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# Baby Health Centre

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## Location

51 - 53 Bluff Road,, BLACK ROCK VIC 3193 - Property No B4898

## Municipality

BAYSIDE CITY

## Level of significance

State

## Heritage Listing

National Trust

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant? The Baby Health Centre at Black Rock is a small single-storey light colored brick building in the Streamlined Moderne style. It is laid out on an L-shaped plan with a low hipped roof of terracotta tiles, mostly concealed by a parapet with bands of contrasting manganese brickwork. The rear block has rectangular windows, some of which wrap around the corners. The frontage is dominated by an elongated and projecting flat-roofed wing with a curving end, typical of the international functional style. This wing, designed as a pram porch, has a rendered parapet, a cantilevered concrete window canopy and a row of full height steel-framed windows that form a canted bay to the curved end. A side opening in the bay, protected by a metal screen, gives access to the centre and pram porch. Between the hood and the parapet are the words BABY HEALTH CENTRE in steel letters. The building is surrounded by its own garden and is located on a corner block adjacent to a nursery school.

The centre was built for the City of Sandringham in 1939, apparently to the design of their City Engineer, N G Roeszler. At the time of its opening it was said to be the most up-to-date centre in Victoria. It has recently ceased to operate but remains in excellent condition.

How is it significant? The centre is of historical, architectural, aesthetic, and social significance at a State level.

Why is it significant? Historically the baby health centre is significant for its associations with the infant welfare movement in Victoria. Founded in 1917 to address the high infant mortality rate, the movement underwent its most significant phase of expansion during the 1920s and 1930s, when purpose built baby health centres were erected throughout the state as a result of community agitation and council foresight. Collectively these buildings not only demonstrate the widespread popularity and success of the movement, but also the resolute efforts of individual councils and local communities in the period prior to 1949, before the state government began to provide funding for baby health centres.

Architecturally the centre is significant as an outstanding example of a baby health centre in the inter-war Moderne style. Although many baby health centres were built during the late 1920s, 1930s and early 1940s,

these were usually expressed in a more domestic fashion as cottages or suburban bungalows such as that at East Kew, 1925, or were embellished with Moderne detailing such as the Lady Gowrie Centre in North Carlton. Along with the contemporary centre at Lygon Street, Brunswick, 1939, the centre at Black Rock is one of very few that can be considered as a pure manifestation of the international inter-war Moderne style, with its flat roofed, projecting wing and curved glass bay.

Aesthetically the building is a fine, modestly scaled, example of its type, incorporating many of the significant characteristics of the Moderne style. It demonstrates excellent design in both proportion and detail. It remains a distinctive element in the streetscape of a major thoroughfare otherwise dominated by residential and commercial buildings.

The building is of social significance for its long time value to the mothers and infants of the bayside communities of Black Rock and Beaumaris. The centre is a symbol of a culturally progressive society in which the local community initiated steps to provide a purpose-built facility to offer programs for the improvement of the health education of women raising young children in the outer suburbs.

Classified: 26/07/2008

Hermes Number 71882

Property Number

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