

Heritage Advice for the Victoria Planning Authority, 'Myer House', Minta Farm, Berwick (Stage 2)



Figure 1: Myer House (27 March 2017)

25 May 2017

Prepared for: **Victorian Planning Authority**

by:

Dr Leo Martin, Director
LLB, BPD, BA (Hons)

Renae Jarman, Director
BA, GradCert (Planning and Environment)

GJM Heritage

t: 0433 671 914

e: enquiries@gjmheritage.com

w: www.gjmheritage.com

m: GPO Box 2634, Melbourne, VIC 3001

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. The Myer House.....	3
2.1 Historical Information.....	3
3. The Myer House, Minta Farm	5
4. Comparative Analysis.....	8
4.1 Eynesbury, Eynesbury Road, Eynesbury (VHR H0362)	9
4.2 659 Moreland Road, Pascoe Vale South, City of Moreland (HO120)	11
4.3 Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (VHR H1002) (demolished).....	11
4 Assessment of Significance	12
5. Conclusion.....	13
Appendix 1	15
Images taken by GJM Heritage on 27 March 2017	15

1. Introduction

Minta Farm is a site of some 288.9 hectares located in the suburb of Berwick on Melbourne's urban fringe. A 'Historic Cultural Heritage Assessment' of the entire farm was undertaken by Tardis Enterprises 'Archaeologists and Heritage Advisors' in 2011 (the Tardis Report). The Assessment identified a series of structures on the site, including the 'Minta Homestead', a small dairy, workers quarters, a cottage and a 'Myer House'. The assessment identified the Myer House as having 'moderate historic cultural heritage significance' and suggested a series of management options, but did not explicitly recommend a Heritage Overlay for the site.

We have been engaged to provide additional advice on the significance of the Myer House, as per the following tasks. The tasks have been broken into stages as agreed.

Stage 1

- Undertake a peer review of the 'Historic Cultural Heritage Assessment'
- Desktop research into the history of the Myer House
- Preparation of a contextual history of the Myer House

Stage 2

- Preparation of heritage assessment of the Myer House
- Collation and Indexation of the photographic record

Stage 3 (if required)

- Preparation of a heritage citation for the Myer House
- Preparation of a report making recommendations in relation to integration, conservation and management within the Precinct Structure Plan (PSP)

This Report contains all deliverables required in Stage 2. It is informed by an external and internal inspection of the building, which was undertaken on 27 March 2017. Images in this report were taken by GJM Heritage on that date, unless otherwise stated.

2. The Myer House

2.1 Historical Information

The History of the Myer House as a typology has been explored in the Stage 1 Report. In brief, Myer Houses were constructed in small numbers in Victoria over a brief period after the end of World War II. In response to the housing shortage caused by returning servicemen and an influx of immigrants, a number of different prefabricated housing types were developed in Australia in the 1940s.¹ These included the Myer House which was developed by the Myer Emporium, and the Beaufort House which was developed by the Victorian Housing Commission. Both of these prefabricated housing schemes continued for only a brief period. The Beaufort House ceased production in early 1948, after a change in government the previous year, and the Myer House ceased production soon after. It is probable that only a very small number of both Myer and Beaufort houses were actually built despite plans to speedily construct thousands of affordable houses.

A coloured brochure 'The Myer House', produced in 1947 by the Myer Emporium, illustrated and described this particular prefabricated house type. The house, to be erected by J C Taylor & Sons Pty Ltd. of Richmond, was described as 'the result of three years of world-wide investigation on modern home building' and as 'a substantial structure in concrete, brick and timber, combined with factory produced 'zincaneal' roofing, joinery, plumbing and all generous interior fittings'.

¹ University of Melbourne Archives, Harold Bartlett Collection, files of prefabricated house types.

Three plan types were offered, as well as the mirror image of these plans, resulting in six plan variations. The materials of the Myer Houses were described as follows:

- reinforced concrete foundations
- steel and timber floors
- timber external walls, with concrete sheeting and stucco or sand finish
- timber interior walls with plaster sheeting
- steel roof trusses with zinc tiles, barges and fascias
- aluminium doors
- timber and aluminium windows
- timber architraves, picture rails and skirtings.

Built-in furniture included bedroom cupboards and drawers. Kitchens, laundries and bathrooms were produced as units at the factory and transported to site in a finished condition, with all equipment and services built in. Future extension of the houses was made possible by the inclusion of a door in the exterior wall, enabling a third bedroom to be provided if required.²



Figure 2: The Myer House, AL model and plan type



Figure 3: The Myer House, BL model and plan type



Figure 4: The Myer House, CL model and plan type

² Plan types taken from: The Myer Emporium 'The Myer House' brochure (1947).

