

Former HCV Bachelor Flats

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

15-17 Eric Street Preston, Victoria 3071



March 2026

Prepared for

HOMES VICTORIA

Prepared by

LOVELL CHEN





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

This report was prepared on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people who have been custodians of this land for thousands of years. 15-17 Eric Street is also located on the lands of the Wurundjeri Wo-wurrung people. We acknowledge their stories, connection to land, water and culture which is embedded in Country. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and acknowledge the stories, traditions and cultures of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Quality Assurance Register

The following register documents the development and issue of this report prepared by Lovell Chen Pty Ltd in accordance with our certified quality management system.



Project no.	Issue no.	Description	Issue date	Approval
2024021	1	Heritage Impact Statement - Draft	16/03/2026	KG
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Referencing

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Cover image: One of the two blocks of flats at 15-17 Eric Street, Preston, March 2026

Source: Lovell Chen

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1.0 Introduction

This Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) has been prepared for Homes Victoria and addresses a proposal to demolish two three-storey walk-up flat blocks at 15-17 Eric Street, Preston (Figure 1). The flat blocks were constructed by the Housing Commission of Victoria (HCV) in 1960-61 as 'lone persons' accommodation.

The subject site is included in the Heritage Overlay (HO) of the Darebin Planning Scheme as HO32 and is identified in the Schedule to the HO as *HCV Bachelor Flats, 15-17 Eric Street, Preston*.

The HIS has been prepared in the context of a Clause 52.20 Government Funded Housing Development submission for demolition of buildings on the site. Clause 52.20-2 identifies wholesale exemptions from the requirement to obtain a permit under the planning scheme. If not for the exemptions under Clause 52.20, a permit for demolition would have been required under the HO provisions at Clause 43.

Clause 52.20-5 sets out the plans documents and information required to be prepared and submitted to the satisfaction of the Minister for Planning.

Of relevance to heritage, these include:

- *A site description and analysis plan that accurately describes the natural, physical, cultural heritage, built heritage, landscape, vegetation, access and any other notable features, characteristics and significance of the site and surrounding area including the existing use and development of the site and surrounding land.*

and

- *A report that addresses the proposed use or development and how:*
 - *It responds to the purposes, objectives, decision guidelines or statements of significance or risk of any zone, overlay, or other provision that would apply to the use or development were it not for the exemptions in Clause 52.20-2. This does not include Clauses 54, 55, 57, 58 and 59.*

This HIS addresses these requirements.



Figure 1 Satellite imagery of the subject site
Source: Nearmap, capture date 16 December 2025

2.0 Heritage Overlay

As noted, the flats at 15-17 Eric Street, Preston are subject to a site-specific HO control, HO32 in the Darebin Planning Scheme. The HO applies to land mapped at Figure 2(the full extent of the subject site). External paint controls apply, but there are no internal alteration controls or tree controls.

