City of
STONNINGTON

Prahran Market

Prepared by: GJM Heritage (March 2025)

Address: 163-185 Commercial Road, 32 Elizabeth Street & part Market Street, South Yarra

Name:	Prahan Market	**Survey Date:**	May 2024
Place Type:	Commercial	**Architect/Designer:**	Charles D'Ebro (1891), F L & K Klingender and F W Thomas (1928), Gunn Hayball (1976-1981)
Grading:	Significant (HO24)	**Builder:**	C Corlett (1891) George Prentice Pty Ltd (1928) Not known (1976-1981)
Extent of the Overlay:	To property boundaries	**Construction Date(s):**	1891 (Commercial Road building), 1928 (Meat Market, Elizabeth Street), 1976-1981 (Market hall)



Prahran Market, Commercial Road elevation, South Yarra (GJM Heritage, April 2024)

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Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Prahran Market at 163-185 Commercial Road, 32 Elizabeth Street & part Market Street, South Yarra, constructed in 1891, with the meat market constructed in 1928 and upgrading of the market spaces in 1976-81.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include:

1891 building

- Rendered brick commercial building constructed in a Free Classical Style
- Slate-clad hipped and mansard roofs, largely concealed behind a highly decorative parapet
- Rectangular plan
- Symmetrical principal elevation with dominant three-storey central bay flanked by groups of three two-storey shops
- Large central arched entry with oriel bay window above, panels of arabesque and festoon decoration
- Ornate central pediment and smaller elaborate end pediments, decorated with oculi, festoons and arabesque ornament,
- Name plate 'Prahran Market' to central pediment with gold lettering
- Multiple cornices providing horizontal emphasis to the elevation
- Rusticated pilasters dividing the elevation into vertical bays
- Pilasters continue as square columns at ground level to form an arcade of recessed shops with large display windows and recessed entrances
- Tall timber sash windows, deeply set into openings with rendered frames and pediments at first floor level
- Wide end bays with tripartite window arrangements and curved pediments interrupted by centrally placed moulded festoons
- Four rendered chimneys
- Commemorative foundation stone

Delicatessen arcade

- Saw-tooth roof form with curved corrugated steel soffits and expressed parallel cord steel trusses

Market hall

- Universal column structure supporting an open grid of parallel cord steel trusses
- Saw-tooth roof form and steel trusses
- Open market hall character
- Curtain glazed and concrete block elevations to Elizabeth Street and Commercial Road

Meat market

- Brick (overpainted) commercial building constructed in an Interwar Stripped Classical style
- Rectangular plan, orientated north-south
- Principal symmetrical elevation with broad lower-storey and central upper-storey
- Cement render detailing including bracketed cornices, plain parapets and a central unadorned pediment
- Broad brick piers, with simple recessed brickwork patterning, dividing elevation into three bays
- Steel-framed paned windows including a row of four individual square windows at the upper level
- Prominent central bay with classically-inspired rendered cement frame to central entrance.

How is it significant?

The Prahran Market is of local historical, aesthetic and social significance to the City of Stonnington.

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Why is it significant?

The Prahran Market has strong associations with the early settlement of South Yarra and – when initially established in Greville Street in 1864 – was amongst the earliest public markets established in suburban Melbourne. The Prahran Market provided local market gardeners and the surrounding community with an important commercial facility, a function which has continued for in excess of 150 years. Built in 1891, the substantial Commercial Road building remains highly intact to clearly demonstrate the continuous operation and development of the market in the City of Stonnington from the late nineteenth century, into the twenty-first century (Criterion A).

The two-storey shops and Commercial Road entrance to the Prahan Market, South Yarra is an assured and finely-executed example of a Free Classical Revival style commercial building, constructed to a design by prominent architect Charles D'Ebro. The refined detailing of the highly symmetrical elevation, including dominant three-storey central bay with large arched entry, oriel bay window, name plate, ornate pediment and panels of arabesque and festoon decoration, side bays with slate-clad mansard roofs set behind elaborate pediments, rusticated pilasters and rendered frames and pediments to deeply set window openings, presents a highly resolved expression of this architectural style, and creates an imposing form within the commercial streetscape (Criterion E).

