

## Heritage Citation

### Austral Silk and Cotton Mills Factory/Warehouse Complex (former)

**Address:** 112-124 Trenerry Crescent, Abbotsford

Prepared by: GJM Heritage

Survey Date: 25 July 2016

<b>Place type:</b> Factory/warehouse	<b>Architect:</b> Not known
<b>Grading:</b> Individually Significant	<b>Builder:</b> Not known
<b>Integrity:</b> Moderate - High	<b>Construction Date:</b> 1927
<p><b>Status:</b> Included in the Heritage Overlay (HO337 - Victoria Park Precinct, Abbotsford)</p> <p>No external paint, internal alteration or tree controls apply to Precinct</p>	<b>Extent of Overlay:</b> As existing, refer to plan



**Figure 1.** 112-124 Trenerry Crescent, Abbotsford: the main four-storey building and the remaining section of a contemporary building to the north (foreground) (2016).



## Historical Context

The following historical context is taken from the HO337 Victoria Park Precinct citation<sup>1</sup>, unless otherwise cited.

The area surrounding Victoria Park to the Yarra River includes parts of Crown Portions 78, 79 and 88, which had been surveyed by Robert Hoddle and sold in 1839 to R Dacre, J D L Campbell (a pastoralist) and J Dight, respectively. John Dight built Yarra House (later the Shelmerdine residence) and a mill on his allotment, and Campbell built his house, Campbellfield House (later owned by architect and MLA William Pitt as Mikado) on his land overlooking the Yarra River.

In 1878, Edwin Trenerry, a shareholder in a deep lead mining company, subdivided Crown Portions 78, 79 and 88 for residential development, creating the existing street pattern. The design recalled the earlier Darling Gardens development at Clifton Hill, with Victoria Park intended as an ornamental garden square, surrounded by residential properties with 33' frontages to the park. By 1879 much of the land had been sold to David Abbott, with some lots sold to James and John Kelly in the next year. By 1885, all the lots had been sold, and development of many of them had begun.

Trenerry Crescent followed the line of the Yarra River and separated the larger riverside allotments from the smaller residential subdivisions to the west. By the turn of the century, the river frontage allotments along Trenerry Crescent were undergoing a transformation from gentlemen's farms to industrial uses. The Melbourne Flour Milling Company operated at the old Dight's Mill site on the Yarra from 1891, at the north end of Trenerry Crescent, with the Shelmerdine's Yarra Hat Works (Figure 4) and a quarry located further to the south, both since redeveloped.

Abbotsford emerged as a centre for the textile industry during the interwar period, with much of the vacant land between Johnson Street, Trenerry Crescent and the Yarra River developed with textile mills.<sup>2</sup> The massive Austral Silk and Cotton Mills complex was built at the north end of Trenerry Crescent in 1927 and the Yarra Falls Spinning Mills had also expanded in the area during the early 20th century. Their administrative complex was built in 1919 facing Johnston Street and the landmark 1930s Byfas building was built, facing Trenerry Crescent, to produce textiles during World War II. The combination of these extensive industrial complexes has a strong built character that is evident from within the Heritage Overlay Area and from distant views down the Yarra River and the Eastern Freeway.

In the last two decades of the 20th century, these large industrial and mill buildings have gradually been decommissioned and recycled for light industrial, commercial or residential uses. Some of these developments have been innovative in the re-use of significant industrial structures, such as Daryl Jackson's award winning design for the Esprit company at 20-60 Trenerry Crescent in the 1980s.

## Place History

The following place history is taken from the 1992 Gary Vines & Matthew Churchward 'Northern Suburbs Factory Study'<sup>3</sup>, unless otherwise cited.

In 1882 Thomas Shelmerdine, a former manager and lessee of the Denton Hat Mills (48-60 Nicholson St, Abbotsford), purchased 4 acres of land from the Campellfield or Dights Falls Estate, which included the subject site. Shelmerdine occupied Yarra House (a large mansion with elaborate gardens, originally built by John Dight, of Dight's Falls and Mill)<sup>4</sup> and a hat factory (Figure 4), equipped with machinery imported specially from Europe and driven by one of the first gas engines in the colony. The factory thrived under Victoria's protective import duties and was soon employing 110 hands.

