Appendix A – Heritage Citation

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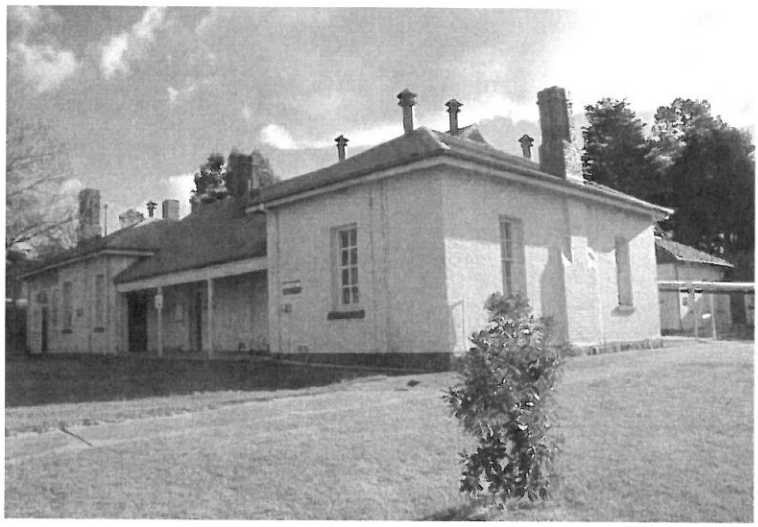
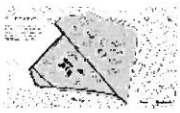
Victorian Heritage Database Report

FORMER KEW COTTAGES (KEW RESIDENTIAL SERVICES)





Location:
PRINCESS STREET, STAINER STREET, BOTANIC DRIVE, ARBOUR DRIVE, CANOPY AVENUE, BRAZIER GROVE, COLLINS STREET, LOWER DRIVE, PARK AVENUE, LINAKER PLACE, GUEST CLOSE, MONTEREY CLOSE, ENGLISH PLACE, MAIN DRIVE, HOLLY LANE, LOWER DRIVE NORTH, KEW, BOROONDARA CITY

Heritage Status / Level of Significance:
Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number: H2073
Listing Authority: VHR

Heritage Overlay Number: HO485

Statement of Significance:
What is significant?

The Former Kew Cottages (Kew Residential Services) initially consisted of three cottages, school house and kitchen constructed from 1887 to the east of the Kew Lunatic Asylum. The present buildings stand in extensive grounds with avenues of oaks lining the internal roads and mature plantings between the buildings.

The surviving buildings at the site include two of the three cottages built in 1887, nowknown as Unit 10 and House Hostel. The original School House (Parent's Retreat/Chapel) was built at the same time. A further cottage (Unit 11) was built in 1891 and has also been altered. The ward (Unit 9) built as the female ward dates from 1898-1900. A separate dining room (STAD building) was built in 1917. Units 9, 10, 11 and the House Hostel have been much altered and extended. The three cottages and the female ward were updated in the wave of reform initiated by Dr E. Cunningham Dax, the first Chairman of the Mental Health Authority, in the 1950s and many of the changes made to these buildings reflect this era. The School House and the Dining Room are relatively intact although used for various purposes over the years.

The Former Kew Cottages (Kew Residential Services) site deteriorated dramatically in the first half of the twentieth century, with severe overcrowding and lack of maintenance.

There were two waves of reform to the institution in the later twentieth century. The first was initiated by Dr Cunningham Dax with the support of a media campaign launched by journalist E.W. (Bill) Tipping in the Melbourne Herald brought the overcrowding and poor conditions of the Kew Cottages to the community's attention, with the establishment of the Kew Cottages Appeal in 1953 raising £47,798. The first £10,000 was spent on modern plumbing, new kitchens, refrigeration and renovations to the original cottages. Four H-shaped dormitory blocks based on Dutch models seen by Dr Dax were built in 1958. A new ward (Ward 13) was completed in 1960 as was the Geiger Playhouse.

In 1973 a further appeal was initiated by Graham Perkin, Editor of the Age newspaper. This became known as the Minus Children Appeal. There were over 500 children on the waiting list for places at Kew Cottages at that time. Four major buildings were constructed in this period to cater for daytime activities and education and named the Hamer Centre (day activity centre), the Smorgon Centre (medical and dental centre) and the Perkin Art Centre and the Age/Geiger Centre (theatre and kindergarten), which incorporated the Geiger Playhouse, were built as a result of this appeal.

Landscape
The Kew Lunatic Asylum (Willsmere) had been constructed between 1868 and 1872. The principal access to the complex was from a drive from Princess Street culminating in an eliptical carriageway in front of the main building. A gate lodge and large ornamental gates were designed in 1873 and erected at the entrance. These were later demolished (1940s?) for the straightening of Princess Street. The gates were relocated to the entrance of Victoria Park in High Street, Kew.

