

## WOMEN'S DRESSING PAVILION



royal park pavilion steps  
entrance apr07 jmb



royal park pavilion front  
entrance detail apr07 jmb



poplar oval pavilion front  
elevation jun07 jmb



poplar park pavilion view from  
oval jun07 jmb



royal park toilet block pavilion  
apr07 jmb



poplar oval toilets apr07 jmb



royal park toilet block apr07  
jmb



royal park pavilion front  
entrance apr07 jmb



poplar oval pavilion spectator  
seats apr07 jmb



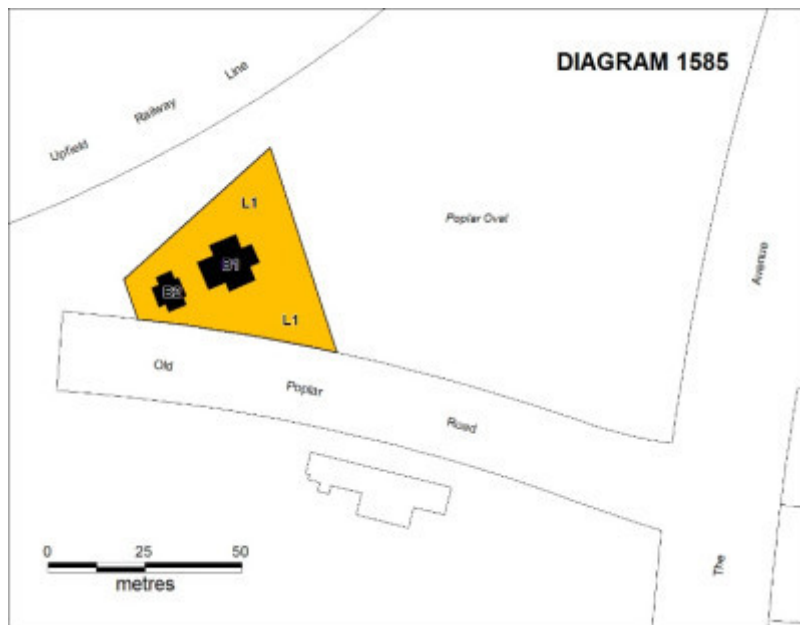
poplar oval pavilion interior  
jun07 jmb



poplar oval pavilion interior  
with coat hooks jun07 jmb



poplar oval pavilion interior  
exit jun07 jmb



H1585 womens pavilion plan

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### Location

OLD POPLAR ROAD PARKVILLE, MELBOURNE CITY

### Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

### Level of significance

Registered

### Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1585

### Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO933

### VHR Registration

September 13, 2007

### Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 18, 2007

What is significant?

The Women's Dressing Pavilion at Poplar Oval in Royal Park was completed in 1937. The pavilion was part of a general program of sporting infrastructure improvements in Melbourne parks. The Women's Dressing Pavilion at Poplar Oval is significant as one of the first sporting facilities designed in Victoria for the use of women.

Land for Royal Park was set aside as early as the 1840s, but the park itself was not reserved until 1876 within its current boundaries. Although Royal Park was used for grazing throughout the 19th century, by the early twentieth century sport was the most popular activity undertaken in the Park. In 1903 a golf course was created and tennis courts followed in 1904 in the north of the Park. When the Melbourne City Council took over the management of Royal Park in 1934 they launched a program of improving sporting facilities. The McAlister, Ransford and Ryder Ovals in the north of the Park were created at this time. Poplar Oval and the adjacent pavilion were created in 1936/37.

In November 1936 the Melbourne City Council Parks and Gardens committee accepted a tender for £1199 from WA Townsend for the erection and completion of a Women's Dressing Pavilion at Royal Park. At the same time a cinder running track was added to the Oval. The distance across the diameter of the oval was a suitable distance for hurdles and a high jump pit was also created. The facilities were ready for the Australian Women's Championships in December 1937. The championships were also selection trials for the Empire Games to be held in Sydney in February 1938. Three thousand people attended the Championships in Melbourne and many commented on the quality of the facilities made available for women athletes. As a contemporary account noted, before the construction of the pavilion and the athletics oval "women athletes of Melbourne" were using a "dog-coursing track" to train and compete. The Women's athletics association were first formed in Victoria in 1929 followed in 1932 by the Australian Women's Amateur Athletic Union. Australian women had taken part in athletics at the 1928 Olympic Games. Previously women had represented Australia only in swimming. It was not until the 1938 British Empire Games in Sydney that a number of women successfully competed in athletics and many of these had represented their States in Melbourne at Royal Park two months earlier.