<sup>1</sup> Victorian Heritage Database (VHD), City of Yarra citation for 'Victoria Park Heritage Precinct', accessed July 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Gary Vines & Matthew Churchward (1992) 'Northern Suburbs Factory Study', Part One: 63.

<sup>3</sup> Vines & Churchward (1992), Part Two: 250-51.

<sup>4</sup> VHD citation for 'Victoria Park Heritage Precinct'.

Following Shelmerdine's death in 1900, the factory, house and land passed on to his executors. In 1902 the property was split so that the factory (Hat Mills), was rated separately from the house (mills £300, house £100). In 1905, the hat mills were purchased by Abraham Kosminsky, manufacturer. At this date, the property had a NAV (Net Annual Value, approximately 10% of the total value) of £150.<sup>5</sup>

In 1907, Sir Alexander Peacock, Abraham Kozminsky and Samuel Warnock were listed as occupants, and in 1909 they were listed as director, manufacturer and director, respectively, of Austral Hat Mills. The company purchased 80' of vacant land to the south (lot 6 and part of lot 7) in 1909 and the adjacent 64' 8" of land in 1911. Between 1919 and 1926 John Fox of the Wool Exchange, Melbourne, was listed as owner of the property.

In 1926, Yarra Falls Spinning Mills Pty Ltd purchased the 144' 8" of land (including the subject site), and the factory known as United Felt Hats Ltd (built 1920)<sup>6</sup> numbered 98 and 110 Trenerry Crescent (to the south of the subject site). In 1927, Yarra Falls Spinning Mills Pty Ltd built cotton mills, Austral Silk and Cotton Mills, at 112-120 Trenerry Crescent (the subject site) as a subsidiary of Yarra Falls Pty Ltd; in 1927 the NAV of the mills totalled £2000<sup>7</sup>.

A drawing of the factory dated March 1943 provided a birds-eye-view of the site (Figure 5). The façade of the multi-storey building was shown with a smaller section to the right (south), which remains in 2016. The façade of the multi-storey building had a projecting one-storey (two-storey at the south end) section (since removed). The parapet read 'Austral Silk & Cotton Mills'. To the left (north) were saw-tooth factory buildings which were demolished post-1966.

An aerial photo dating to 1966 (Figure 6) showed the multi-storey building and the saw-tooth factory buildings to the north which have since been demolished. In 1992 the property was owned by the Victorian Teachers Federation.

Modern additions have since been constructed on the rooftop to extend the fourth floor, while a modern entrance porch, with stairs and ramp, has been constructed at the entrance. In 2016 the building is occupied by the Australian Education Union.

This place is associated with the following themes from the *City of Yarra Heritage Review Thematic History* (July 1998):

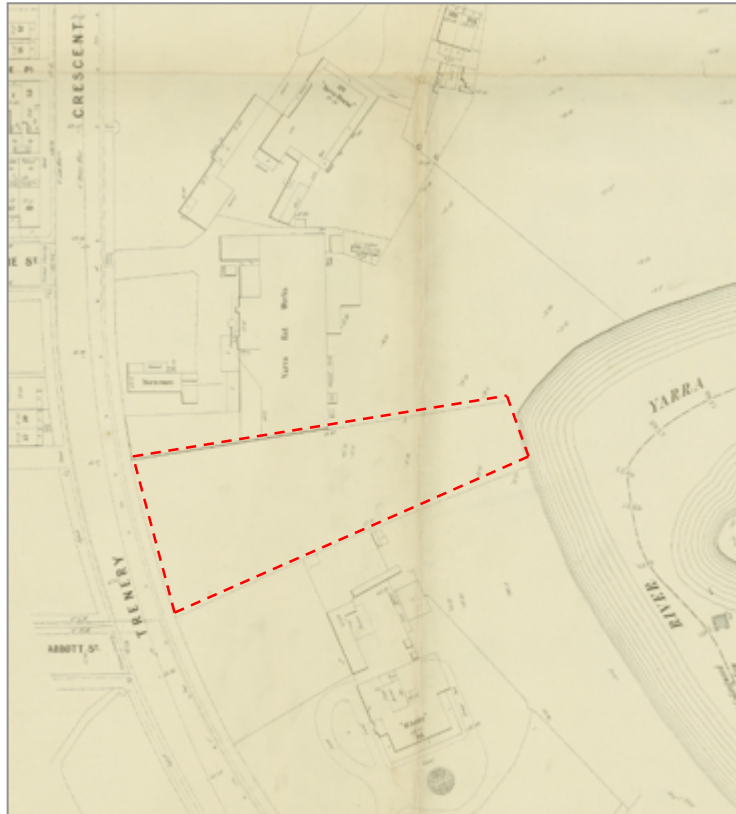
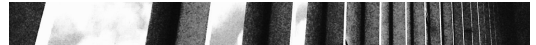
- 4.0 Developing Local Economies
- 4.2 Secondary Industry