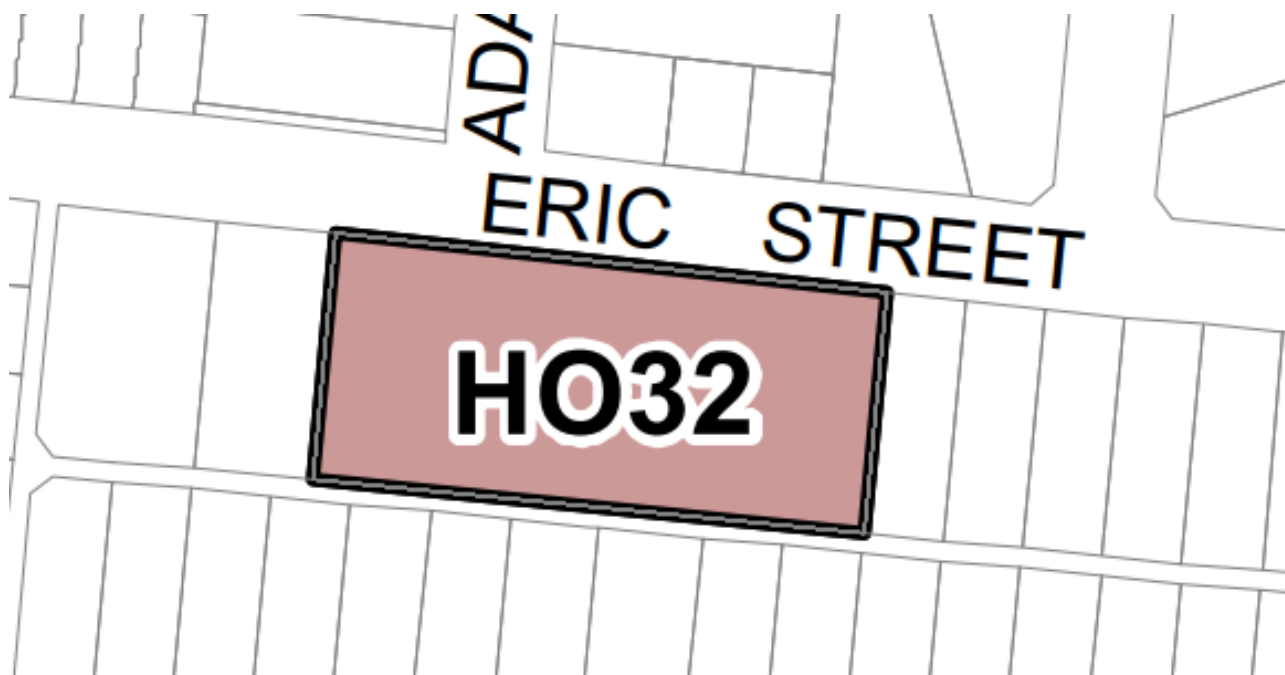


Figure 2 Map showing the extent of HO32
Source: Darebin Planning Scheme

2.1 Statement of significance

The flats at 15-17 Eric Street, Preston were identified in the *City of Coburg Heritage Conservation and Streetscape Study*, prepared by Timothy Hubbard Pty Ltd for the City of Coburg 1991.¹

The level of significance ascribed to the site was level B. B graded buildings were recommended for planning controls under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.² The data sheet for the place (from Volume 2 of the study) is reproduced at Appendix A. It includes the following Statement of Significance for the flats:

The two blocks of three storey walk-up flats at 15-17 Eric Street, Coburg were built by the Housing Commission of Victoria in 1960-61. Designed by the Commission's architectural division, they were constructed in pre-cast concrete panels from the Commission's Holmesglen factory. Access to the individual flats is from open balconies on the east elevations reached by dramatic staircases in off-form concrete. Almost certainly the stairs were influenced by those at Cairo Flats, Nicholson Street, Fitzroy designed and built before the Second World War by Best Overend and Partners. All flats are standard in plan, with a single room for living and sleeping and an attached bathroom and kitchen. The major windows are on the west elevation so that the flats enjoy good light and an excellent view across the Merri Creek valley and the Commission's Newlands Estate.

The Bachelor Flats are of regional significance as an unusual development of pre-cast concrete walk-up flats and as a contrast to the rest of the Commission's development in Coburg and other

¹ Timothy Hubbard Pty Ltd, *City of Coburg Heritage Conservation and Streetscape Study*, Volume Two Datasheets, 1991, pp. 71-72.

² Timothy Hubbard Pty Ltd, *City of Coburg Heritage Conservation and Streetscape Study*, 1991, Volume One Text, p. 43.

northern suburbs. They should be compared with developments at Heidelberg, built for the 1956 Olympic Village.³

Notable features identified on the data sheet were:

- The external concrete stairs that project from the east elevations
- The chimneys across the roof profile
- The pressed metal rubbish bins on the balcony.

Following municipal amalgamations in the 1990s, the flats were included in the Schedule to the HO of the Darebin Planning Scheme.

