the Hospital with 3,000 people in attendance. It was the first fully airconditioned hospital in Victoria and was lauded for its modern facilities. In 1972 it was renamed the Western General Hospital and went through a number of other name changes and amalgamations with other health services. In 2014 the hospital became known as Footscray Hospital again and remains part of the Western Health network.

## **Brutalist architecture**

The architectural style known as Brutalism emerged in Europe after the Second World War. The word Brutalism is drawn from the phrase 'beton brut' meaning raw concrete. Beton brut was first used in the 1950s by prominent Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier to describe his emerging approach to building design which favoured the honest use of construction materials, notably concrete, and the highlighting of building structures and services rather than hiding them. This approach to design and use of building materials became influential throughout Europe and internationally. The term Brutalism, or New Brutalism, was coined in England to describe this new approach to architecture that had both an ethical and aesthetic concern with the honest use of materials and social responsiveness at its core. Typically, Brutalist buildings were assertive, and featured powerful, blocky forms and were honest about their use, construction and materials. The style was a departure from the sleekness, lightness and minimalism of other strands of twentieth century design.

## **Brutalist architecture in Victoria**

Brutalist architecture first appeared in Australia in the 1960s. It was a style suited to institutional buildings, and the first examples appeared at university campuses. Throughout the 1960s, notable architect Robin Boyd advocated for the adoption of the style in Victoria and in 1968 designed the Brutalist influenced Menzies College at La Trobe University. Influential architects Kevin Borland, Graeme Gunn, Evan Walker and Daryl Jackson also adopted the style for major commissions. Borland and Jackson produced the notable Brutalist design for the Harold Holt Memorial Swimming Centre (VHR H0069), which was constructed in 1969. During the early 1970s, Brutalism became the style of choice for the union movement as evidenced by the Plumbers and Gasfitters Union Building (VHR H2307) and Clyde Cameron College (VHR H2192) and influential within the Public Works Department. The popularity of Brutalism diminished through the 1980s. It is considered a key architectural style of the twentieth century.

## **Public Works Department**

The Public Works Department was established in 1855 and was primarily responsible for the construction and maintenance of Victoria's major public works and buildings. Over its history its responsibilities changed but at various times encompassed the design, building and maintenance of roads and bridges, harbours, cemeteries, government accommodation and major public buildings including asylums. Many prominent architects worked within the Department, and by the late nineteenth century, architectural styles generally followed contemporary taste. The Public Works Department designed the Footscray Psychiatric Centre in the early 1970s, though it is unclear who the original architect(s) were. In December 1987, the Public Works Department was abolished and the Ministry of Housing and Construction was established in its place.

## **Footscray Psychiatric Centre**

Between the 1960s and the 1980s, the Mental Health Authority aimed to reduce resident populations in older and larger institutions, regionalise mental health services, and establish smaller centres where people could access treatment within their community. A series of community mental health centres were planned and built across Victoria in this era, and the establishment of an early treatment centre at Footscray was a priority for the Mental Health Authority. In 1973, the Commonwealth Mental Health and Related Service Assistance Program provided funding for eight new community mental health services in Victoria, including Footscray. The Footscray centre

was designed to provide early treatment facilities for the inner municipalities of Melbourne's western region. Construction began in 1974 and was largely completed by late 1976 but the facility did not commence operation until late 1977 with the opening of an outpatient clinic and community mental health service. Alterations and additions were made in the early 1990s to convert the ground floor to a high dependency unit. Beds were closed in the facility from 1993, with staff protesting the closures. The building ceased to function as a psychiatric centre in 1996 and acute psychiatric services were moved to other locations. The building is currently used for storage by Western Hospital.

#### KEY REFERENCES USED TO PREPARE ASSESSMENT

Newspaper articles and reports

Annual Report of the Mental Health Authority Victoria for the year ended 31 December 1977

Report of the Mental Health Authority for the year ended 31st December 1976

"Psychiatric Staff Act Over Closures" The Age 30 November 1993

"Staff Needed for New Psychiatric Centre" The Age 16 May 1992

Articles and books

Chesters, Janice (2005) "Deinstitutionalisation: an Unrealised Desire" Health Sociology Review

Goad, Philip (2009) Melbourne Architecture

Lewis, Milton (1988) Managing Madness: Psychiatry and Society in Australia 1788-1980

Robson, Belinda (2008) "From Mental Hygiene to Community Mental Health: Psychiatrists and Victorian Public Administration from the 1940s to 1990s" Provenance

Taylor, Jennifer (1986) Australian Architecture Since 1960

Websites

The People's Hospital: Tales from the surgeon's table, Remembering the first 60 years of Footscray Hospital

<http://www.whpeopleshospital.com.au/>

Celebrating 60 years of Footscray Hospital

[http://www.westernhealth.org.au/AboutUs/60\\_WHF\\_Anniversary/Pages/Footscray-2010-Present.aspx](http://www.westernhealth.org.au/AboutUs/60_WHF_Anniversary/Pages/Footscray-2010-Present.aspx)

## Extent of Registration

### Heritage Act 2017

#### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 2017**, I give notice under section 53 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by adding a place in the Heritage Register:

Number: H2395

Category: Registered Place

Place: Footscray Psychiatric Centre

Location: 160 Gordon Street, Footscray

Municipality: City of Maribyrnong

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 2395 encompassing part of Lot 1 on Title Plan 11529, part of Lot 1 on Title Plan 242851 and part of Crown Allotments 7B and 7C, Section 15, Parish of Cut Paw Paw.

28 May 2020

STEVEN AVERY

Executive Director



*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/>*