

Fairfield Village Heritage Precinct Amended Statement of Significance

Prepared for Project Manager

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The Panel noted that the Statement of Significance for Fairfield Village Heritage Precinct was strongly focused on Fairfield Station and the associated village square and immediate surrounds and less so on the Station Street component of the heritage place. While the Panel understands that this appropriately relates to the level of local significance associated with the railway station heritage fabric and its role in the growth of the Fairfield Village commercial area, it limits the significance of Station Street to an aesthetic one. This may have implications later if Council's objective is to retain substantial heritage fabric in Fairfield Village Heritage Precinct.

The Panel recommended that the Statement of Significance be amended to rectify this matter and this has been done in point two below.

2. Statement of Significance (amended)

This statement of significance is based on the history, description and comparative analysis in this citation. The Criteria, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H is the Heritage Council Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance (HERCON). Heritage values of historic, social, aesthetic and scientific significance are based on the Burra Charter definitions. Level of Significance, Local, State, National, is in accordance with the level of Government legislation.

What is significant?

The Fairfield Village Heritage Precinct, comprising the Federation and Inter-war commercial buildings in Station, Wingrove and Railway streets, the church in Station St, and the railway reserve and station buildings, platforms, footbridge and signal box, and its interrelationship of its spacious setting and views in the precinct, as shown on the precinct map, is significant. The original form, materials and details of the heritage places as shown in the schedule, are significant as are views to and from the station from all directions within the precinct. Other buildings and non-original alterations are not significant.

How is it significant?

The Fairfield Village Heritage Precinct is locally significant for its historical, social and aesthetic values.

What is significant?

Historical Significance. (HERCON criteria A, B, H).

The precinct has tangible and substantial evidence of the documented major historic themes, 'Peopling Fairfield', 'Transport and Communications', and 'Developing Fairfield's Economy'.

Railway Station as the Catalyst for the Earliest Development

The Fairfield Village Heritage Precinct, **is historically significant at a local level** as it demonstrates the evolution of the modest working man's commercial shopping area from the earliest location of Fairfield's shopping village, located in Railway Place in the late 1880s and opposite the south side of the railway station, which was the catalyst for the development of Fairfield in the 1880s. The existing building on the north-east corner of Wingrove and Gillies Streets, and the existing church in Station Street, also date from the earliest period of development of Fairfield. The two distinctive palms in the Railway Reserve, flanking the entry to the southern entry to the station, are the only remnants of the Federation era garden plantings at the station. The shopping village later extended to the north side of the station buildings (Wingrove Street). The former 1925 Lodge Medical practice at 278 Wingrove Street was strategically located opposite the station.

Impact of the Electrification of the Railway particularly on Station Street

After the electrification of the railway line in 1921, the extension of the shopping village continued around the corner into Station Street northwards to Duncan Street. The large numbers of inter-war style buildings in Railway Place and Wingrove Street and particularly Station Street, reflect the significance the electrification of the line, to the economy of Fairfield.

Historic Station Street

The character of Station Street developed as the thriving commercial centre of Fairfield from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It started with the initial subdivision of long narrow rectangular allotments with the short ends parallel to Station St, which is reflected in the current width of most of the significant places there today. These properties were serviced with an unmade road, which dissected the railway line close to the station. The allotments had a few houses and shops but they were mostly vacant. This historic development is illustrated in Station Street by community facilities such as the first St Paul's Anglican Church, erected in 1885, which also served as the district's first school. In 1921, the rail line was electrified and Station Street fast became a busy thoroughfare with many one and two storey interwar style shops, with narrow frontages, which still exist. The existing large number of inter-war style buildings in Station Street reflects the significance of this event to the economy of Fairfield. The human scale of divided façade elements reinforces and corresponds to the original allotment widths.

Historic Village 'Square'

Together with the historic buildings either side of the Railway Reserve, in Wingrove St and Railway Place, the open space of the railway reserve as well as the interrelated heritage features including but not limited to the station buildings, signal box, pedestrian bridge and palm trees within it are important. They illustrate the Railway Reserve's historic role, acting as the 'traditional village square' providing an informal community meeting place. Significance includes the setting, the functional inter relationship of the various parts, as well as views within and across the Railway Reserve from Wingrove Street and Railway Place which are vital to understand and enjoy the important heritage values. The spacious and visually connected context of the historic places within the railway reserve and to the historic buildings in Railway Reserve, Wingrove St and Station Street is in danger of being cumulatively eroded through the redevelopment of strips of railway reserve land for the construction of buildings which block the historic views.

(Refer to Figure 5.2 for a diagram of the village 'square'.)

Over 100 years as a Railway Station

The existing Federation era station building complex, including the station buildings, platforms, footbridge and signal box, is historically significant for indirectly recalling its opening in 1888 and remaining in use for its original purpose at present (over 106 years). It is important also for its capacity to offer an insight into how pre-electronic railway stations worked, and the important work of the chief architect's office following its establishment in 1908 when the Railways Department was engaged in the improvement of station facilities across the network in response to unprecedented traffic growth. This is illustrated by the Arts and Crafts style of the station buildings enabling it to be readily identified with the early work of the chief architect's office.

Social Significance (HERCON criterion G)

The Fairfield Village Heritage Precinct, is **socially significant at a local level** particularly the railway reserve which is a spacious landmark in the precinct and seen as a focus and an extension of the local community performing functions similar to that of a civic space, where social and economic exchanges take place, where people and cultures mix as they use the railway infrastructure and as an historic and spacious back drop to shopping and eating in the streets visually connected to it. It is the only spacious landmark in the Fairfield Village Heritage Precinct.

Aesthetic Significance (HERCON criterion E)

Views.

The Fairfield Village Heritage Precinct, is **aesthetically significant at a local level** for the informal 'village square' created by the unobstructed views to and from the Federation and Inter-war historic places in and around the Railway Reserve. The 'village square' is lined with buildings, infrastructure, community facilities and open spaces, particularly in the railway reserve. It is a self-identified precinct which is seen as a focus and an extension of the local community and in this way performs functions similar to that of a civic space, like town squares in old European cities. The low rise one or two storey structures, the articulation of the building facades, the Federation and Inter-war decorative elements, varying pediments and broken skyline, provide an interesting and diverse streetscape that is divided into narrow allotments and buildings which have a human scale. The two distinctive palms flank the entry to the front of the 1911 station buildings and this landmark statement, which can be seen from various parts of the precinct, is important. (Refer to Figure 5.2 for a diagram of the village 'square'.

Arts and Crafts Architecture

The station buildings are aesthetically significant as an increasingly rare, substantially complete and interrelated railway complex of the Federation era, with two palms, and the picturesque Arts and Crafts forms, motifs including strap work, spandrels, fibrous cement slates and rough-cast plaster work.

Inter-war Architectural Streetscapes

Station Street is aesthetically significant for the streetscapes of predominantly Inter-war historic commercial buildings of low rise one or two storey structure, the articulation of the building facades, the moderately Inter-war decorative elements, varying pediments and broken skyline, they provide an interesting and diverse streetscape that is divided into narrow allotments and buildings which have a human scale.