3.0 15-17 Eric Street

3.1 Brief history and description

As identified in the Statement of Significance, the three-storey flats at the subject site were designed by the Chief Architect's Branch of the Housing Commission Victoria (HCV) and constructed by the HCV's Concrete Housing Project (CHP) department in 1960-1 (Figure 3).⁴ Together, the pair of flats comprised 42 units that were purpose-built as lone person units or 'elderly persons' flats. The HCV formerly referred to the site as the Coburg Estate: the land being donated by the former City of Coburg (Figure 4).⁵

This estate was established by the HCV at a time when the Commission were constructing numerous public housing estates across Melbourne's inner and outer-suburbs that focused on providing low rental and lone person unit accommodation for the elderly.⁶ This programme of works prioritised the efficient and economic construction of various one, two and three-storey flat typologies and prototypes amidst a severe housing shortage in the post-war period. These typologies included and were variously known as Lone Person units/bedsits, and Darby and Joan units. The majority were designed by the HCV's Chief Architect's Branch and were constructed by the CHP. The flats adopted various construction methodologies that had been iteratively refined by the HCV since the 1930s (see section 3.3 below).

Broadly concurrent with construction of the flats at Eric Street, Preston, the HCV also constructed low rental housing estates for elderly persons at Gilba Street in Maidstone, Miller Street in Fitzroy and Blyth Street in Altona, as well as in Hawthorn and Springmeadows.⁷

The two flat blocks at the subject site are identical in design. Both have rendered concrete-panel walls and tiled gable roofs with squat rendered chimneys. There are tripartite metal-framed windows to the long west elevations (one window unit removed in its entirety and all glazing removed and fall protection introduced), with entry doors and small high paired windows to the east elevations. Access is via balconies / walkways on the east elevations; the upper-level walkways are accessed via concrete stairs with landings that are semi-circular in plan around central column. The

³ Timothy Hubbard Pty Ltd, *City of Coburg Heritage Conservation and Streetscape Study*, Volume Two Datasheets, 1991, pp. 71-72.

⁴ 'General Correspondence Subject Files [Chief Architect's Branch]: Coburg C2', VPRS 1808, P000, Public Record Office Victoria.

⁵ 'General Correspondence Subject Files [Chief Architect's Branch]: Coburg C2', VPRS 1808, P000, Public Record Office Victoria; HCV *Annual Reports*, 1960-1962.

⁶ 'General Correspondence Subject Files [Chief Architect's Branch]: Coburg C2', VPRS 1808, P000, Public Record Office Victoria; *Home Truths*, Spring 1959, p. 3.

⁷ HCV *Annual Report*, 1960-61, p. 10; 'General Correspondence Subject Files [Chief Architect's Branch]: Coburg C2', VPRS 1808, P000, Public Record Office Victoria.

flights of stairs are straight with flat undersides. The stairs were especially designed to make full use of post-tensioning techniques that were used in the CHP factory. The walkways and stairs have metal balustrades and distinctive diamond-patterned pressed metal rubbish bins are positioned on the walkways (Figure 5 to Figure 7). The north and south elevations are blank other than for the expressed floor panel ends.

The flats are sited parallel to each other and oriented north-south on the site. Landscaping comprises mature trees and at-grade carparking areas, the latter have low bluestone retaining walls (Figure 8 and Figure 9). The site originally had a low timber fence along Eric Street. This has been removed and temporary security fencing has been introduced.

3.2 Condition

In 1991, the City of Coburg Heritage Conservation and Streetscape Study noted the integrity of the flats as good and the condition fair.⁸

Some 35 years later, the buildings remain largely intact externally and are understood to be structurally sound, but their condition has declined generally, and they are also suffering the effects of damage from fire, vandalism and graffiti, evident both internally and externally. A section of the tiled roof to the western flat block is missing, having been destroyed by fire.



Figure 3 View of the two blocks of flats at the subject site

⁸ Timothy Hubbard Pty Ltd, *City of Coburg Heritage Conservation and Streetscape Study*, Volume Two Datasheets, 1991, pp. 71-72.

