
Winbush House



50 and 2-50 Fletcher Street
Essendon

Location

50 Fletcher Street and 2/50 Fletcher Street ESSENDON, MOONEE VALLEY CITY

Municipality

MOONEE VALLEY CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO489

Heritage Listing

Moonee Valley City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - February 4, 2019

What is Significant?

Winbush House at 50 Fletcher Street, Essendon, is significant. The two-storey Moderne style house was designed by architect Harry Winbush as his home in 1936 (and extended to incorporate his office in 1959).

Significant fabric includes the:

original building form and roof form;

roof parapet with brick banding;

rendered and face brick walls including unpainted face brick details such as tapestry brick accents;

window and door joinery including the leaded glass window to stairwell;

stepped entry porch beneath a cantilevered concrete roof;

brick garage; and

low brick front fence.

The 1950s south extension and office to the north at 2/50 Fletcher Street, Essendon, are contributory elements of the place.

The garage door and metal palisade fence are not significant.

How is it significant?

Winbush House at 50 Fletcher Street, Essendon, is of local architectural (representative) and associative significance to the City of Moonee Valley.

Why is it significant?

Winbush House at 50 Fletcher Street, Essendon, is a fine representative example of the Moderne style applied to a tight suburban block. The mix of curved and planar surfaces typical of the style complements the contrast between the pale render and subtle touches of dark face brickwork. The house demonstrates the strong emphasis on the horizontal, typical of the style, created by the roof parapets with brick bandings, and the narrow brick bands around windows and doors reminiscent of quoining. The stepped entry beneath a concrete hood is of particular note. (Criterion D)

The house at 50 Fletcher Street and the office extension at 2/50 Fletcher Street are of historical significance for their association with the life and works of local architect Harry Winbush. Designed by Winbush in 1936, a year after his marriage, it served as the family home for the next fifty-four years. As he did not have to incorporate the taste of any client, it can be considered a pure expression of his style at this very active time in his career. The extensions to the north and south of the house illustrate his continued use of the property and its respectful adaptation to changing needs, particularly the northern wing where he moved his architectural practice. (Criterion H)

Heritage Study/Consultant Moonee Valley - Moonee Valley 2017 Heritage Study, Context, 2019;

Architect/Designer Winbush, Harry and Associates,

Hermes Number 202274

Property Number

Physical Description 1

50 Fletcher Street, Essendon, a highly distinctive interwar residence, sits at the north west of a prominent corner site fronting Fletcher Street, but having its longer facade to Nicholson Street. Both are wide thoroughfares: Fletcher Street with tramlines and Nicholson Street with central grassed median with street trees. The building is highly urban in its conception, abutting two street frontages and having only a minimal setback elsewhere.

Despite its address in Fletcher Street, the building primarily addresses Nicholson Street where it has its predominant frontage; the building turns its back on the neighbouring commercial / industrial development in Fletcher Street. The southern frontage of 50 Fletcher Street, created by a 1956 extension, is plain with a visible skillion roof, and its west facing walls (just visible above 52 Fletcher Street) are of utilitarian face red brickwork with parapet.

The ensemble has clear functional divisions with the main two-storey block on the corner counterpointed by a single-storey wing running north, with a subsidiary entry then a garage, and terminating in a utilitarian rear office wing. The central section of the building form is given prominence in the architectural composition through increased height and a gently sloping skillion roof behind a stepped parapet contrasting with an exposed skillion roof to the front corner wing and the lower heights of the rear wings, which have flat roofs concealed by parapets. The central single-storey and rear wings appear to have (or once had) trafficable roofs, with discreet tubular metal handrails.

The walls of 50 Fletcher Street are of rendered brick, painted white, over red/blue bricks forming a base (to window sill height) and relieved by contrasting bands of narrow face brick forming expressed quoining to doors, principal windows, and occasional emphasis of corners, as well as a row of face brick headers capping the parapet. Services such as vents and pipes are kept to a minimum and painted out to de-emphasise their impact against the sheer walls. Window openings are simple and largely unadorned (save for the brick quoins), with double-hung timber sash windows having intermediate horizontal glazing bars (emphasising the effect of the horizontal brick quoins) set within simple timber architraves; windows (except for the stairwell) are set close to the wall plane with little or no reveal, emphasising the sheer quality of the external surfaces. For principal rooms the windows are grouped in pairs or, as in the case of the front ground floor room, in a bay of three.

