

# ROYAL VICTORIAN EYE AND EAR HOSPITAL, AUBREY BOWEN WING



ROYAL VICTORIAN EYE  
AND EAR HOSPITAL,  
AUBREY BOWEN WING  
SOHE 2008



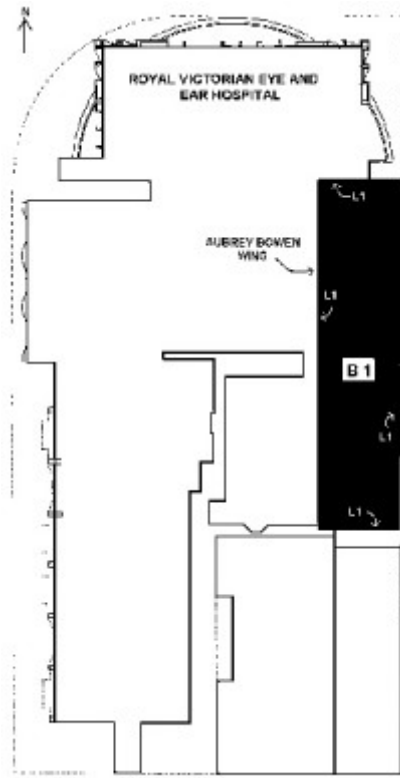
aubrey bowen wing royal  
victorian eye & ear  
hospital morrison place east  
melbourne view from street



aubrey bowen wing royal  
victorian eye & ear  
hospital morrison place east  
melbourne facade detail  
jan1998



aubrey bowen wing royal  
victorian eye & ear  
hospital morrison place east  
melbourne corner view  
jan1998



royal victorian eye and ear hospital aubrey bowen wing plan

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### **Location**

MORRISON PLACE EAST MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

### **Municipality**

MELBOURNE CITY

### **Level of significance**

Registered

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

H1724

### **Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO164

### **VHR Registration**

August 20, 1982

### **Amendment to Registration**

September 17, 1998

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 2, 1999

What is significant?

The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital was established when Dr. Andrew Sexton Gray's charitable institution for the eye and ear amalgamated with the Ophthalmic and Orthopaedic Institution (conducted by Drs Aubrey Bowen and Ewin Jones) in 1870. In 1878 the Government granted it a valuable site on what was known as the Tank Reserve on Eastern Hill and by 1883 a Victorian Classical style hospital had been constructed using a special grant of £1000 and money raised by subscription. The construction of the Aubrey Bowen Wing in 1896 was funded by a bequest from Dr Bowen. It was designed and constructed to the same Victorian Classical style of the original building. The building is two storey and constructed of rendered brick walls with ruled ashlar blockwork to the ground floor exterior. It has a parapet roof with pediments and a three storey tower at one end. Windows are arched and the bays are divided by Ionic order pilasters with a classical cornice at the termination of each floor. In 1978 the earliest part of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital was demolished.

How is it significant?

The Aubrey Bowen Wing of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital is of social, historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Aubrey Bowen Wing is of social and historical significance as the earliest section remaining of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, the original 1883 section having been demolished in 1978. The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital is important for its associations with its founders Dr Aubrey Bowen and Dr. Andrew Sexton Gray, both prominent figures in their medical fields. Andrew Sexton Gray is believed to be the founder of Ophthalmology in Australia. After World War II, The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital with its numerous specialists, training posts, special services and professional presence became a cornerstone in the expansion of Australian ophthalmology and otorhinolaryngology, and made possible the Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists.

The Aubrey Bowen Wing of the Eye and Ear Hospital is of architectural importance as part of the unique East Melbourne Precinct surrounding St Patrick's Cathedral. It contributes to a rare composition of related building proportions and Victorian architectural vocabulary, with the vista down Morrison Place providing a grand view of the Cathedral. The Aubrey Bowen Wing is of interest for its classical detailing with arched windows, parapet and cornices and Ionic order pilasters.