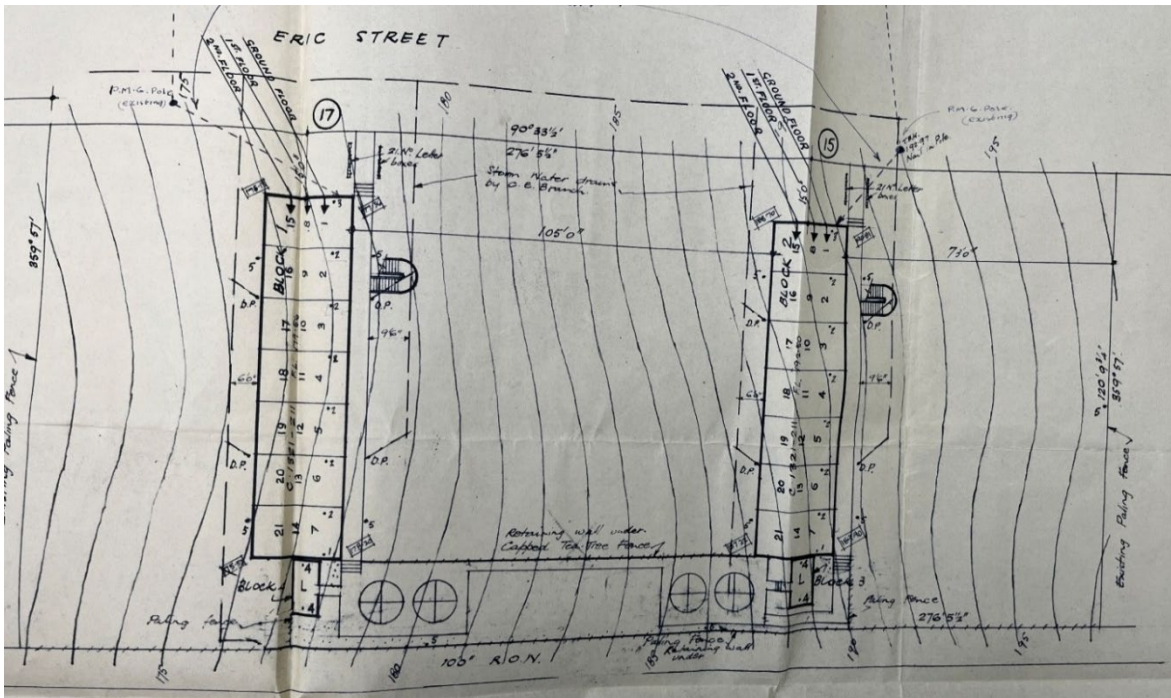


Figure 4 Site plan for flats at 15-17 Eric Street, Preston, December 1960
 Source: VPRS 1808, P0000, Public Record Office Victoria



Figure 5 West elevation of 15 Eric Street, showing glazing removed and general dilapidation



Figure 6 East elevation of 15 Eric Street, access stair to upper walkways



Figure 7 East elevation of 17 Eric Street, note the fire damage to the upper level and roof



Figure 8 Carpark area to the east of the site, view from the north



Figure 9 Mature trees in the garden between the two blocks of flats

3.3 Contextual history

HCV public housing programmes

The subject site can be seen in the context of the broader history of HCV public housing programmes of the twentieth century.

The provision of public housing has been the responsibility of the Victorian state government since the passage of the *Housing Act* (Victoria) in November 1937. The Act, which followed recommendations made by the Slum Reclamation Board, established the HCV which was tasked with demolishing slums (areas of concentrated poverty and insanitary housing), determining standards for construction, providing accommodation for people of limited means and undertaking town planning. A panel of architects was appointed to oversee the HCV in 1939.⁹

The HCV developed a concrete panel system which was initially applied extensively to single-storey villas and duplexes. The first of these, in 1939, were single-storey houses at one of its earliest housing estates at Fishermen's Bend (VHR 1863), where the panels were cast on site applying the system developed by Werribee inventor T W Fowler in 1939. By 1946 the Commission had taken over a former wartime tank factory at Holmesglen, where the Concrete House Project (CHP) produced panels on a fixed production line system. The 5,000th single-storey concrete house was produced at this factory in 1953.¹⁰