Designed in the Interwar period, the meat market entrance elevation to Elizabeth Street also displays classically-inspired detailing, albeit in a highly simplified manner, including a symmetrical elevation with prominent central bay, dividing piers, bracketed cornices and pedimented parapet. This elevation presents a highly resolved expression of the Interwar Stripped Classical style, and creates an imposing form on the Elizabeth Street frontage of the market complex (Criterion E).

The Prahran Market, South Yarra has a strong association with the local community for its long and continuing use as a fresh food market, shopping and meeting place. Established in Greville Street in 1864, and on its present site in 1891, the popular and successful market continues to serve both the local and broader community (Criterion G).

Historical Context

This place is associated with the following historic theme(s) taken from the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (2009):

6 Developing Local, Regional and National Economies

- 6.1 Working the land

7 Retailing and Hospitality

- 7.2 Creating specialised shopping centres

Place History

The foundation stone of the Prahran Market in Commercial Road, South Yarra was laid on 25 March 1891 (*Herald*, 25 March 1891:1).

Moves to establish a market in Prahran were made in the 1860s and a site in Greville Street, Prahran was first purchased by the Prahran Council in 1864 for this purpose (*Prahran Telegraph,* 27 July 1928:5). The Prahran Market was permanently moved to its present location and officially opened for trading in Commercial Road on 8 November 1881 (*Argus*, 22 October 1881:10). Later that decade, the City of Prahran Council held a design competition for 'shops, dwellings, and improvements of the present market accommodation in Commercial Road', with Charles D'Ebro the successful architect (*Prahran Telegraph*, 6 April 1889:4; Figure 1). Tenders for the erection of the new market building, comprising six two-storey shops to Commercial Road and open sheds behind, were called in July 1890 (*The Age*, 17 July 1890:7), with C Corlett the successful tenderer (*Herald*, 25 March 1891:1). An 1892 photograph

shows the new market façade soon after its construction (Figure 2). An 1895 Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Plan (MMBW) shows the early layout of the market site (Figure 3).

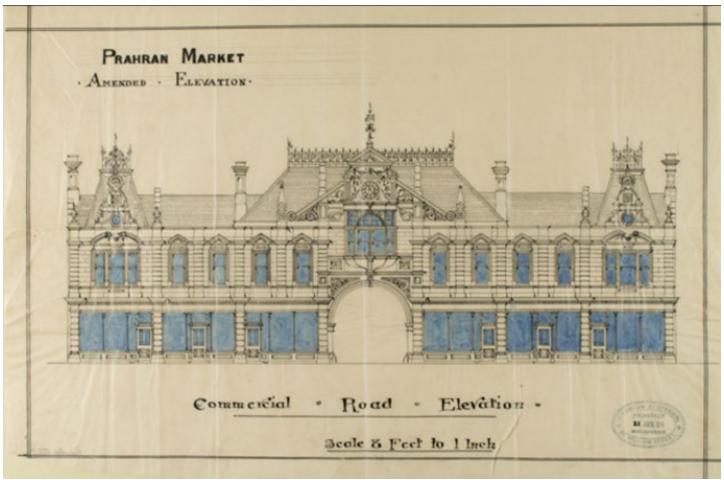


Figure 1. Commercial Road elevation of Prahran Market, C D'Ebro, architect, 21 January 1891 (Source: Stonnington History Centre)



Figure 2. Prahran Market, Commercial Road, South Yarra, N J Caire, 1892 (Source: Stonnington History Centre)