### 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 alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.
2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations 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 alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible.
3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it.
4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.
5. Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

Exterior

- \* Minor repairs and maintenance which replace like with like.
- \* Removal of any extraneous items such as air conditioners, pipe work, ducting, wiring, antennae, aerials etc, and making good.
- \* Installation or repair of damp-proofing by either injection method or grouted pocket method.

Interior

- \* All internal works, including demolition, are exempt other than where they affect the retention of the Morrison Place facade, southern tower and upper tower rooms, original roof structure and bronze memorial plaque.

Construction dates	1895,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	386
Property Number	

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## **History**

Contextual History:

### History of Place:

Dr Andrew Gray founded an institution for the eye and ear for the benefit of the poor in Albert Street, East Melbourne in 1863. This was afterwards moved to Spring Street where it was carried on by its benevolent founder at his own cost until September 1866, when he suggested its conversion into a public hospital. A governing body was organised in May 1868, with Gray appointed as the honorary surgeon for life. The hospital was maintained by voluntary contributions, supplemented by a small annual grant from Government, but before this assistance could be obtained the Treasurer recommended its amalgamation with the Ophthalmic and Orthopaedic Institution, conducted by Drs Aubrey Bowen and Ewin Jones. This was done in 1870. Dr Bowen became one of the honorary surgeons of the present hospital, and continued to act in that capacity for twenty two years earning the respect of the public and the profession. His resignation of the post was the result of ill-health. It was not until eight years after the amalgamation had taken place that the hospital felt itself in a position to take steps to procure a permanent habitation of its own. In 1878 the Government granted it a valuable site on what is known as the Tank Reserve, on the Eastern Hill, in addition to a special grant of £1000 towards the building fund. With this, and a sum of money raised by subscription, a commencement was made with the back part of the present structure in 1881, which was erected at a cost of £ 1 558 and occupied forthwith. In the year following, a commencement was made with the front and main portion of the hospital which was completed in 1883, the total cost having been £ 6 092.

These premises however, were found to be inadequate to meet the growing requirements of the hospital and the Government liberally granted another block of land, 164 feet by 46, in the rear of the edifice. Adjoining it was a vacant allotment, the acquisition of which was considered most desirable as a recreation ground for the in-patients; but the institution had no funds, and Dr. Bowen generously bought it, in order to prevent its falling into alien hands, and subsequently offered it to the committee at the same price which he had paid for it. The honorary treasurer borrowed the necessary amount of mortgage, giving his personal guarantee as collateral security: the purchase was effected, and the loan was paid off in the year 1894. In the meanwhile Dr. Aubrey Bowen died, and his widow, wishing to fulfil his benevolent intentions in the administration of a bequest of £20 000 which he had left to the benevolent institutions of Victoria, devoted a portion of that amount to a substantial extension of the building, which was stated to be the fifth largest hospital of the kind in the British Empire. This addition was known as "The Aubrey Bowen Wing". The Aubrey Bowen Wing was opened in the month of February 1896. In 1903 the institution was said to be the fifth largest hospital of the kind in the British Empire (James Smith 1903, p. 422).

T. Aubrey Bowen was one of the founders of ophthalmology in Victoria. Born in Midland England, trained as a physician and surgeon then as an ophthalmologist in Birmingham, he settled in Melbourne where he attained the peak of his profession. He gave prolonged service to the Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, the Children's Hospital, the Medical Society of Victoria and various governments. He died from pulmonary phthisis when 55 years of age.

Gray's institution was the third official charitable hospital founded in Melbourne, being preceded only by the Melbourne Hospital (1846) and the Lying-In Hospital (1856). As a tribute to its founder, in 1963, when the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital was granted its coat of arms, two anchors taken from the crest of the Gray family were emblazoned on the horizontal arms of the red cross on the shield.

