# Former Congregational Church, 66-72 Peel Street, Windsor

**Heritage Place:** Former Congregational Church
**Address:** 66-72 Peel Street, Windsor
**Designer:** Unknown
**Builder:** Unknown

**HO Reference:** HO93
**Citation status:** Final
**Date Updated:** 5 April 2024
**Year of Construction:** 1858



Photograph of Former Congregational Church.
*Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.




Location map and extent of HO93.

**Heritage Group:** Religion
**Heritage Type:** Church

**Key Theme:** Community and Culture
**Key Sub-theme:** Worshipping – Independent or Congregational Church

**Significance Level:** Local

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Controls:** | ☐ | External paint controls | ☐ | Internal alteration controls | ☐ | Tree controls |
| | ☐ | Include on Victorian Heritage Register | ☐ | Incorporated Plans | ■ | Outbuildings and fences not exempt |
| | ☐ | Prohibited uses may be permitted | ☐ | Aboriginal Heritage Place | ■ | Solar energy system controls |

## Statement of Significance

### *What is significant?*

The property at 66-72 Peel Street, Windsor (otherwise known as the Former Congregational Church), is significant. Specifically, the form, raised sitting, façade arrangement and fenestration of the Classical Revival style 1858 church building, as well as the intact front boundary brick fence and iron palisade fence, is of local heritage significance. Later alterations and additions to the property are not significant.

### *How is it significant?*

The Former Congregational Church is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

### *Why is it significant?*

The Former Congregational Church is of local historical significance as one of the earliest churches erected in the City of Stonnington. Constructed in 1858, it is the oldest known surviving example of a Congregational church building designed in the Classical Revival style, and its modest scale and incorporation of Classical Revival style elements is typical of Nonconformist groups, whose deviation from the Church of England and strong lay participation tended to result in less costly church buildings. It not only forms a tangible link to mid nineteenth century church building development within the municipality, but also provides insight into the early presence of the Congregational church within the municipality. (Criterion A)

The Former Congregational Church is of local representative significance as an early example of a church building incorporating Classical Revival style elements. While it has been substantially altered, several distinguishing features remain, including its stepped parapet, arched window openings, formal symmetrical façade arrangement, expressed Tuscan pilasters and remnant projecting gable porch entrance. These features are enhanced by the intact front boundary brick fence and iron palisade fence and raised sitting on a bluestone foundation, which contribute to its ecclesiastical and formal appearance along the residential streetscape. (Criterion D)

## HERCON Criteria Assessment

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *A* | *Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history* | The Former Congregational Church is of local historical significance as one of the earliest churches erected in the City of Stonnington. Constructed in 1858, it is the oldest known surviving example of a Congregational church building designed in the Classical Revival style, and its modest scale and incorporation of Classical Revival style elements is typical of Nonconformist groups, whose deviation from the Church of England and strong lay participation tended to result in less costly church buildings. It not only forms a tangible link to mid nineteenth century church building development within the municipality, but also provides insight into |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | the early presence of the Congregational church within the municipality. |
| *B* | *Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history* | This place does not meet this criterion. |
| *C* | *Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history* | This place does not meet this criterion. |
| *D* | *Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments* | The Former Congregational Church is a representative example of a church building incorporating Classical Revival style elements. While it has been substantially altered, several distinguishing features remain, including its stepped parapet, arched window openings, formal symmetrical façade arrangement, expressed Tuscan pilasters and remnant projecting gable porch entrance. These features are enhanced by the intact front boundary brick fence and iron palisade fence and raised sitting on a bluestone foundation, which contribute to its ecclesiastical and formal appearance along the residential streetscape. |
| *E* | *Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics* | This place does not meet this criterion. |
| *F* | *Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period* | This place does not meet this criterion. |
| *G* | *Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions* | This place does not meet this criterion. |
| *H* | *Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.* | This place does not meet this criterion. |

## Description

- ### Physical Analysis

The Former Congregational Church is located at 66-72 Peel Street, Windsor. It consists of a double-storey building formerly used as a United Methodist Free Church. The masonry structure consists of face light brown brick laid in a stretcher bond supported on a bluestone block foundation. The former church presents a simple rectilinear form and modest massing. The main hipped roof, largely concealed by the parapet, is reclad with corrugated sheet metal but retains the original slate tiling on the west roof face.