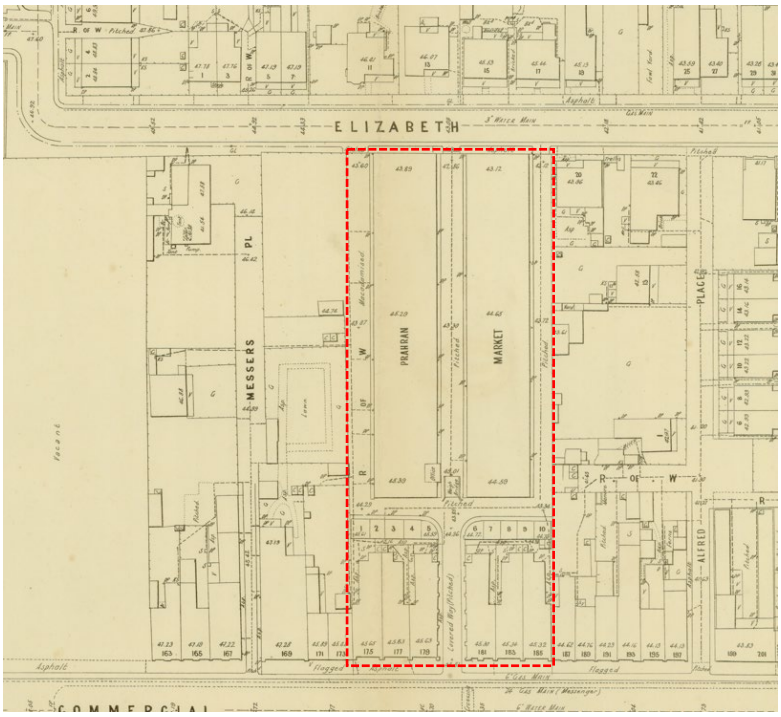


Figure 3. Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plan No 954, City of Prahran, showing original extent of the Prahran Market in 1895 (Source: State Library of Victoria)



Figure 4. Prahran Market, N J Caire, c1912 (Source: Stonnington History Centre)

The Prahran Market prospered in the early twentieth century and a series of extensions were made in the 1920s. This included the addition of 48 stalls to the east of the existing market in 1922 (*Sun News-Pictorial*, 21 October 1922:17) (Figure) and an arcade entrance from Commercial Road, with 14 lock-up shops, in 1924 (*Prahran Telegraph*, 22 February 1924:5; Figure 5). A new meat market was constructed to the west of the general market in 1928. The new building, with frontage to Elizabeth Street, was designed by architects F L and K Klingender and F W Thomas and was built 'on the most up-to-date and hygienic lines to provide the latest facilities for meat supplies' (*Herald,* 19 July 1928:1). Accessible from both Elizabeth Street and Commercial Road as well as the general market, the meat market comprised a wide central aisle flanked by 22 stalls, each with rear lane access. The building exterior comprised 'brickwork with freestone-coloured cement dressings and steel windows throughout' and the interior was designed to be 'thoroughly sanitary' (*The Age,* 14 July 1928:20).

The new meat market was officially opened on 20 July 1928 by the Mayor, Councillor F Harvey (*Prahran Telegraph,* 20 July 1928:2) (Figures 6-10). At its opening, it was noted that the extension of the tramway to the outer suburbs was likely to increase the demands on the market and the council was willing to acquire land as required (*Argus*, 22 July 1928:29). The 1920s extensions to the Prahran Market can be seen in a 1931 aerial photograph (Figure 11).



Figure 5. Extension to the market, 1922 (Source: Sun-News Pictorial, 21 October 1922:17)



Figure 6. Detail of aerial photograph showing extensions to the market, c1925 (Source: State Library of Victoria)



Figure 7. Illustration of the proposed new meat market with frontage to Elizabeth Street (Source: Herald, 18 January 1928:11)