The reason why Victoria has a specialist eye and ear hospital is that Gray had trained in Dublin where the association of eye and ear was usual, whereas the eye hospitals in the other Australian States looked back to London's Moorfields and other English Eye Hospitals (Ronald. F. Lowe, 1985 p.426).

Gray and the hospital which he founded and with which he was associated for 44 years, accelerated the development of ophthalmology in Victoria. After World War II, The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital with its numerous specialists, training posts, special services and professional presence became a cornerstone in the expansion of Australian ophthalmology and otorhinolaryngology, and made possible the Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists (Ronald. F. Lowe, 1985 p.430).

Associated People: The Eye and Ear Hospital founders Dr Aubrey Bowen and Dr. Andrew Sexton Gray who were both prominent figures in their medical fields. Andrew Sexton Gray is believed to be the founder of Ophthalmology in Australia.

### Plaque Citation

Established in 1896 with a bequest from Dr Aubrey Bowen, one of the pioneers of ophthalmology in Australia, this Victorian Classical style building is the oldest remaining section of the hospital.

## **Assessment Against Criteria**

### **Criterion A**

The historical importance, association with or relationship to Victoria's history of the place or object.

The Aubrey Bowen Wing is of social and historical significance as the earliest section remaining of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, the original 1883 section having been demolished in 1978. The Eye and Ear Hospital is important for its associations with its founders Dr Aubrey Bowen and Dr. Andrew Sexton Gray who were both prominent figures in their medical fields. Andrew Sexton Gray is believed to be the founder of Ophthalmology in Australia and the hospital greatly accelerated the development of ophthalmology in Victoria. After World War II, The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital with its numerous specialists, training posts, special services and professional presence became a cornerstone in the expansion of Australian ophthalmology and otorhinolaryngology, and made possible the Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists.

### **Criterion B**

The importance of a place or object in demonstrating rarity or uniqueness.

The Aubrey Bowen Wing is of social and historical significance as the earliest section remaining of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, the original 1883 section having been demolished in 1978.

### **Criterion C**

The place or object's potential to educate, illustrate or provide further scientific investigation in relation to Victoria's cultural heritage.

### **Criterion D**

The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as part of a class or type of places or objects.

The Aubrey Bowen Wing was based on the original design of the Eye and Ear Hospital and is therefore representative of the appearance of the earlier 1883 section which was demolished in 1978.

### **Criterion E**

The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features.

### **Criterion F**

The importance of the place or object in demonstrating or being associated with scientific or technical innovations or achievements.

After World War II, The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital with its numerous specialists, training posts, special services and professional presence became a cornerstone in the expansion of Australian ophthalmology and otorhinolaryngology, and made possible the Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists.

### **Criterion G**

The importance of the place or object in demonstrating social or cultural associations.

The Eye and Ear Hospital is important for its associations with its founders Dr Aubrey Bowen and Dr. Andrew Sexton Gray who were both prominent figures in their medical fields. Andrew Sexton Gray is believed to be the founder of Ophthalmology in Australia and the hospital greatly accelerated the development of ophthalmology in Victoria.

### **Criterion H**

Any other matter which the Council considers relevant to the determination of cultural heritage significance

## **Extent of Registration**

NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended in that the Heritage Register Number 1724 in the category described as a Heritage Place is now described as:

Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, Aubrey Bowen Wing, 126-142 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne, City of Melbourne.

EXTENT:

1. To the extent of all the building described as the Aubrey Bowen Wing of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital marked B-1 and the object known as the Bronze Memorial Plaque on Diagram 603564 held by the Executive Director.
2. To the extent of all the land marked L-1 on Diagram 603564 held by the Executive Director, being part of the land described as Public Purposes Reserve, Allotment 27-29, Section 2, Parish of East Melbourne.

Dated: 27 August 1998.

RAY TONKIN

Executive Director

[Victoria Government Gazette G 37 17 September 1998 p.2428]

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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/>*