The street frontage (north elevation) is finished with a smooth white stucco, contrasting the brown brick side elevations. The façade is visually demarcated by four, equally spaced expressed Tuscan pilasters. A centered projecting gable roof porch provides the main entry into the building. The porch roof is clad with roof tiling and extends to shelter the main entrance, supported by simple timber brackets. The parapet adopts a Classical Revival style featuring a moulded cornice and simple stepped form, with the year '1858' applied to the centre. The façade returns to the side elevations with stuccoed imitation quoining.

The building features tall and narrow windows with extruded and rendered brick sills. The façade windows feature an arched form, while the side elevation windows present a rectangular form. The original windows have been replaced with timber and aluminium sash and fixed windows.

The west elevation of the original structure has been finished in white paint. The west elevation includes a contemporary two-storey extension. The contemporary extension leads to a single-storey wing constructed in 1983. The addition adopts a complementary form to the original church, mirroring details including the projecting porch, arched windows, and Classical Revival elements. A garage is located under the single-storey wing, accessible from Peel Street.

The original former church structure is located along the east extent of the property. It is raised and set back from the street. The street front boundary is demarcated by a low face brown brick fence laid with a stretcher bond. The fence is capped with a bluestone block course and a palisade fence. The main gate is located at the west end of the front fence, which terminates to accommodate the driveway and garage. A concrete laid path leads to the entry courtyard. A rendered masonry fence creates an enclosed central courtyard which houses a swimming pool. The contemporary extensions extending from the original structure are located along the south and west boundaries. The terraced front landscape is heavily planted with ornamental shrubs and a number of mature trees.

The property fronts Peel Street to the north. It is surrounded by residential properties to its east, west and south. The former church has been converted for use as a private residence and is generally in good condition. The property has seen major alterations to the landscape and new additions extending from the main residence. The original structure appears to have retained its original form and massing, however, some original detailing including the original windows have been reported to be altered. The structure is highly modified internally and is overall of moderate integrity.

- Alterations and Additions

- Façade render re-painted (2019).
- Former windows replaced with timber and aluminium sash and fixed windows.
- Original slate roof reclad with corrugated steel sheet metal.
- Major relandscaping including terracing and addition of swimming pool.
- Modern single-storey and garage addition (1983) and double-storey additions (2010).

## History

- Historical Context

The area presently known as Stonnington is the traditional home of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the East Kulin Nation. Formerly characterised by pre-contact plains, grassy woodland and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyongkoot) and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), this once thriving habitat provided Traditional Owners access to a range of water, plant and animal resources integral to their way of life. The onset of colonialism not only saw the transformation of these landscapes, but also Woi wurrung and Bunurong displacement through violence and land dispossession, as is evident in the establishment of George Langhorne's Aboriginal Mission Station Reserve along the southern banks of the Yarra River in present day Prahran and Toorak. Operating under the guise of 'protection', this reserve ultimately became a focal point for segregation, dislocation and colonial control of Aboriginal people's lives (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 31).

Despite decades of ongoing dispossession, the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington has an enduring presence to this day. Through continued resistance and the passing down of Indigenous knowledge, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong people maintain an ongoing connection to, and care for Country.

The first Crown Land Sales in what would become the suburb of Windsor took place in 1849-50, including the subdivision of land bounded by present day Toorak Road, Orrong Road, Dandenong Road and Punt Road into fifty-one allotments (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 39). The land encompassing present-day Windsor, being bound by High Street, Kooyong Road, Dandenong Road and Punt Road, comprised twenty-two of these allotments. Formerly known as Prahran South, the area was later re-named Windsor in 1891. While higher ground overlooking the Yarra to the north of Prahran was quickly acquired and settled by the colonial elite from the 1840 Crown Land Sales, Windsor, being of poorly drained low-lying land characterised by wetlands further to the south, was primarily set aside for farming and housing for the working and lower middle classes. By 1856, the land encompassing Windsor was primarily characterised by a mixture of undeveloped land and small timber and brick workers cottages set on narrow allotments (Surveyor-General's Department 1856). The high level of natural deposits of alluvial clay in the area meant that pockets of low-lying land were used as brickyards (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 17). An early suburban railway station also opened in Windsor in 1859 as part of the Hobsons Bay line, which encouraged further housing development in the vicinity. The area was distinguished by its strong market garden character during its early period, with much of the land awaiting development being used for cultivation during the 1850s and 1860s (Malone 1983, 12).