3. The Myer House, Minta Farm

The Myer House, Minta Farm is an AL model and plan type. It is sited with the main facade facing north and appears to have been built with the optional third bedroom at the west end. The house is highly intact and is very similar in appearance to the house illustrated in the Myer House brochure (see Figure 2).

The house is of simple rectangular gable form with two slightly offset gables meeting at the mid-point, a small protruding gable-end to the east and a large protruding gable to the west. The latter accommodates the third bedroom. A partly open, covered area is located to the north of this gabled section. This has a flat roof, roughcast end wall and guttering which matches that of the house, suggesting it formed part of the original construction. A deep recessed porch, located at the mid-point of the north façade, provides entry to the house.

The external walls are timber framed with a roughcast finish and the roof is clad with corrugated galvanised iron. The latter may have replaced original zinc tiles, which were specified in the promotional brochure, or may be the original cladding. Zinc pressed shingle sheets line the gable ends. A broad, unadorned tapered chimney breast protrudes from the north façade. This differs from the exposed brick, straight-sided chimney illustrated in the brochure. Windows are timber-framed with double-hung aluminium sashes. The interior of the house contains a longitudinal hall, which provides access to a living room and main bedroom to the east and second bedroom, dining room, kitchen, bathroom, laundry and third bedroom to the west. Interior walls are timber framed and lined with plaster, with timber skirtings, picture rails and architraves; floors are of timber and ceilings and cornices are of plaster.

The Myer House, Minta Farm is of high integrity. The external form has been retained, and the original materials are generally intact.



Figure 5: Myer House, Minta Farm – Looking at south-east facade

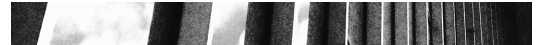


Figure 6: Myer House, Minta Farm – Looking at north-west facade



Figure 7: Detail of eastern façade – showing brick and roughcast render

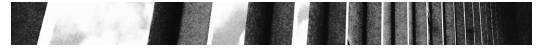


Figure 8: Detail of eastern façade – showing zinc shingles and roughcast render



Figure 9: Northern façade – showing chimney



Figure 10: Internal image showing kitchen / dining



Figure 11: Living Room – with fireplace and windows facing north

4. Comparative Analysis

In the absence of a broader typological study of Myer Houses (or pre-fabricated houses constructed after the Second World War) it is impossible to be certain about the number of houses constructed, or the number that remain. As noted, in the Stage 1 Report, an article from 6 August 1947 reports that a proposed Myer House in Glen Waverley will be the '35th' to be erected – so the numbers constructed were comparatively small.³

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the small number of houses constructed and their relatively modest form, few extant examples of the Myer House have been identified as remaining in Victoria. All those identified to date appear to be examples of the AL model, similar to the demonstration model constructed in the Treasury Gardens in January 1947.⁴ (since demolished).

Identified extant examples are:

- Two three-bedroom houses at Eynesbury Homestead, Eynesbury Road, Eynesbury (VHR H0362)
- House, 659 Moreland Road, Pascoe Vale South (HO120, City of Moreland)
- Three-bedroom house, Minta Farm, Berwick.

Another Myer House is known to have been constructed at the Royal Victorian Institute of the Blind (RVIB), St Kilda Road, Melbourne (VHR H1002), however this has since been demolished. It is interesting to note that the properties at Eynesbury and Berwick were both owned by the Baillieu family in the late 1940s/ 1950s – at the time the Myer Houses are likely to have been constructed. The Baillieu and Myer families were related from the 1920s when Marjorie Merlyn Baillieu married the developer of the chain of Myer

³ *Dandenong Journal*, 6 August 1947, p.11

⁴ *Age*, 24 January 1947, p 4.

stores, Sidney Myer – and it is likely that their connection explains the use of these structures on Baillieu owned properties.

Likewise, few extant examples of the prefabricated Beaufort House have been identified in Victoria. A group of eight houses, of an original twenty-three houses built in Pascoe Vale South for the War Services Homes Commission, remains highly intact. These are of identical design and are included in the Heritage Overlay of the Local Planning Scheme of the City of Moreland as part of Gallipoli Parade Precinct, HO80.

The comparative analysis below has been based upon an analysis of the three other extant Myer Houses identified to date, although we have also briefly considered the now demolished building within the RVIB.