The Women's Dressing Pavilion and the adjacent toilet block are modest in size. The designer is unknown, but was probably employed in the City Council's architect's office. The pavilion was constructed of red brick in an English Domestic or Cottage style with a pitched tiled roof. Inside the finishes are simple with wooden ceilings and coat hooks lining the solid brick walls. Off the large main room are toilets and showers and in a separate room, kitchen facilities. The windows are simple louvres. Steps lead down from the pavilion to the Oval and trees have been planted close to the pavilion to provide shade.

How is it significant?

The Women's Dressing Pavilion at Royal Park is of historic significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is significant?

The Women's Dressing Pavilion at Poplar Oval in Royal Park is of historic significance as one of the first purpose built sporting facilities for women in Victoria. The provision of these facilities was instrumental in the development of women's athletics in Australia.

The Women's Dressing Pavilion at Poplar Oval in Royal Park is of historic significance for its association with the recognition in the first half of the twentieth century of women's ability and right to participate in competitive sport.

## 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:** 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 Conditions:** 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 Conditions:** 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. **Note:** The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. **General Conditions:** 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. **General Conditions:** 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. **Public Safety and Security :** the erection of temporary security fencing, scaffolding, hoardings or surveillance systems to prevent unauthorised access or secure public safety which will not adversely affect significant fabric of the place

### **Interior**

Painting of previously painted surfaces provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of the original paint or other decorative scheme.

Installation, removal or replacement of carpets and or flexible floor coverings.

Installation, removal or replacement of curtain track, rods, blinds and other window dressings.

Refurbishment of bathrooms and toilets including removal, installation or replacement of sanitary fixtures and associated piping, mirrors, wall and floor coverings.

Installation, removal or replacement of kitchen benches and fixtures including sinks, stoves, ovens, refrigerators, dishwashers etc and associated plumbing and wiring.

Installation, removal or replacement of ducted, hydronic or concealed radiant type heating provided that the installation does not damage existing skirtings and architraves and provided that the location of the heating unit is concealed from view.

Installation, removal or replacement of electrical and telecommunications wiring provided that all new wiring is fully concealed

Installation, removal or replacement of bulk insulation in roof spaces.

Installation, removal or replacement of smoke detectors.

Installation, removal or replacement of electric clocks, public address systems, detectors, alarms, emergency lights, exit signs, luminaires and the like on plaster surfaces.

Installation of new fire hydrant services including sprinklers, and elements affixed to plaster surfaces.

Construction dates	1936,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	POPLAR OVAL DRESSING ROOMS,
Hermes Number	23345
Property Number	

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## History

### Women and Sport in Victoria to World War II

Playing, participating and watching sport has always been (and still is) an important part of defining masculinity. (Cashman : The Paradise of Sport p. 72). It is hardly surprising then, that women have struggled to have their sporting endeavours taken seriously or indeed be offered the facilities to participate in sport.

Organised sport for women began in the private girls schools of the 19th century, where hockey and some athletic endeavours were encouraged (or tolerated). This followed onto the involvement of women in organised sport at University. Women's participation in others sports flourished even without this support, such as swimming, while tennis and golf were important leisure activities for both sexes.

The boom in women's team sports really began in the 1920s and included rowing and cricket as well as hockey. Teams were formed at schools and university, but also through churches and businesses (eg. Myers or Bryant and May).

In 1931 the Victorian Amateur Sports Council was formed and it was active in lobbying for the interests of sportswomen including the allocation and building of grounds and playing fields (Stell : Half the Race p. 59). In 1934 the Council organised a sporting pageant at the MCG to celebrate Victoria's centenary.

More importantly, they also lobbied for facilities, male administrators and sportsmen jealously guarded facilities and grounds. In 1933 the Exhibition buildings were used for netball. Women were also agitating with the appropriate authorities for ovals and facilities and although this campaign was unsuccessful at Albert Park (Barnard & Keating : People's Backyard p. 129) it was successful with the Melbourne City Council at Royal Park. Even if *the Argus* could report in 1937 after the completion of the Poplar Oval pavilion that "Satisfying the sporting needs of women is a small matter". (The Argus, 17 Sept 1937 p. 10).

The facilities provided at Royal Park were to be used as the selection trials for the British Empire Games held in Sydney in February 1938. It was at these championships that Decima Norman (1909-1938) first came to national prominence and went on to win 5 gold medals at the Games, a record held until 1998 when Susie O'Neill won 6 gold medals in swimming.

## Plaque Citation

This dressing pavilion, constructed in 1937 for women athletes, was one of the first purpose built sporting facilities for women in Victoria.

## Extent of Registration

1. All of the buildings marked B1 (Pavilion) B2 (Toilets) on Diagram 1585 held by the Executive Director.
2. All of the land marked L1 on Diagram 1585 held by the Executive Director.

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*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/>*