In the 1880s the grounds were planted with many conifers and large growing trees, oaks, elms and Moreton

Bay Figs, and trees indigenous to the area, River Red Gum, Yellow Box and Lightwood were retained in the landscape. In 1913 the landscape gardener Hugh Linaker was employed to layout the grounds of Mont Park (est. 1910). As landscape gardener for the State Lunacy Department he commenced a program of landscape improvements and tree plantings at asylums in Victoria.

The conifer plantings and oak avenues were well established and a mature size by the 1940s. Conifers were widely planted from the 1860s along with Moreton Bay Figs and occasionally Oaks. Oaks and elms were more widely planted from the 1880s. It is not known if Linaker was responsible for the oak avenues, but it appears that many of the conifers, Monterey Pines, Canary Island Pines, Monterey Cypress, Hoop Pine, Bunya Bunya Pines and Himalayan Cedars, predate Linaker and the oaks and elms may have been planted soon after his appointment. The use of Bhutan Cypress in the landscape is almost certainly due to Linaker as he favoured upright trees.It is possible that the two remnant Monterey Cypress along Main Drive and a Monterey Pine along Lower Drive are trees from an earlier planting scheme.

In the late 1960s-70s a new layer of planting was established to the north and east of the site. Amongst the complex are many fine Spotted Gums (Corymbia maculata), Lemon-scented Gums, (Corymbia citriodora), Flowering Gum (Corymbia ficifolia) Blue Gums (Eucalyptus globulus subsp. globulus), Swamp Mallet (Eucalyptus spathulata), Argyle Apple (E. cinerea), Narrow-leaf Black Peppermint (E. nicholii) and a few unknown (rare/significant?) eucalypts. North of the Perkins Centre are two fine, and rare, gums, Eucalyptus occidentalis, and E. macrandra, and to the east 2 E. camaldulensis and a E. spathulata. On the Princess Street frontage (SE corner) is a young Syncarpia glomifera, an unknown Eucalyptus sp. and scattered throughout the site are a few Callitris trees, C. rhomboidea, C. columinaris and C. glaucophylla, and River Red Gums (Eucalyptus camaldulensis)

How is it significant?

The Former Kew Cottages (Kew Residential Services) site is of architectural, historical, aesthetic, scientific (horticultural) and social significance to the State of Victoria

Why is it significant?

The Former Kew Cottages (Kew Residential Services) site is historically significant as the first government institution to be established for intellectually handicapped children in Australia. Its design and construction in 1885-87 represented a new and progressive move for the care and accommodation of people with intellectual disabilities, in that it removed them from the general lunatic asylums and provided opportunities for education and training. The six buildings constructed between 1887 and 1917 are of particular significance as the core of the site, demonstrating the form and function of the original institution.

The Former Kew Cottages (Kew Residential Services) site is historically and architecturally significant as the first example of the cottage system based on the European 'Cottage System' applied in full to the intellectually handicapped. While the surviving original cottages have been extended and upgraded, their siting and, in part, their form and remaining fabric, point to the original arrangement of the institution. In addition, the changes made in the period 1958-1960 demonstrate the wave of reform initiated by the newly-appointed Chairman of the Mental Hygiene Authority in 1952, Dr Eric Cunningham Dax and the Tipping Appeal. It was the condition of the House Hostel and Unit 9 which demonstrated to the reading public in the 1950s the needs of the residents in the whole institution.

The Former Kew Cottages (Kew Residential Services) site is historically significant in demonstrating changing attitudes to the care of the intellectually disabled from 1887 to the present.

The Former Kew Cottages (Kew Residential Services) site is historically significant for its association with Dr Ernest Jones, first Inspector General for the Insane from 1905 and Dr Eric Cunningham Dax, first Chairman of the Mental Hygiene Authority from 1952, whose reforms are reflected in the development of the site and buildings. The cottage now known as Unit 10 is historically significant as one of the original cottages for boys opened in 1887, but considerably altered, especially in the years 1954 to 1960 but retaining the domestic scale

of the original.

The House/Hostel (1887) is historically significant as one of the original 1887 cottages for girls. Although much altered by changes made mainly in the period 1954-60, the building (and Unit 10 and 11) demonstrates in its siting and remaining fabric, the first stage of development of the institution. Additional facilities were added on the south side, replacing an existing verandah. The changes of the 1950s and 1960s demonstrate the wave of reform initiated by the newly-appointed Chairman of the Mental Hygiene Authority in 1952 and the Tipping Appeal and it was this cottage and Unit 9 whose condition demonstrated to the public in the 1950s the needs of the residents in the whole institution.