4.1 Eynesbury, Eynesbury Road, Eynesbury (VHR H0362)

Two identical three-bedroom prefabricated Myer Houses were erected to the south of the homestead c1947, after the purchase of the Eynesbury property by John Baillieu the previous year. Both are examples of the AL type floor plan, as illustrated in the Myer House brochure, with an additional bedroom. The houses are considered to contribute to the state significance of the Eynesbury estate as rare and highly intact examples of these prefabricated Myer Houses.

They are mentioned in the VHR Citation for Eynesbury – albeit briefly. The History notes that: ‘two identical prefabricated Myer houses were erected to the south ... of the property in 1947’. The houses are identified as being: ‘historically and architecturally important as rare and highly intact examples of one of the many prefabricated houses constructed by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation and marketed by the Myer Emporium during the world-wide shortage of housing following the Second World War.’

Both houses are of high integrity; although they do not appear to have been lived in for some time and the condition of one (in particular) has been compromised. The images below were taken on 17 January 2017 and provided by Heritage Victoria.



Figure 12: Myer House 1, Eynesbury © Heritage Victoria, 17 January 2017

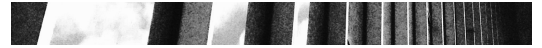


Figure 13: Myer House 1, Eynesbury © Heritage Victoria, 17 January 2017



Figure 14: Myer House 2, Eynesbury © Heritage Victoria, 17 January 2017

4.2 659 Moreland Road, Pascoe Vale South, City of Moreland (HO120)

The house at 659 Moreland Road, Pascoe Vale South was identified in the City of Coburg Heritage Conservation and Streetscape Study (Timothy Hubbard Pty Ltd, 1990) and graded 'B'. The property is subject to an individual Heritage Overlay (HO 120) within the City of Moreland. 'B' graded houses in the study were identified as being:

Either already included on, are recommended by this Study for nomination to the Register of the National Estate. Inclusion upon the Register provides statutory protection only to buildings owned by the Commonwealth of Australia. It is recommended that control over the majority of the B buildings identified in this study should therefore rest with the Responsible Authority, the City of Coburg, under the enabling provisions of the Planning and Environment Act. These buildings should not undergo alterations or be demolished without close reference to the relevant Guidelines. These buildings may fall either within or outside a Conservation Area or an Urban Design Area. Limited controls should also be introduced for sites contiguous with B Graded Buildings outside Conservation and Urban Design Areas

The house has since had an individual Heritage Overlay applied. While the form of the home remains readable, it has been somewhat altered – in particular the addition of external roller shutters, the replacement of the roof tiles and the apparent addition of weatherboard / imitation weatherboard cladding to the gables have compromised the building's integrity.



Figure 15: 659 Moreland Road, Pascoe Vale South © Google Streetview, 29 March 2017.

4.3 Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (VHR H1002) (demolished)

A prefabricated Myer House was also erected in the grounds of the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind between 1947 and 1953. The Statement of Significance for the place describes this house as 'one of the few examples of its type in Victoria' and states that it contributed to the state significance of the place. Despite this, the Myer house has been demolished since assessment of the place was undertaken.



Figure 16: Myer House, Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (since demolished) (image from Victorian Heritage Database)

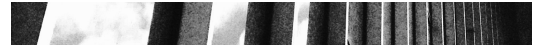
4 Assessment of Significance

The Myer House was an expression of the significant growth in the demand for housing following the Second World War. Because this housing type was only manufactured during c1947-48 and was not the model favoured for development by the Commonwealth Government, comparatively few were produced. Only three other examples have been identified as remaining in the State. Even assuming that there are other houses identified, given the small number built, it is clearly a rare example of its type. Two of the houses (both at Eynesbury) are included on the VHR – as part of the Eynesbury Homestead. The remaining house is included on an individual Heritage Overlay within the City of Moreland. All examples known to remain are examples of the ‘AL’ model.

An analysis indicates that the house at Minta Farm is of a high intactness and comparable in quality to the two houses at Eynesbury. It is in more intact condition than the example within the City of Moreland. While we have not undertaken a full assessment against the Criteria (in accordance with Planning Practice Note 1), we are of the view that the house would meet the threshold for inclusion on the Heritage Overlay of the City of Casey’s Planning Scheme.