The area underwent a period of rapid change following the 1880s land boom period. This spurred residential development on farming land and the replacement of modest mid-nineteenth century wooden dwellings with more ornate, single-fronted Victorian and Edwardian style brick

and timber cottages, some joined as terraces, that could house the influx of factory workers as part of the area's growing manufacturing industries (Malone 2000, 20). While both post-war 'slum' clearance and gentrification from the 1970s saw the loss of many of these Victorian- and Edwardian-era cottages, a significant number have survived intact. Beyond the small group of modest c.1920 factories concentrated around the intersection of Frederick and James Street, Windsor's working-class history can primarily be found in the form of several surviving 1850s and 1860s cottages, as well as in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century single-fronted cottages and dwellings concentrated on streets between Chapel Street and Punt Road.

- Place History

The land on which the Former Congregational Church currently sits comprised Crown Portion 59A during the 1849-50 Crown Land Sales (Surveyor General's Department 1849). Consisting of approximately ten acres of land roughly bounded by present day Upton Road, Albert Street, Punt Road, and the line of McIllwrick Street, the portion was substantially smaller than the subdivisions taking place to the north and the east and was purchased by S. Staughton (Surveyor General's Department 1859; Malone 1999, 28). Due to its proximity to St Kilda and poorly drained terrain, the portion was quickly subdivided into small allotments and narrow streets for use as a working-class housing area (Malone 1999, 29). Indeed, by 1856, the allotment was characterised by a scattering of buildings set on modest allotments (Surveyor-General's Department 1856). Meanwhile, the site of the Former Congregational Church was occupied by an Independent Chapel owned by the Independent (or Congregational) Church fronting Albert Street (Surveyor-General's Department 1856; see Figure 1).




Figure 1. 1856 map showing the approximate location of present day Former Congregational Church (then occupied by an Independent Chapel) in red, and scattered workers cottages and buildings on adjacent streets. *Source:* Public Record Office Victoria.

In 1858, the Independent Church sold the site and existing chapel fronting Albert Street to the United Free Methodists (Context Pty Ltd 1993). The present day Former Congregational Church building, then known as the second United Methodist Church in the Melbourne Circuit, was subsequently erected to designs by an unknown architect, and comprised a modest rectilinear

building with an entrance portico, Classical Revival style parapet and round arched windows (Malone c.1984; MMBW 1896; Caldwell c. 1949) (see Figure 2 - Figure 4*Figure 3*).