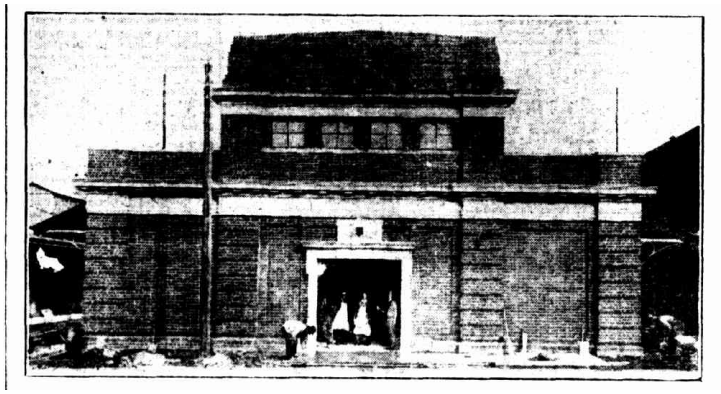


Figure 8. The new meat market, Elizabeth Street, 1928 (Source: Sun News-Pictorial, 14 July 1928:29)



Figure 9. Opening of the new meat market at the Prahran Market, 20 July 1928 (Source: Stonnington History Centre)



Figure 10. Interior of the meat market, c1931 (Source: Stonnington History Centre)

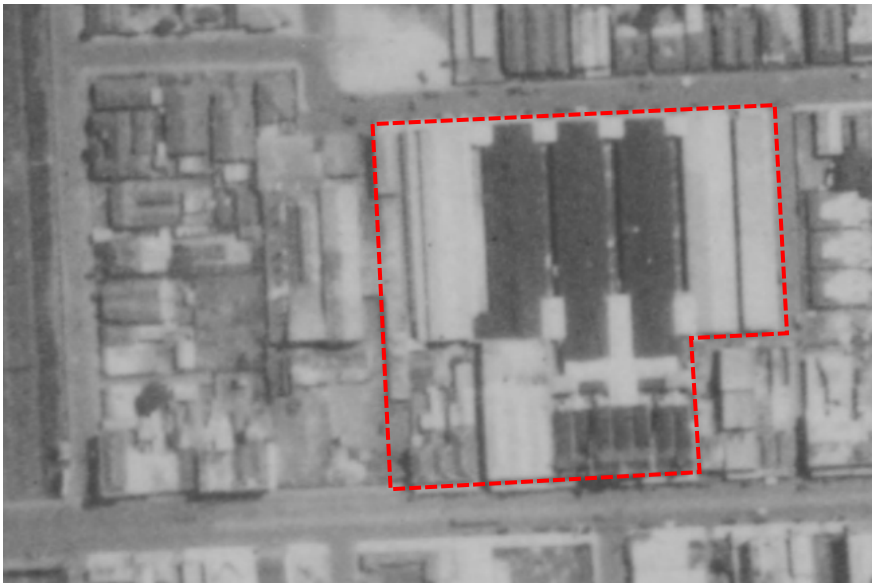


Figure 11. Aerial photograph of Prahran Market, 1931, approximate boundary of market is outlined (Source: Landata Victoria)

The Prahran Market was damaged by fire in 1950 which destroyed the grocers' arcade, three open sheds and 12 brick shops facing Market Street, requiring a modest rebuild and construction of a brick building with sawtooth iron roof and room for 213 stalls (Wilde:137-138) (Figure 12).



Figure 12. Destruction of part of the Prahran Market by fire in 1950 (Source: Stonnington History Centre)

The Prahran Council announced plans to rebuild and modernise the market in 1971 and architects Gunn Hayball Pty Ltd were appointed to undertake this work, with construction commencing in 1976 and completed in 1981 (*The Age*, 14 November 1989:5). At this time the original Commercial Road façade was retained with substantial changes made to the rear (*Wilde:*140, Figure 13) and the addition of a courtyard to the west on Commercial Road (*The Age*, 14 November 1989:5). The upgraded Prahran Municipal Market received a Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Victorian Chapter) Merit Award in 1982.

The Prahran Market continues to operate as a produce market in 2024.



Figure 13. Extensions to the rear of the market at the corner of Elizabeth and Market streets as part of the redevelopment works, c1976 (Source: Stonnington History Centre)

Description

The Prahran Market is located on the north side of Commercial Road, west of the main intersection of Commercial Road and Chapel Street. It occupies a large site bounded to the north by Elizabeth Street and to the east by Market Street. Original 1891 fabric is limited to a substantial building to Commercial Road with the remainder of the market comprising later changes and additions and includes a large covered market hall, a meat hall, delicatessen arcade and adjoining courtyard.