From 1949 the Commission started building estates of two and three-storey brick flats set in park like landscapes on an early reclamation area at Molesworth Street, North Melbourne (Figure 10, demolished) and on the site of the old Ascot racecourse (partially extant). This form of construction had proved expensive and there were few builders competent in the middle ground of construction between cottages and large commercial projects. The Commonwealth was calling for greater density on the Commission's housing sites and the use of the concrete panels was adopted as a more economical solution and a 'frameless' system based on a Dutch precedent, using precast panels both for floors and walls, was adopted and tested. The first use was in two-storey flats at the Collingwood reclamation area in 1954 (demolished).¹¹

A 'Development Section' was formed at the CHP factory in 1954 to produce prototypes, and the Commission engaged consultant structural engineer W P Brown and Melbourne University Professor of Civil Engineering A J Francis to examine the feasibility of extending the system to three or more storeys. They reported that up to 10 storeys was feasible with the existing panel thickness and reinforcement.¹²

The Commission's Architects Panel now documented three-storey concrete panel walk-ups with three-bedroom flats on each floor, the first time that large family accommodation was planned above ground floor level. With a vertical stacking of floor plans it was possible to have all walls placed directly over the walls of the floor below, carrying loads directly to the ground, and enabling use of light weight floor panels. Engineers Brown and Francis carried out successful full-scale load tests. The first examples were built at the Pigdon Street Estate in North Carlton (extant, see Figure 11).¹³

9 Renate Howe, 'Reform and Social Responsibility: the establishment of the housing commission', in Renate Howe, ed., *New Houses for Old: Fifty Years of Public Housing in Victoria 1938-1988*, Ministry of Housing and Construction, Melbourne, 1988, p. 38.

10 *Home Truths*, V.1 No.2, Summer 1953 p.2.

11 Peter Mills, 2010, 'Refabricating the Towers: The genesis of the Victorian Housing Commission's high-rise estates to 1969', PhD thesis, School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies, Monash University, pp.103-105.

12 Mills, pp.106-107.

13 Mills, pp.109-112. See also Housing Commission Victoria, *Slum Clearance and Redevelopment Projects*, c. 1961, HCV 19th Annual Report 1956-57, p.34.

The Commission was criticised by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) for creating densities in the latest two- and three-storey flat estates in Collingwood and Carlton which were less than the densities of surrounding existing residential areas. As part of a move to greater density, the Commission now planned four-storey maisonette (flats extending over two storeys with an internal staircase) blocks. These buildings featured transverse load-bearing concrete panel walls on a maisonette-width module, a structural feature which was suited to the CHP large panel system. The first four-storey maisonette blocks were built at the Stokes Street. Port Melbourne estate (extant) in 1958, although concrete panels were applied only as spandrels on the external walls. By 1960 the CHP was producing fully panellised four-storey blocks of three-bedroom maisonettes. These were accompanied on inner-city sites by existing two and three-storey block designs for one and two-bedroom and lone-person flats, a mixture first realised at the Walker Street, Northcote estate (demolished).¹⁴

