

# FORMER MICKVEH YISRAEL SYNAGOGUE AND SCHOOL



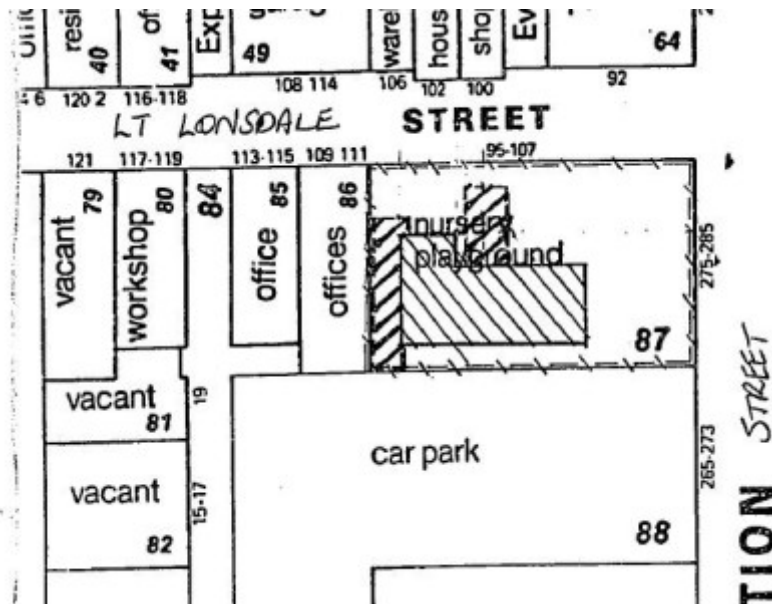
FORMER MICKVEH  
YISRAEL SYNAGOGUE  
AND SCHOOL SOHE 2008



1 mickveh yisrael synagogue  
exhibition street melbourne  
front view jun1995



mickveh yisrael synagogue  
exhibition street melbourne  
rear view jun1995



h00766 plan h0766

## Location

275-285 EXHIBITION STREET MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

## Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

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

H0766

## **Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO635

## **VHR Registration**

August 20, 1982

## **Amendment to Registration**

October 12, 1988

## **Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Register

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## **Statement of Significance**

Last updated on - January 27, 2000

What is significant?

The Former Mickveh Yisrael Synagogue and Hebrew School was constructed in 1859 to a design by the architects Knight and Kerr. It was used as such until 1877 when a new Synagogue was built in Albert Street, East Melbourne. It then became State School No 2030 until 1892, and subsequently had a number of educational, social welfare and child care uses. The building is a simple single storey brick structure on a basalt plinth, with pedimented gables, brick pilasters and arched windows with brick dressings.

How is it significant?

The Former Mickveh Yisrael Synagogue and Hebrew School is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Former Mickveh Yisrael Synagogue and Hebrew School is of historical significance as one of the oldest synagogues in Melbourne and as a testament to the contribution of the Jewish community to the development of Melbourne from the city's very early days.

The Former Mickveh Yisrael Synagogue and Hebrew School is of historical significance for its associations with the early provision of social welfare in Victoria. In 1892 it was used by the Salvation Army, first as a free labour bureau, then as a men's industrial home and, following additions in 1897, as a women's shelter. From 1909 it was tenanted by the Methodist Central Mission, which, in addition to providing bible classes and services, established, under the patronage of the lady mayoress, a free kindergarten for children of poor parents. The need for such care became particularly acute during WWI when many women entered the workforce. In 1916 the City Crèche for mothers visiting hospitals or doctors was added to the services provided. In 1948-50 the City Free Kindergarten was relocated to East Melbourne and the building was modified by the Melbourne City Council to provide a crèche and nursery facility. The history of the former Synagogue is thus intimately bound up with the history of the provision of social welfare, particularly catering to the needs of impoverished women and children and the unemployed in the formerly deprived north-eastern quarter of the city. As such, it is also a reminder of the

character of this part of the city in the late-19th century and early 20th century: the area around Lonsdale, Little Lonsdale and Stephen Street (as Exhibition Street was originally known) was thought of as a slum area, inhabited by the poor and vice-prone. Now much of the small-scale fabric of this area has disappeared, giving the former Synagogue added significance.

The Former Mickveh Yisrael Synagogue and Hebrew School is of architectural significance as an interesting example of the conservative Classical style, unusually applied to a Synagogue, and of the small scale work of Knight and Kerr. The conservative Classical style was more commonly used by the Methodists and Baptists and this rather austere version suggests an emphasis on economy, probably reflecting the beginnings of the Jewish community in the city. The small scale of the Synagogue provides an interesting comparison with Knight and Kerr's major work of the period, Parliament House, the first stages of which were designed in 1856.

## 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](#).

|                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Construction dates      | 1859,                     |
| Architect/Designer      | Knight & Kerr,            |
| Heritage Act Categories | Registered place,         |
| Other Names             | ETHEL NILSEN DAY NURSERY, |
| Hermes Number           | 747                       |
| Property Number         |                           |

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## History

Contextual History:History of Place:

The projecting pediments with trapezoidal brackets are a distinctive and important motif and can be compared with the same usage at D'Estaville in Kew, also by Knight and Kerr and erected in 1857.

The synagogue was used until 1877 when a more substantial building was erected for the purpose in East Melbourne.

## **Plaque Citation**

Built in 1859 to a design by Knight & Kerr, this is one of Melbourne's oldest synagogues. From 1877 it was a State School and was later used by social welfare agencies caring for the poor in the 'Little Lon' area.

## **Extent of Registration**

### **AMENDMENT OF REGISTER OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS**

Historic Building No. 766, the Ethel Nilsen Day Nursery (former Synagogue), 275-285 Exhibition Street, Melbourne.

(All of the buildings and land hatched as shown in Attachment A, entered in the Register Book Certificate of Title Volume 976 Folio 040.

[Victoria Government Gazette No. G13 28 March 1990 p.937]

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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/>*