1891 Commercial Road Building

The substantial rendered brick 1891 building is of rectangular plan and presents an imposing elevation to Commercial Road (Figure 14). Designed in a Free Classical style, the principal elevation is symmetrical with a dominant three-storey central entrance bay flanked by groups of three two-storey shops which are

recessed behind the main façade at ground level. The elevation is parapeted, with slate roofs including a central hipped roof form, flanking lower hipped roofs and steep mansard roof forms at the ends. Large rendered chimneys flank the central hipped roof, with smaller chimneys at the east and west end walls. The broad central bay contains a large arched entry with oriel bay window above, panels of arabesque and festoon decoration and an ornate pediment at the parapet line and smaller elaborate pediments are arranged at the ends of the parapet, in front of the mansard roofs. Pediments are decorated with oculi, festoons and arabesque ornament, and the central pediment contains the name plate 'Prahran Market'.

Multiple cornices provide horizontal emphasis to the facade and rusticated pilasters divide the elevation into bays, containing tall sash windows which are deeply set into openings with rendered frames and pediments at first floor level. End bays are wider with tripartite window arrangements and curved pediments interrupted by centrally placed moulded festoons. Pilasters continue as piers at ground level to form an arcade of shops with large display windows and recessed entrances (Figure 15).
Delicatessen arcade and courtyard

Immediately behind the two storey shops addressing Commercial Road is the delicatessen arcade (Figure 17) with permanent individual stalls which acts as a link to the broad market space and fish and meat hall beyond. This arcaded link comprises of a flat roofed section to the west and a small, five bay, sawtooth roof with curved corrugated steel soffit to the east. Expressed parallel cord steel trusses support the sawtooth roof.

The open multipurpose courtyard (Figure 18) located to the west of the delicatessen arcade provides access via stairs to the rooftop terrace retail outlets and professional suites on the first floor (Figure 19). The stairs, tubular steel handrails and perforated steel balustrading date from the early 1980s work. Later steel shade structures supported by universal columns and universal beams have been added to the courtyard and first floor terrace.

Market hall

The market hall is a large industrial form structure with five-bay sawtooth roof with bays running east-west parallel to Commercial Road (Figure 20). The hall is accessed from the main Commercial Road entrance via the delicatessen arcade and from Elizabeth Street to the north. The long-run steel clad roof formed of steel sawtooth trusses (running north-south) is supported in a regular grid of parallel cord steel trusses which in turn are supported on steel universal columns. The parallel cord trusses are painted blue and the sawtooth trusses are painted red.

The northern elevation comprises a large opening to the market hall, curtain glazed shopfronts and concrete block panels (Figure 21). The entrances are identified by canopies and signage.

Meat market

The meat market is located at the western side of the market complex, with the main elevation facing the rear (north) Elizabeth Street boundary. Orientated north-south, the substantial building is rectangular in form and runs the length of the five sawtooth bays of the main market.

Constructed in brick with cement render dressings (all overpainted), the building presents a symmetrical principal elevation to Elizabeth Street, designed in an Interwar Stripped Classical style. The façade comprises a broad lower-storey and a central upper-storey, with bracketed cornices, parapets and a central unadorned pediment. Four broad piers, featuring simple recessed brickwork patterning, divide the elevation into three bays which contain paned steel-framed windows. The prominent central bay contains a large central opening with classically-inspired rendered cement frame at ground level and a row of four individual square windows at the upper level (Figure 16).