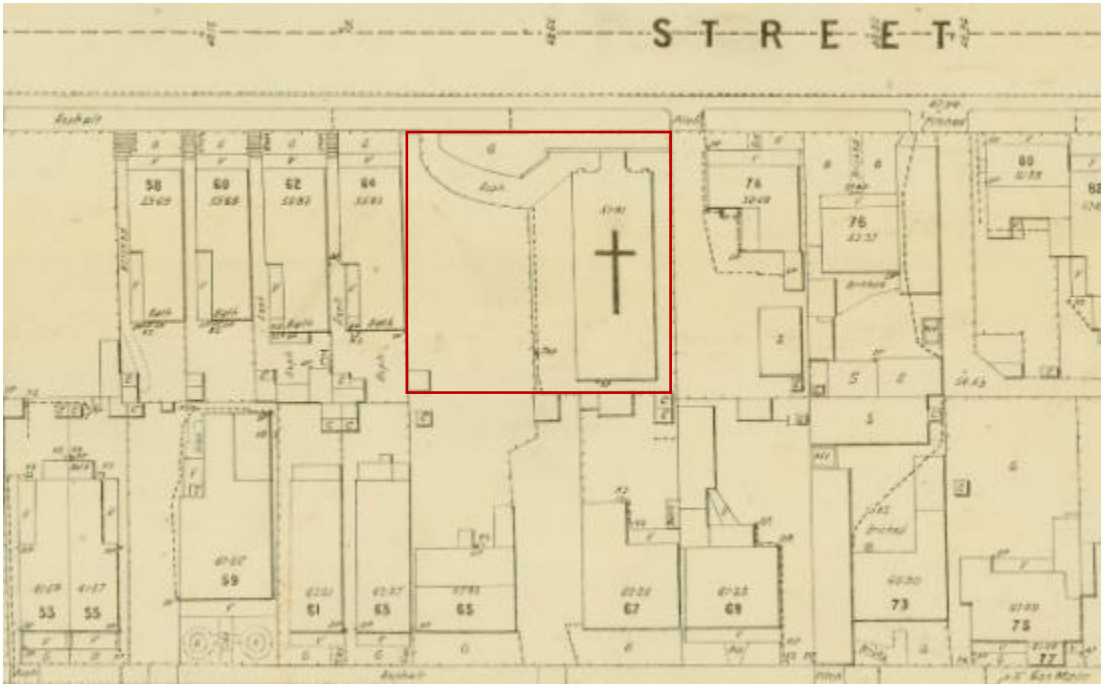



Figure 2. 1896 MMBW map showing Former Congregational Church. *Source*: State Library of Victoria.



Figure 3. 1949 view of Former Congregational Church. *Source:* State Library of Victoria.




Figure 4. 1949 view of Former Congregational Church façade. *Source:* State Library of Victoria.

Notably, it was one of the earliest churches erected within the municipality (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 182). From around 1866, the majority of the local congregation joined the Congregational Church, which would subsequently give the building its name (Context Pty Ltd 1993; The Telegraph 1867, 2). As with other Nonconformist Protestant groups, the congregation primarily comprised working-class and lower middle-class English people, and its location within Windsor reflected the demographic makeup of the local area (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 178).

Documented occasions taking place at the site throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are typical of other independent churches of a smaller following, and include a variety of fundraising activities, social events, society meetings (The Prahran Telegraph 1889, 3; The Prahran Telegraph 1926, 5). According to one newspaper article, the appointment of Reverend George King in 1921 saw renewed interest and activities at the Church, which had largely suffered a lull during the early interwar period due to the loss of several leading Congregational families within the neighbourhood (The Prahran Telegraph 1921, 3).

The building continued to be used by the Congregational Church until 1977, when it became part of the Uniting Church (Context Pty Ltd 1993). The final service held in the building took place in 1979, reflecting falling church attendance numbers and changing demographic conditions. It was subsequently sold in May 1980 and has since been converted into a private residence.

## Comparative Analysis

Designed in the Victorian Free Classical style, the 1858 Former Congregational Church is primarily defined by its symmetrical façade arrangement, rectilinear form, expressed Tuscan pilasters, stepped Greek Revival style parapet and arched window openings. As one of the earliest churches established within the City of Stonnington, there are only two comparable examples of this style within the municipality:

- **Former Baptist Church, 462 Chapel Street, South Yarra (HO17).** Erected in 1866, the Former Baptist Church building is comparable to the Former Congregational Church in terms of style, form and fenestration. While it lacks the stepped form parapet and former projecting entrance porch that typifies the Former Congregational Church, it shares a number of stylistic features, including a formal symmetrical composition, expressed Tuscan pilasters and arched windows. Of the two, the Former Baptist Church is not only more imposing, owing to its large scale and sitting on a prominent corner lot, but also substantially more intact.
- **Church of Christ Church, 220-236 High Street, Windsor (HO93).** Erected in 1883, the Church of Christ Church is comparable to the Former Congregational Church in terms of style, composition and detailing. Although it was erected several decades later and lacks the stepped form, distinct Greek Revival style parapet and former projecting entrance porch demonstrated at the Former Congregational Church, it nevertheless compares in terms of its formal symmetrical composition, expressed Tuscan pilasters and arched windows. It ultimately more intact than the Church of Christ Church, having retained a larger degree of its original detailing.