---

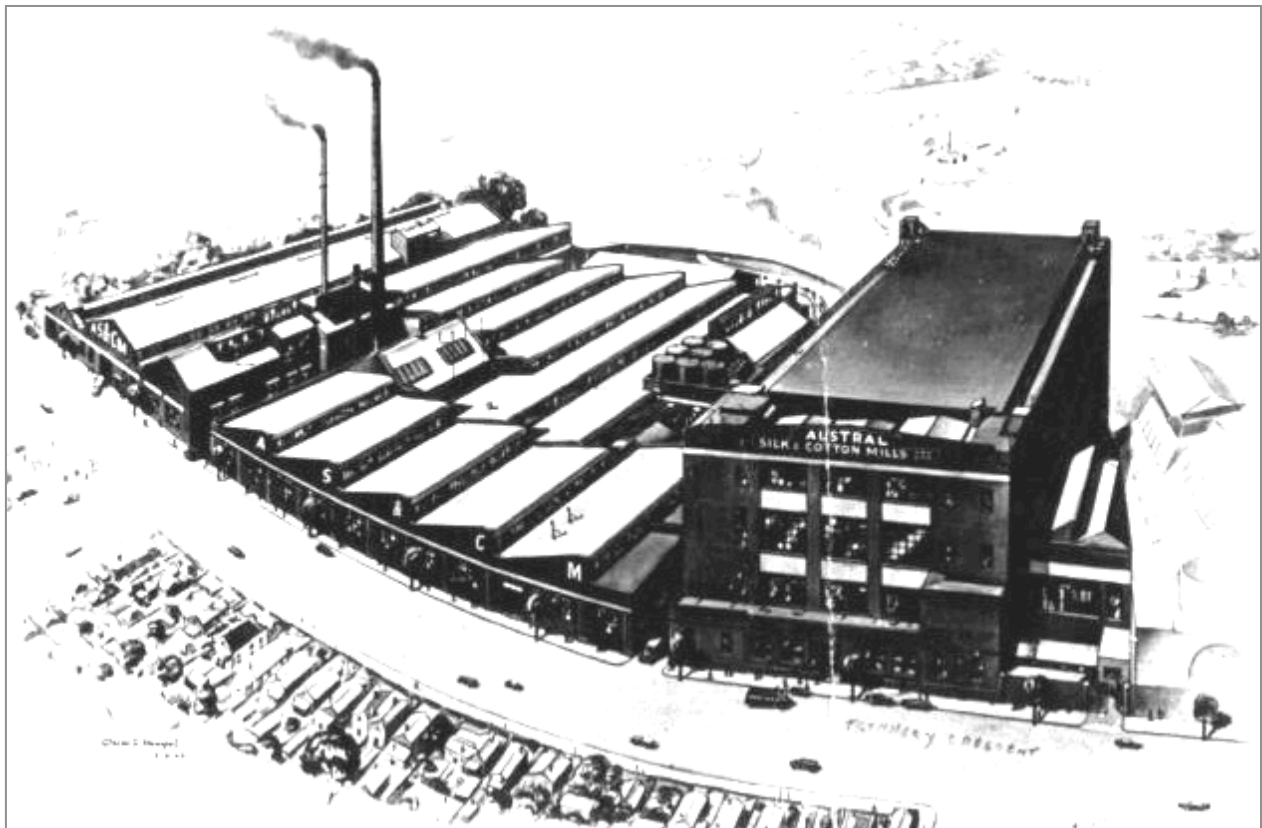
<sup>5</sup> Rate Books, as cited in Andrew C. Ward & Associates (May 1995), 'Collingwood Conservation Study Review', Part C: 618.