Key Features:

1891 building

- Rendered brick commercial building constructed in a Free Classical Style

- Slate-clad hipped and mansard roofs, largely concealed behind a highly decorative parapet
- Rectangular plan
- Symmetrical principal elevation with dominant three-storey central bay flanked by groups of three two-storey shops
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- Four rendered chimneys
- Commemorative foundation stone

Delicatessen arcade and courtyard

- Saw-tooth roof form with curved corrugated steel soffits and expressed parallel cord steel trusses
- Permanent individual food stalls
- Stairs, handrails and balustrading to the stairs and roof terrace

Market hall

- Universal column structure supporting an open grid of parallel cord steel trusses
- Saw-tooth roof form and steel trusses
- Open market hall character
- Curtain glazed and concrete block elevation to Elizabeth Street

Meat market

- Brick (overpainted) commercial building constructed in an Interwar Stripped Classical style
- Rectangular plan, orientated north-south
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- Broad brick piers, with simple recessed brickwork patterning, dividing elevation into three bays
- Steel-framed paned windows including a row of four individual square windows at the upper level
- Prominent central bay with classically-inspired rendered cement frame to central entrance.



Figure 14. Commercial Road elevation (GJM Heritage, May 2024)



Figure 15. Commercial Road shopfronts (GJM Heritage, May 2024)



Figure 16. Prahran Market, meat market entrance, Elizabeth Street elevation, South Yarra (GJM Heritage, June 2024)



Figure 17. Delicatessen arcade behind Commercial Road shopfronts (GJM Heritage, May 2024)



Figure 18. Open Courtyard to the west of the delicatessen arcade behind Commercial Road shopfronts (GJM Heritage, May 2024)



Figure 19. First floor terrace above the delicatessen arcade behind Commercial Road shopfronts (GJM Heritage, May 2024)

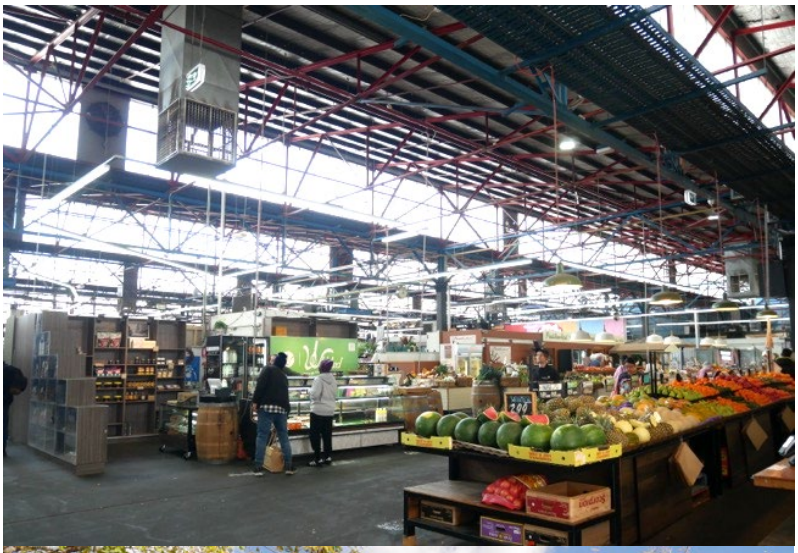


Figure 20. Market hall interior (GJM Heritage, May 2024)



Figure 21. Market hall exterior (GJM Heritage, May 2024)



Figure 22. Meat and fish arcade interior (GJM Heritage, May 2024)



Figure 23. Aerial photograph of Prahran Market (outlined in red), 16 May 2024 (Source: Nearmap)

Intactness and Integrity

The 1891 Commercial Road building of the Prahran Market remains highly intact to its period of construction and has recently undergone a program of conservation works. The principal elevation of the 1928 Meat Market has been overpainted but otherwise remains highly intact to its original detailing. The roof-form and corresponding open internal arrangement of the Meat Market remains legible to its original construction. The market spaces have been renewed and upgraded over time; however, the overall form and external structure remains substantially intact to the late twentieth century renewal by Gunn Hayball.

Assessment Against Criteria

Criteria referred to in *Planning Practice Note No. 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay* (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, August 2018), modified for the local context.

CRITERION A: *Importance to the course or pattern of the City of Stonnington's cultural or natural history (historical significance).*

The Prahran Market has strong associations with the early settlement of South Yarra and – when initially established in Greville Street in 1864 – was amongst the earliest public markets established in suburban Melbourne. The Prahran Market provided local market gardeners and the surrounding community with an important commercial facility, a function which has continued for in excess of 150 years. Built in 1891, the substantial Commercial Road building remains highly intact to clearly demonstrate the continuous operation and development of the market in the City of Stonnington from the late nineteenth century, into the twenty-first century.