Due to the absence of other contemporaneous churches of comparable design within the municipality, the Former Congregational Church is best compared to nonconformist mid nineteenth Classical Revival style churches that are located outside of the municipality. These include:

- **Mt Zion Particular Baptist Church, 10 Little Ryrie Street, Geelong (City of Greater Geelong, HO975 / VHR 1122).** Constructed in 1856, the Mt Zion Particular Baptist Church comprises a modest gabled formed church building with Classical Revival influences. While its rectilinear windows with expressed architraves and front facing gable is distinct the Former Congregational Church, the pair are nevertheless comparable in terms of its scale, projecting main entrance gabled porch, symmetrical façade arrangement and use of pilasters. As with the above example, if is substantially more intact than the Former Congregational Church, despite having undergone several contemporary alterations.
- **Former Wesleyan Church, Parsonage and Common School, 44-46 James Street, Port Fairy (Shire of Moyne HO27 / VHRH0884).** Constructed in 1855, the Former Wesleyan Church comprises a distinctive bluestone church derived from both Classical and Georgian architectural sources. While evidently more impressive than the Former Congregational Church in terms of intactness, detailing and skillful stonework finish, a number of similarities can nevertheless be drawn. These include its modest scale, rectilinear form, symmetrical façade arrangement, projecting main entrance gabled porch, arched windows, and incorporation of Classical derived Tuscan pilasters.
- **Wintergarden (Congregational Church), 51 McKillop Street, Geelong (City of Greater Geelong, HO117 / VHR H1173).** Established in Geelong in 1850 to designs by architect Benjamin Blackhouse, the former Congregational Church building, presently known as

Wintergarden, comprises a Classical Revival style building distinguished by its formal symmetrical composition and form, unusual proportions, expressed pilasters, and arched windows with prominent architraves. It is comparable to the Former Congregational Church in terms of its distinct stepped parapet and incorporation of Free Classical elements, such as expressed Tuscan pilasters and arched fenestration. It is more imposing than the Former Congregational Church in terms of scale and lacks its former projecting entrance porch.

While the Former Congregational Church is not the most intact Classical Revival style church building established during the mid-nineteenth century, its remnant defining features, including its rectilinear form, arched window openings, formal symmetrical arrangement and stepped parapet, can be compared to other contemporaneous examples. Moreover, as the above analysis has demonstrated, with the exception of 1856 Former Baptist Church, the 1858 Former Congregational Church is the only known surviving example of a Classical Revival style mid nineteenth century independent church within the municipality.

## References


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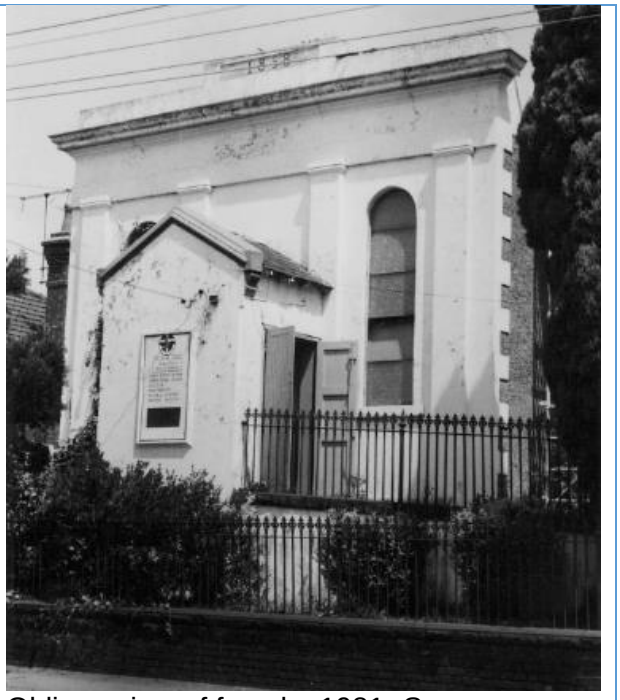
## Limitations