<sup>6</sup> Vines & Churchward 1992, Part One: 151.

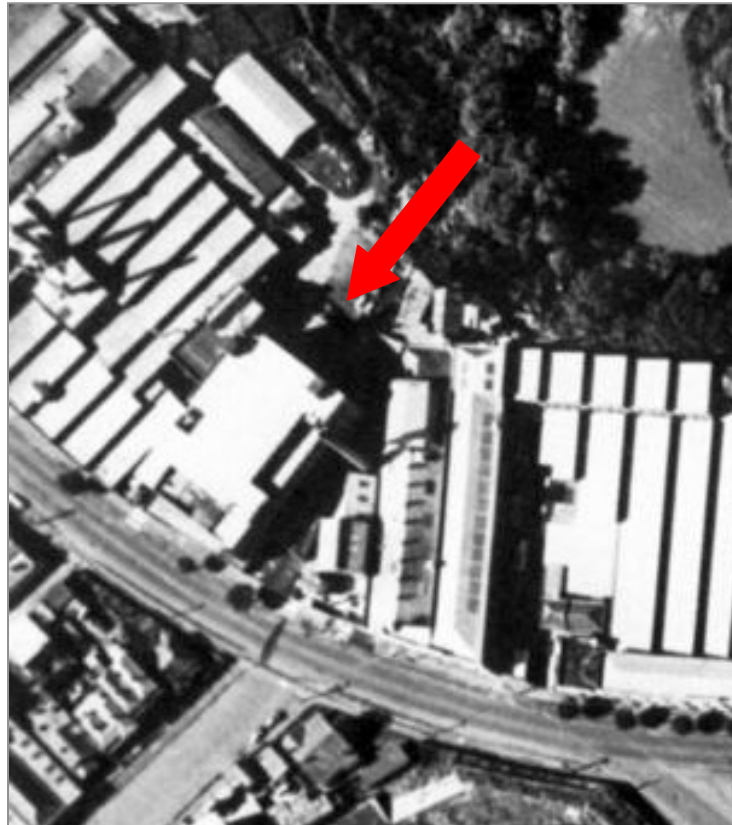
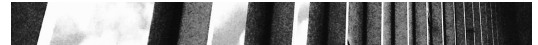
<sup>7</sup> Rate Books as cited in Ward, 1995: 619.



**Figure 4.** The 1905 MMBW Detail Plan showing the vacant subject site (shown in red), Yarra Hat Works and 'Yarra House' to the north and 'Mikado' to the south. West of Trenerry Crescent was the smaller residential development.



**Figure 5.** 'Sketch of Austral Silk and Cotton Mills' dated 3 March 1943, by artist Oscar S. Hempel (Source: COYL ID. CL PIC 179).



**Figure 6.** Detail of a 1966 aerial of Trenerry Crescent showing the existing multi-storey building (with arrow) and the other factory buildings (left) which have since been demolished (Source: COYL ID. CL PIC 105).

### Description

The complex is occupied by a substantial four-storey factory building constructed in 1927, which has a small setback from the front (west) title boundary. The restrained architectural treatment reflects the industrial use, however, the Stripped Classical details strongly suggests that the building was designed by an architect. The building is a landmark in the streetscape and surrounding area due to its substantial size and assertive form. Other original or early structures on the site include a single-storey section attached to the south of the building, and the remnant front section of a now largely demolished single-storey factory building (visible in Figure 5) which stands on the front title boundary, north of the main building. At-grade car parking occupies the remainder of the site. A freestanding brick chimney is located on the neighbouring property at 88 Trenerry Crescent.

112-124 Trenerry Crescent is a four-storey building (the fourth storey towards the street façade is a contemporary addition) with a semi-basement level. Constructed in red-brick, the façade has three groups of windows surmounted by a brick parapet with a central rendered panel (overpainted), which is decorated at cornice level with toothed brickwork. Below the cornice is a band of render (overpainted). Concrete spandrels separate large windows between floors, while brick pilasters divide them vertically. To the corners of the building are horizontally and vertically proportioned rows of glazed windows and blind windows (with vents to the rear of the building). The windows have concrete sills (overpainted). At the north-east corner of the building is a projecting 'turret' element providing access to the roof with a cantilevered timber walkway and bull-nosed profile roof, which may have originally served to watch over the complex to the north. The small building attached to the south elevation is contemporaneous with the main building in design and has had a section removed from the façade (see Figure 5), as confirmed by bricked-in openings.