We note that Myer Houses were designed and constructed off site and without reference to their ultimate location, therefore the siting of this building is of less significance than its fabric. While the preferred option, in heritage terms, would be to maintain the building in its current location, its re-location within the extent of the Minta Farm complex (with which it is historically associated) may be an acceptable heritage outcome, particularly if its relocation provides an opportunity for the building to be better used and understood.

In accordance with the agreed scope of works, Stage 3 will involve the preparation of a heritage citation for the Myer House at Minta Farm. This will include the preparation of an assessment against the Criteria and a Statement of Significance. It will also include advice on the appropriate curtilage and orientation – both in relation to the current site and in the event that the building is re-located elsewhere within the Minta Farm Complex.

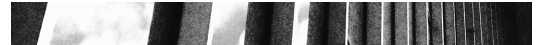


5. Conclusion

The Myer House at Minta Farm, Berwick is a rare and highly intact example of its type and one of the few examples known to exist in Victoria. Like the examples above, the house remains as an important illustrative example of experimentation in the prefabrication of houses that occurred directly after the end of World War II, to address housing shortages and to utilise both engineering techniques and skilled workforce from wartime.

References

The Age 8 September 1945, 24 January 1947
City of Moreland, Citation for 'Myer House, 659 Moreland Road, Pascoe Vale South' HO120, Victorian Heritage Database
Context, 'Gallipoli Parade Heritage Precinct & Beaufort Houses. Review of Heritage Significance Final Report', 2011
Dandenong Journal, 6 August 1947
Eynesbury, Eynesbury Road, Eynesbury, VHR H0362, Victorian Heritage Database
Mills, Peter. Various research notes on the Myer House and the Beaufort House, undated
Myer Emporium', 'The Myer House', Brochure, Melbourne, 1947
O'Callaghan, J & Pickett, C. *Designer Suburbs: Architects and Affordable Homes in Australia*, Sydney 2012
University of Melbourne Archives, 'Harold Bartlett Collection, Housing Commission, Victoria, Prefabricated House Types Files', 1939-60
Victorian Institute for the Blind, St Kilda Road, Melbourne, VHR H1002, Victorian Heritage Database



Appendix 1

In accordance with the agreed scope of works, we have collated images of the house obtained during the course of our research.

Images taken by GJM Heritage on 27 March 2017



Photo A: Northern facade



Photo B: Eastern facade



Photo C: Looking at south-east facade



Photo D: Looking at north-west facade



Photo E: Looking at north-west facade



Photo F: Looking at northern facade

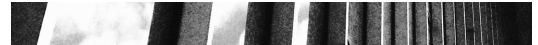


Photo G: Northern façade



Photo H: Eastern façade - detail



Photo I: Eastern façade – detail



Photo J: Northern facade



Photo K: Porch roof

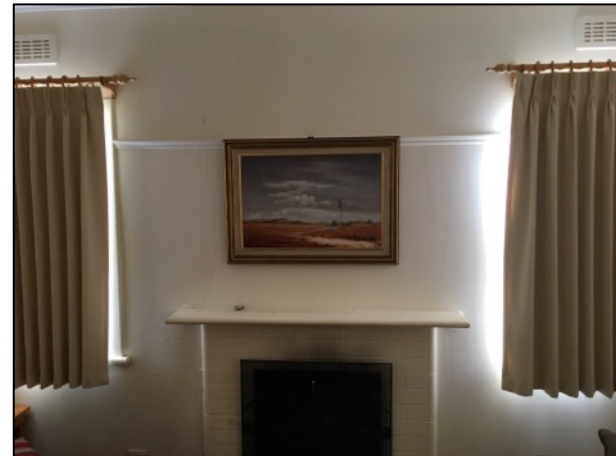


Photo L: Internal – northern facade

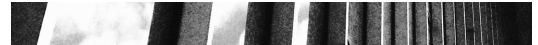


Photo M: Internal – cornice detail living room



Photo N: Internal - water damage – western bedroom



Photo O: Internal –kitchen / dining room



Photo P: Towards Minta Farm – from Soldiers Road



Photo Q: Northern Façade – Context

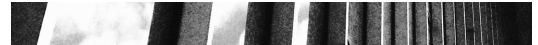


Photo R: Eastern façade



Photo S: Chimney detail



Photo T: Northern façade – detail



Photo U: Covered area off western end of house

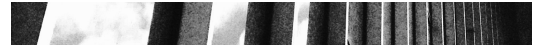


Photo V: Internal – floorboards



Photo W: Internal – showing built in cupboard



Photo X: Internal – kitchen/ dining area



Photo Y: Internal – corridor looking east