1. Access to all heritage places was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not accessed as part of this heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain as well as desktop resources.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

## Images



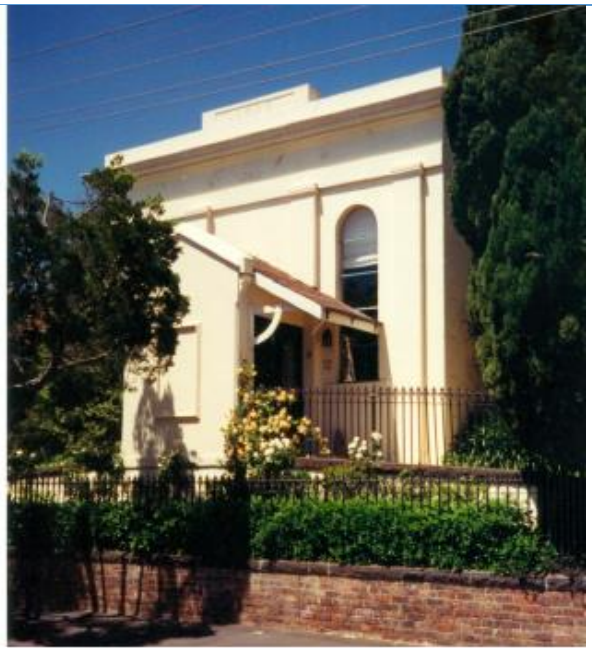
Oblique overview, 1962. *Source*: Collins, John T. 1962. *Windsor Congregational Church, Peel Street.* Photograph. J.T. Collins Collection. Accession no: H98.250/2229. State Library of Victoria).



Oblique view of façade, 1981*. Source:* Collins, John T. 1981. *Windsor Uniting Church, former Congregational, Peel Street.* Photograph. J.T. Collins Collection. Accession no: H98.251/2931. State Library of Victoria.



Sketch of Former Congregational Church, c. 1984*. Source:* Malone, Betty. c.1984. Windsor Congregational Church. Graphic materials, ref no. PH10779. Stonnington History Centre.

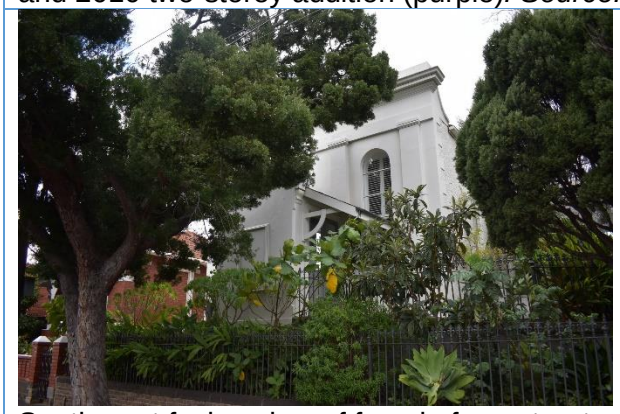


Oblique view of façade, c.1993*. Source:* Context Pty Ltd. 1993. 'Conservation Review:

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Aerial showing 1858 Former Congregational Church building (blue), 1983 addition (orange) and 2010 two-storey addition (purple). *Source:* NearMap, 2022.



South-east facing view of façade from street front. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



South-west facing detail view of façade and projecting entrance porch. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



Detail view of projecting entrance porch façade. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



South-east oblique detail view of parapet corner. *Source:* Extent Heirtage Pty Ltd, 2022.



South-west facing overview from street front. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



South-west oblique detail view of parapet corner. *Source:* Extent Heirtage Pty Ltd, 2022.



Detail view of entablature. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



Detail view of stepped parapet centre and incised ‘1858’ lettering. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



Detail view of side elevation windows. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



Overview of front boundary brick fence and iron palisade fence. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



South-east facing view of front boundary brick fence and iron palisade fence. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



View of 1983 building and garage additions from street front. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.

## Authors

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**Quality assurance review conducted by:** Michelle Bashta, 2023.