An original one and two-storey section was removed from the façade of the four-storey building (see Figure 5) at an unknown date; this was adjoined where the render is applied, while at the south end of the façade it is evident where a door was bricked-in to close access to the two-storey section.

The modern portico, stairs and access ramp are in a sympathetic post-modern design. The modern windows to the building occupy the original openings and are highly sympathetic in design, most likely reflecting the original steel-framed multi-paned windows.

North of the main building is the remaining section of a single-storey factory building (see Figure 6 for original extent). This red-brick building is of the same architectural style, with toothed brickwork to the cornice and rendered dressings which remains unpainted at the cornice. An entrance door fronts Trenerry Crescent flanked by engaged brick pilasters, with modern aluminum vents to the facade. The side elevations have been rendered.

### Integrity & Condition

The 1927 buildings and contemporary structures are in very good condition and are reasonably intact with largely sympathetic later reglazing, entrance portico and other additions. The overall level of integrity as a result of alterations is considered moderate to high.

### Comparative Analysis

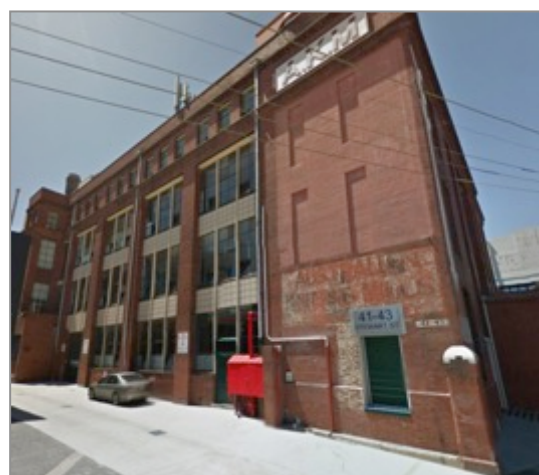
The comparative analysis has been informed by a search of the Hermes database and includes places that are individually significant within the City of Yarra. The following places are comparable in historic use, construction date or architectural style or form:

#### **Australian Knitting Mills Ltd (former), 41-43 Stewart Street, Richmond (Individually Significant within Precinct HO332)**

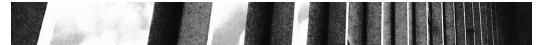
The multi-storeyed red-brick building was constructed in 1922-24 (with some sections that date to 1899 and possibly 1912). The building retains 'Kookaburra Underwear' and 'Golden Fleece' logos on the parapet. It is identified as being architecturally significant, and a key part of the significant sub-precinct of the original AKM complex. The factory retains a fair level of integrity.

The Austral Silk and Cotton Mills Factory/Warehouse Complex and Stewart Street factory are contemporaneous buildings that are highly comparable in form, scale, construction materials and in their overall architectural design. Both buildings have windows of various sizes including large sections of glazing separated by horizontal spandrels and vertical brick piers.

The main Austral Silk and Cotton Mills Factory/Warehouse Complex building is a more substantial building, while both buildings are broadly comparable in terms of integrity.



Figures 7 and 8: 41-43 Stewart Street, Richmond (© Google)



**Whybrow's Boot Factory (former), 198-210 Hoddle Street, Abbotsford (Individual HO, HO18)**

The former Whybrow's Boot Factory, built in 1919, is a large four-storey red-brick building with a façade broken into bays by brick pilasters. Repetitive fenestration comprises pairs of single timber-framed windows with rendered lintels and sills. Larger windows appear on the side elevations. The roof is hidden by a parapet that rises at the corners of the façade. The building retains a high level of integrity but has a modern entrance and fan-shaped cantilevered glass canopy over the main entrance. The former Whybrow's Shoe Factory is of local architectural and historical significance. The building is enhanced by its large scale and repetitive fenestration, and is an important heritage element in the streetscape. Historically, the building is the last major remnant of one of Melbourne's largest and most progressive boot manufacturing companies.