The building constructed as the School House (Parents Retreat/Chapel) (1887) is architecturally and historically significant as the first building constructed to provide education and training for the residents and demonstrates the innovative educational function of the institution from its earliest period. This school was the predecessor of special schools for the intellectually handicapped in Victoria.

The cottage now known as Unit 11 (1887) is historically significant as one of the original 1887 cottages. It has been considerably altered by changes made mainly in the period 1954-60.

The building now known as Unit 9 (1898-1900) is of historical significance as one of the early wards, which has been considerably altered by changes made mainly in the period 1954-60.

The former Dining Room (STAD Building) (1917) is of historical and architectural significance in demonstrating the development of the institution in the early twentieth century. The dining room was constructed to improve food hygiene as part of the reforms introduced by Dr Ernest Jones, Inspector General of Lunatic Asylums, in response to the regular outbreaks of typhoid and scarlet fever and the increase in the institution's population to over 300.

The landscape at Kew Cottages is of historical and aesthetic significance at a state level. The planting is dominated by towering conifers from the nineteenth century, including Hoop Pines, Bunya Bunya Pines, Monterey Pines, Canary Island Pines, and Monterey Cypress. The landscape was further enhanced by avenue plantings of English Elms, English Oaks and Algerian Oaks along the Drives and in the landscape. The Main Drive comprises an unusual double avenue of trees, the outer rows are planted with Algerian Oaks, and the inner avenue with English Elms. Towards the western end the avenue changes to alternating Elms and Moreton Bay Figs. On the north side near the centre is a short row of Bhutan Cypress. The Boundary Drive is planted with an avenue of Algerian Oaks and the planting along Lower Drive mostly features pairs of alternating English Oaks and Algerian Oaks along the avenue. The grounds also feature an Oak Walk, asphalt path edged with uncommon glazed spoon drainage tiles and planted with Algerian Oaks, and a few English Oaks. Retained in the landscape are several old River Red Gums and a number of regenerating saplings, some now semi-mature and two Yellow Box and a fine Lightwood tree.

The Main Drive is of historical significance for its association with the Kew Lunatic Asylum (Willsmere), the largest nineteenth century mental institution in Victoria and later its use by the Kew Cottages complex. The landscape is significant for its association with the prominent landscape gardener, Hugh Linaker who was appointed by the State Lunacy Department in 1913. He later became State Superintendent of Parks and Gardens from 1933, and prepared landscape plans for the Buchan Caves reserve in 1929 and the new Shrine of Remembrance in 1933. Linaker was one of the most significant landscape designers in Victoria in the early 20th century His landscape style included mixing exotics and native trees and contrasting forms especially narrow crowned and fastigiate forms and palms. These were often planted in alternate arrangements in the landscape to give a striking and contrasting image.

The planting is of scientific (horticultural) significance for its collection of trees rarely cultivated in Victoria and trees of outstanding size and form. The grounds include three specimens of the rarely cultivated Prunus ilicifolia. The only other known trees are an old tree at Willsmere, now coppicing from a stump and a young sapling in the entry courtyard and a large tree in Caulfield Park. The planting also includes an uncommon Pinus muricata, Brachychiton roseus subsp. roseus, and three Cupressus macrocarpa 'Fastigiata'. Beside the

workshop is a stand of the rarely grown Wigandia caracasana and north of the Chapel two young trees of Arbutus canariensis.

The Algerian Oaks (Quercus canariensis), (about 80 trees) at Kew Cottages are highly significant. For some unknown reason the trees have been grafted onto English Oak (Quercus robur) rootstock. The location of the graft union ranges from ground level to about two metres above ground level. Algerian Oaks are readily grown from acorns and this form of propagation is only known to occur in Rosalind Park Bendigo, where there are three grafted Algerian Oaks in an avenue.

The Former Kew Cottages (Kew Residential Services) site is of social significance in demonstrating the position of the intellectually disabled in society. Public awareness campaigns such as the very successful Tipping and Minus Children Appeals for improvements at the Cottages have been influential in changing public perceptions of the disabled. The Kew Parents Association founded in 1957 was the first such organisation in Australia, acting as an advocacy group for their children and for all intellectually disabled citizens.

The memorial structures at Kew Cottages commemorating the long term residents and the nine men who died in a fire in Unit 31 in 1996 are of social significance as a reminder of society's duty of care to the intellectually disabled.

[NOTE:On 9 September 2005 the Executive Director granted a permit to demolish buildings B2, B4 and B5 and to relocate memorials F1, F2 and F3]

Heritage Study / Consultant	
Construction Date Range	1886 - 1887
Architect / Designer	
Municipality	BOROONDARA CITY
Other names	
Hermes number	12309
Property number	

This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online