CRITERION B: *Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the City of Stonnington's cultural or natural history (rarity).*

N/A

CRITERION C: *Possession to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the City of Stonnington's cultural or natural history (research potential).*

N/A

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CRITERION D: *Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).*

N/A

CRITERION E: *Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).*

The two-storey shops and Commercial Road entrance to the Prahan Market, South Yarra is an assured and finely-executed example of a Free Classical Revival style commercial building, constructed to a design by prominent architect Charles D'Ebro. The refined detailing of the highly symmetrical elevation, including dominant three-storey central bay with large arched entry, oriel bay window, name plate, ornate pediment and panels of arabesque and festoon decoration, side bays with slate-clad mansard roofs set behind elaborate pediments, rusticated pilasters and rendered frames and pediments to deeply set window openings, presents a highly resolved expression of this architectural style, and creates an imposing form within the commercial streetscape.

Designed in the Interwar period, the meat market entrance elevation to Elizabeth Street also displays classically-inspired detailing, albeit in a highly simplified manner, including a symmetrical elevation with prominent central bay, dividing piers, bracketed cornices and pedimented parapet. This elevation presents a highly resolved expression of the Interwar Stripped Classical style, and creates an imposing form on the Elizabeth Street frontage of the market complex.

CRITERION F: *Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.*

N/A

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 their continuing cultural traditions (social significance).*

The Prahran Market, South Yarra has a strong association with the local community for its long and continuing use as a fresh food market, shopping and meeting place. Established in Greville Street in 1864, and on its present site in 1891, the popular and successful market continues to serve both the local and broader community.

CRITERION H: *Special association with the life or works of a period, or group of persons, of importance in the City of Stonnington's history (associative significance).*

N/A

Grading and Recommendations

It is recommended that the property remain in the Heritage Overlay as an individual Heritage Place (HO24).

It is recommended that the *'Heritage place name'* column within the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay be updated to:

Prahran Market
163-185 Commercial Road, 32 Elizabeth Street & part Market Street, South Yarra.

The Prahran Market has recently been accurately conserved with the external paint colour of the 1891 building reflecting the original scheme. It is recommended that paint controls are triggered to continue to manage the historic scheme into the future.

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It is further recommended that consideration be given to completing a Conservation Management Plan for the Prahran Market to understand whether any internal spaces and fabric contribute to the historical, aesthetic or social significance of the place and to inform any future changes to market.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) to the Stonnington Planning Scheme:

External paint controls *Is a permit required to paint an already painted surface?*	Yes (1891 Commercial Road building)
Internal alteration controls *Is a permit required for internal alterations?*	No
Tree controls *Is a permit required to remove a tree?*	No
Solar energy system controls *Solar energy system controls apply?*	Yes
Outbuildings and fences exemptions *Are there outbuildings or fences which are not exempt from notice and review?*	No
Victorian Heritage Register *Is this place included on the Victorian Heritage Register?*	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted *Can a permit be granted to use for a use which would otherwise be prohibited?*	No
Aboriginal heritage place *Is the place an Aboriginal heritage place which is subject to the requirements of the* Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006?	No
Incorporated Plan *Does an incorporated plan apply to the site?*	No

Extent of Overlay

No change. Heritage Overlay extent to remain to the property boundaries.

Previous Assessment

National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Classification Report, 1995

References

Argus.

Context Pty Ltd, *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History*, 2006.

Herald.

Landata Victoria, Central Plan Office, Historical Aerial Photography, 1931.

Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plan No 954, City of Prahran,1895.

Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) City of Prahran Plan No 37, 1895.

National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Classification Report.

Prahran Telegraph.

State Library of Victoria, map collection.

Stonnington History Centre, pictures and drawings collection.

Sun News-Pictorial.

The Age.