The main entry porch (to Nicholson Street) projects in plan form then narrows slightly in a series of stepped planes of varying height, integrating the porch to the main bulk of the building while at the same time giving it discreet prominence (heightened by the use of narrow brick quoins); the entry is further defined by a reveal adopting a Jazz Moderne (or Art Deco) zig-zag configuration. Connecting the main entry porch to the bulk of the building is a prominent curved corner with double-height window (presumably lighting a stairwell) with tall leadlight window of Art Deco design (featuring dominant vertical lines interplayed with circles and stylised foliage). A subsidiary entry further north in Nicholson Street is emphasised by a projecting corner window and an unusual four-panel timber door with herringbone panelling set within a face brick reveal. The external door openings have narrow projecting eaves formed of crisply detailed reinforced concrete.

An early (probably original) garage is incorporated in the main northern wing, repeating architectural details of the main residence and given emphasis by the use of a high panel of dark brickwork extending from the south pier of the garage door, although the evidence of painted brick capping suggests that the garage once had a lower parapet. It is likely that this parapet was raised when the rear, conjoined red brick office wing fronting Nicholson Street was erected in 1959. This rear section has an industrial appearance with utilitarian placement of high-level windows (of double-hung sashes similar to the residence) set below a rendered upper wall-cum-parapet; the rear wall (returning along a service lane) is of utilitarian red brick. Evidence from the brickwork and its pointing suggests a vehicular door in this rear wing has been recently in-filled. The two-storey skillion-roofed form at the south end was also a later extension (1959), designed by Winbush.

The resulting ensemble of forms is best appreciated from the intersection of Fletcher and Nicholson streets, where the foreshortening of the view and interplay of volumes-swelling here, receding there, dramatically punctuated by corner emphasis and the mix of curved and planar surfaces - complements the contrast between the white-painted render and subtle touches of dark face brickwork. The garden is extremely limited in size, constrained by the footprint of the two-storey wing and bounded by a brick (and recent metal palisade) fence on the corner street frontage; at the two entry doors on Nicholson Street small planter boxes are incorporated into the fence. The fence itself forms a major part of the urban design this property that in many parts is set close to the street, for which the fence becomes an extension of the building. The fence is low in height, constructed of red/blue bricks, capped in glazed dark brown capping, with the main gate piers emphasised with bands of thin dark brown glazed tapestry bricks. The brickwork of the fence flows into the brick paving, which forms an auxiliary linkage between the fence and house.

50 Fletcher Street, Essendon, is of very high integrity to the period of Winbush's ownership with very few changes visible to original or early elements of the place. The original owner (who was also the architect) extended the building in the 1950s two decades after its original construction in a style that matched the original design, adding

wings to the south and north - these extensions, complementary to the original design albeit with slightly simplified detailing, are considered as contributory to the overall place. The building retains its original and early building form, roofs, rendered and face brick walls, porches, windows and doors to the main frontages.

The integrity of the building is enhanced by the high level of intactness of these main elements, which include the unpainted face brick details (such as tapestry brick accents) and the unpainted face brick rear (west) wall and walls of the northern wing, cantilevered concrete porch roofs, and window joinery including a leaded glass window to the stairwell.

The integrity of the building is slightly diminished by roller shutter door between the main south wing and the northern wing, which presumably replaced an earlier door, and in-filled panel of brickwork immediately north of the roller door.

The integrity of the place is enhanced by the low brick fence, part of the original design conception and integrated with the building forms.

The integrity of the place is likely to be diminished by the construction of medium-rise building on the adjacent allotment to the west (currently occupied by a single storey commercial building but permit approved for one commercial space and eight apartments).

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/>