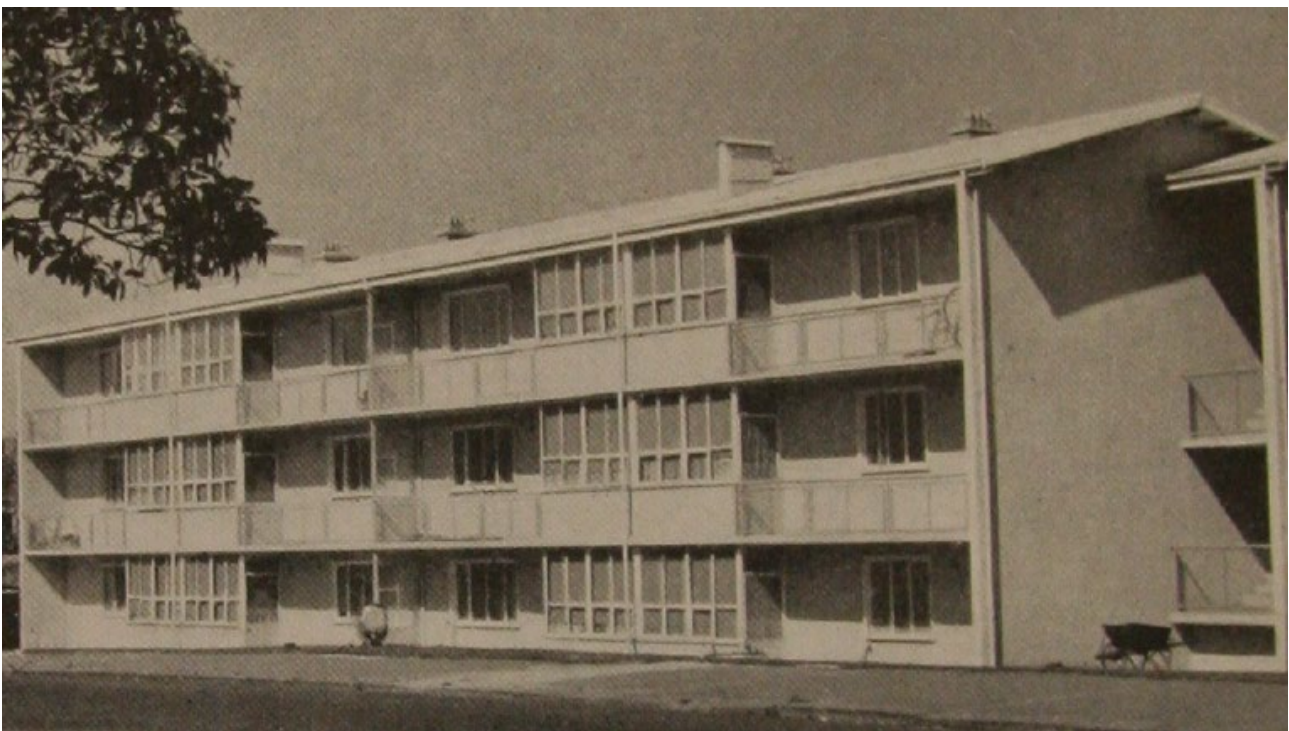


Figure 10 Part of the Molesworth Street Estate, North Melbourne, 1953 (demolished)
Source: *Home Truths*, Summer 1953, p. 3

14 Mills, pp.112-115.



Figure 11 'The first three-storey concrete flats ever erected in Australia' at Pigdon Street, Carlton Source: HCV, 19th Annual Report 1956-57, p.34

The Commission now abandoned maisonettes as too costly – internal stairs were required in each unit. Instead, a fully panellised four-storey block of 16 three-bedroom flats was developed, which had all load-bearing walls but which did not employ the transverse wall module applied to the maisonettes. This type, initially featuring a gable roof, was first built at the New Street, Brighton estate (demolished) in 1959.

The next important addition was an open undercroft supported with a structure of precast concrete beams and stilts, a feature which was inspired by the Villagio Olimpico flats in Rome visited by Vic Bradley, Director of the HCV in 1960. The first example of this strategy was one of the four-storey blocks (demolished) at Emerald Hill Court, South Melbourne. The crowning touch was a flat roof with rooftop laundries and clotheslines, in a type first built in 1961 at the Canning Street, Carlton estate (demolished, Figure 12). These stilted four-storey blocks with laundries on the roof became the dominant walk-up form in all subsequent mixed estates, including around the Commission's early high-rises at the 'Holland Estate', North Melbourne, the first stage of the Debney Meadows estate, Flemington, and the High Street/Reeves Street estate, Carlton.¹⁵

15 Mills, pp.118-127.



Figure 12 The first group of four-storey walk-ups on stilts with roof-top laundries at Canning Street Carlton
Source: State Library of Victoria, Record ID, 9917918593607636 (Wolfgang Sievers photographer, 1962, 'Housing Commission Flats')