The Austral Silk and Cotton Mills Factory/Warehouse Complex and the Hoddle Street factory are comparable in size and scale and construction materials. The main Austral Silk and Cotton Mills Factory/Warehouse Complex building has a lower degree of integrity due to alterations to the windows and removal of some original fabric, while both have an altered entrance. Both are dominant heritage buildings within the streetscape.



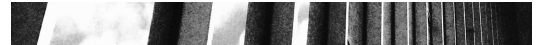
**Figure 9:** 198-210 Hoddle Street, Abbotsford (© Google)

**British United Shoe Machinery Co. Pty Ltd Factory (former), 200 Alexandra Parade, Fitzroy (Individually Significant within Precinct HO334)**

Dating to the Interwar period (built 1932), this former factory is a substantial and intact four-storey red-brick building which a dominant presence along Alexandra Parade. Rows of steel-framed multi-paned windows alternate with horizontal (probably rendered) bands, with distinctive Moderne detailing to the entry.

The subject site is comparable in terms of scale and construction materials and in the repetitive use of large windows to all elevations. The Austral Silk and Cotton Mills Factory/Warehouse Complex has a lower degree of integrity due to alterations. However, architectural detail is confined to the entrance of the Alexandra Parade factory, while the subject site incorporates Interwar Stripped Classical architectural detail more widely, possibly reflecting a more considered design approach.



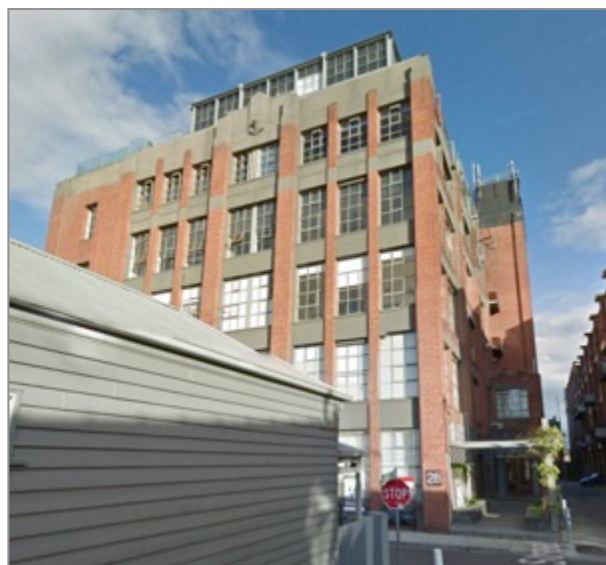


**Figure 10:** 200 Alexandra Parade, Fitzroy (© Google)

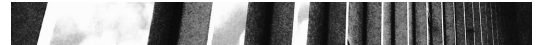
**Julius Kayser (Aust) Pty Ltd Factory (former), 28 Tanner Street, Richmond (Individually Significant within Precinct HO332)**

Designed by architects Plottel & Bunnett and constructed in 1929-30, the former factory is a substantial multi-storey red-brick construction with bold horizontal spandrels and narrow vertical brick piers, defining large multi-paned glass windows. A rendered parapet is accentuated with an Art Deco motif within the larger central bay. The former factory has since been converted to apartments, which may have included the construction of rooftop apartments. The Interwar building has a modern entrance and door, but appears to retain a high level of integrity.

The Austral Silk and Cotton Mills Factory/Warehouse Complex is comparable in the application of architectural detail, both with subtle architectural elements (of differing styles) to the façade. They are comparable in their construction materials and form, as evident in the use of concrete spandrels and vertical brick piers to separate large multi-paned windows. The Austral Silk and Cotton Mills Factory/Warehouse Complex has a lower degree of integrity in comparison to the former factory at Tanner Street, but is comparable in its dominant form and scale and significant contribution to the streetscape.



