

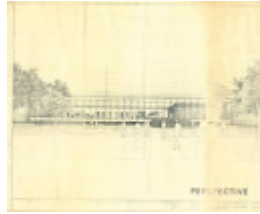
Toorak/South Yarra Branch Library



Toorak/South Yarra Library (c. November 2024).



Side elevation of the Toorak/South Yarra Library, adjacent to Cromwell Road (c. November 2024).



Perspective sketch of Toorak/South Yarra Library, by Yuncken Freeman (c. 1971).



Rear of Toorak/South Yarra Library under construction (c. 1973).



View of the Toorak/South Yarra Library at night, shortly after completion and opening (c. 1973).

Location

338 TOORAK ROAD, SOUTH YARRA, STONNINGTON CITY

Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2463

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO174

Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 8, 2025

What is significant?

Please refer to the Heritage Victoria place record and the individual attachments to this record (search for VHR# H2463)

The Toorak/South Yarra Library at 338-344 Toorak Road, South Yarra, designed by Barry Patten of Yuncken Freeman, constructed in 1972-73.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include:

- Public building in the Late Postwar Modernist style
- Minimalist box-like form with recessed plinth to create a “floating” appearance
- Black-painted steel and fixed tinted glass cladding
- Aluminium framed doors
- Recessed concrete plinth with small rectangular windows
- Elevations with broad horizontal steel plates at the floor and roof lines and expressed vertical steel mullions dividing the walls into regular bays
- Full-height glazing to wall bays.

The replacement Toorak Road entrance ramp and stairs, and surrounding vegetation are not contributory to the heritage place.

How is it significant?

The Toorak/South Yarra Library at 338-344 Toorak Road, South Yarra is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The Toorak/South Yarra Library, South Yarra has strong associations with the provision of community services in South Yarra by the local municipal council and was one of the earliest municipal library services established in the State. Constructed in the late twentieth century as a purpose-built library, the building remains highly intact to its period of construction to clearly illustrate the important development of community educational services in South Yarra – and the City of Stonnington more broadly – in the twentieth century (Criterion A).

Constructed to a design by Yuncken Freeman Architects Pty Ltd, the Toorak/South Yarra Library, South Yarra, represents an accomplished and elegant example of the Late Postwar Modernist style applied to a public building. The refined detailing, including the minimalist box-like form, flat roof, elevated form creating a “floating” appearance, expressed mullions creating regular bays and black-painted steel and tinted glass cladding, presents as a highly distinctive and well-resolved minimalist civic building (Criterion E).

Theme

8. Building community life

Heritage Study/Consultant	Stonnington - References to National Trust of Australia (Vic) Register, National Trust of Australia, 1900; South Yarra Heritage Review, GJM Heritage, 2025;
Construction dates	1972,

Architect/Designer	Yuncken Freeman,
Other Names	340 Toorak Road, South Yarra,
Hermes Number	30850
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

The Toorak/South Yarra Library at 338-344 Toorak Road, South Yarra is located on the south side of Toorak Road, between Surrey Road North and Cromwell Road. The site is accessed by foot from Toorak Road, or by a driveway at the southern end of the Cromwell Road boundary, which leads to a small at-grade carpark. Rows of mature golden elms (*Ulmus glabra Lutescens*) line the eastern and western boundaries of the site.

Designed in the late Postwar Modernist period of the 1970s, the library presents as a minimalist, flat-roofed, box-like form which is clad in tinted glass and black-painted steel and is set above a recessed concrete plinth to appear as floating form. The elevated ground-floor is a U-shaped open space with central service core to the north, accessed by a split ramp to the principal (north) elevation and a set of stairs, installed in 2024. All elevations feature broad horizontal steel plates at the floor and roof lines and expressed vertical steel mullions dividing the walls into regular bays of full-height glazing. A lower ground-floor is partially set within the concrete plinth with small rectangular windows lighting the space.

Key Features:

- Public building in the Late Postwar Modernist style
- Minimalist box-like form with recessed plinth to create a “floating” appearance
- Black-painted steel and fixed tinted glass cladding
- Aluminium framed doors
- Recessed concrete plinth with small rectangular windows
- Elevations with broad horizontal steel plates at the floor and roof lines and expressed vertical steel mullions dividing the walls into regular bays
- Full-height glazing to wall bays.

Local Historical Themes

5.4.1 The municipality of Prahran 8.4.2 Functional, eccentric and theatrical - experimentation and innovation in architecture

Stonnington Thematic Environmental History (2006; 2009)

5 - Governing and Administering Australia

5.4 - Developing Local Government Authorities

Stonnington Post-war Thematic Environmental History Addendum (2025)

8.2 - Educating People

8.2.6 - Participating in Self-Improvement: Local Libraries after 1945

Intactness

The Toorak/South Yarra Library remains highly intact to its period of construction. The split entrance ramp to the

principal elevation was replaced and a new set of stairs installed in 2024; however, overall the building retains a high degree of integrity as a late Post-War Modernist public building.

Extent of Registration

To title boundaries.

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/>