**Figure 11:** 28 Tanner Street, Richmond (© Google)



## Conclusion

The main Austral Silk and Cotton Mills Factory/Warehouse Complex building is a dominant building in the streetscape, which reflects its Interwar construction date in its materials, architectural style and Stripped Classical detailing. It is a substantial example of a factory for this period, with a dominant form and scale that makes a significant contribution to the local streetscape and heritage precinct. It is broadly comparable in design quality, visual prominence and intactness to other factory buildings of this period that are included in the Heritage Overlay.

## Assessment Against Criteria

Following is an assessment of the place against the heritage criteria set out in *Planning Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay* (July 2015).

**Criterion A:** *Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).*

The Austral Silk and Cotton Mills Factory/Warehouse Complex is one of the remaining notable examples of industrial development in Abbotsford, and particularly on Trenerry Crescent along the Yarra River, where industrial development began from the turn of the century. It is of historical value as an example of a factory building associated with the textile industry, which was prominent in the Abbotsford area during the Interwar period. It was one of the last of the Yarra Falls Company buildings to be erected, demonstrating the ultimate extent of land-holdings of this firm.

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

The multi-storey 1927 building (along with the neighbouring contemporary brick chimney) is a landmark in the streetscape and the wider area, dominating the surrounding low-scale residential development and visible from distant views down the Yarra River and the Eastern Freeway. The building has subtle Stripped Classical expression, and is one of the most substantial and distinctive buildings in Trenerry Crescent.

## Statement of Significance

*What is significant?*

The Austral Silk and Cotton Mills Factory/Warehouse Complex at 112-124 Trenerry Crescent, Abbotsford.

The 1927 four-storey brick building, the single-storey section attached to the southern elevation of the three-storey building, and the single-storey free-standing building located to the north all contribute to the significance of the place.

Later additions and alterations to the buildings are not significant.

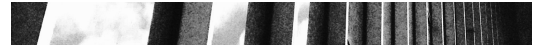
*How is it significant?*

The Austral Silk and Cotton Mills Factory/Warehouse Complex is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Yarra.

*Why is it significant?*

The Austral Silk and Cotton Mills Factory/Warehouse Complex is one of the remaining notable examples of industrial development in Abbotsford, and particularly on Trenerry Crescent along the Yarra River, where industrial development began from the turn of the century. It is of historical value as an example of a factory building associated with the textile industry, which was prominent in the Abbotsford area during the Interwar period. It was one of the last of the Yarra Falls Company buildings to be erected, demonstrating the ultimate extent of land-holdings of this firm. (Criterion A)

The multi-storey 1927 building (along with the neighbouring contemporary brick chimney) is a landmark in the streetscape and the wider area, dominating the surrounding low-scale residential development and visible from distant views down the Yarra River and the Eastern Freeway. The building has subtle Stripped Classical expression, and is one of the most substantial and distinctive buildings in Trenerry Crescent. The



four-storey brick building reflects its Interwar construction date in its Stripped Classical architectural style, and was probably architect designed. The remaining contemporary buildings on site are also of aesthetic significance, as physical remnants of the once-larger former factory complex. (Criterion E)

**Grading and Recommendations**

It is recommended that the place continue to be included in the Heritage Overlay of the Yarra Planning Scheme as an individually significant place within the Victoria Park Precinct, Abbotsford (HO337).

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

<b>External Paint Controls?</b>	No
<b>Internal Alteration Controls?</b>	No
<b>Tree Controls?</b>	No
<b>Outbuildings or Fences not exempt under Clause 43.01-3?</b>	No
<b>Prohibited Uses Permitted?</b>	No
<b>Incorporated Plan?</b>	HO337 Precinct: Yes
<b>Aboriginal Heritage Place?</b>	Not assessed

**Identified by:**

Andrew C. Ward & Associates (May 1995), 'Collingwood Conservation Study Review'.

**References:**

Andrew C. Ward & Associates (May 1995), 'Collingwood Conservation Study Review'.

City of Yarra Library (COYL) Catalogue, <<http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/Libraries/Search-the-catalogue/>>, accessed July 2016.

Graeme Butler and Associates (2007), 'City of Yarra Review of Heritage Overlay Areas, Appendix 8'.

Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works Detail Plans

Vines, Gary & Matthew Churchward (1992) 'Northern Suburbs Factory Study'.

Victorian Heritage Database (VHD), City of Yarra citation for 'Victoria Park Heritage Precinct', accessed July 2016.