Concurrent with the development and evolution of the walk-up typologies, the HCV continued to deliver large-scale housing estates in the outer suburbs and regional areas. Some of the HCV's earliest housing estates were established in the City of Darebin in the 1940s and 1950s, including three early estates at Preston: the Bell-Street Estate (Huttonham), Oakover-Road Estate and the Bailey-Avenue Estate.¹⁶ The Newlands Estate, Preston was another early HCV estate established in the City of Darebin and at the time of its construction between 1943-53 was one of the largest HCV estates in the state (Figure 13).¹⁷

¹⁶ Context Pty Ltd, *City of Darebin Heritage Study Volume 1 Draft Thematic Environmental History Stage 2 Report*, August 2008, p. 30.

¹⁷ Context Pty Ltd, *City of Darebin Heritage Study Volume 1 Draft Thematic Environmental History Stage 2 Report*, August 2008, p. 30.

Within the broader HCV program and the different building typologies, provision increasingly was made for the accommodation of elderly people, particularly pensioners, who made up growing number of people on the HCV waiting lists. From its inception the Commission was primarily funded for and committed to providing housing for families. However, from c.1956 it began building concrete-panel lone person (bedsit) and one-bedroom (Darby and Joan) flats in walk-ups to provide low rent homes to for elderly people. By 1959 the Commission had built in the metropolitan area around 500 Darby and Joan (one-bedroom) and lone person (bedsit) flats, in two and three-storey walk-ups in both brick and concrete panel; the Type 211 and Type 210 featured open balcony access gained by structurally expressive open concrete staircases as seen at Eric Street.¹⁸

The HCV worked closely with local councils in seeking to address the large numbers of elderly people seeking housing assistance, inviting councils to offer sites for development for elderly residents, as was the case with Eric Street, where the land was provided by the City of Coburg.

It has been suggested the flats at Eric Street is an early or the earliest example of single men's HCV housing.¹⁹ The majority of elderly single people on the HCV's waiting lists in this period were women,²⁰ and there is also some evidence that the HCV preferred not to place men in the lone person flats in this period. In a 1960 article profiling the HCV's work in the provision of homes for the elderly, *Home Truths* noted,

Incidentally, the commission usually puts only women into the lone-person units, as it has found that elderly men are not house-minded or as capable of looking after themselves as women.²¹

The policy was acknowledged in HCV's *Annual Report* for 1970-71 which noted as follows:

For the first time, male pensioners living alone were accepted for tenants for lone person units – the first major group of 16 being allocated units in Frank Wilkes Court at Northcote.²²

The following reference in the *Housing Commission News* edition for December 1971 further confirms this policy shift in relation to lone male pensioners:

For the first time since its initiation the Housing Commission is now housing Lone Male Pensioners. The first single men have already been accommodated at Holmes Street, Northcote [Frank Wilkes Court], and more are to follow as the Commission completes other suburban projects.²³

Interestingly, none of these three sources reference the Eric Street flats as existing or earlier accommodation for male pensioners. There is also no indication in the HCV file material reviewed,²⁴ that the Eric Street flats were intended specifically for men. In internal file notes and correspondence to the City of Coburg they are simply referenced as lone person or Elderly Person's flats. Notwithstanding this, it is possible that the flats did accommodate single men from the early period as well as more recently.

¹⁸ *Home Truths*, Spring 1959; Summer 1960, see also P Mills, *Refabricating the Towers*, p. 112.

¹⁹ Context, *Homeward, the thematic history of public housing in Victoria* (2012) for Department of Human Services, notes that a complex specifically for single men was constructed at Preston in the late 1950s [sic], however no source is provided for this information. See Context, p. 21.

²⁰ P Mills, *Refabricating the Towers*, p. 289.

²¹ 'Elderly people get homes', *Home Truths*, Autumn 1960.

²² Housing Commission Victoria, *Annual Report 1970-71*, p. 2.

²³ Housing Commission News, December 1971, p. 3.

²⁴ 'General Correspondence Subject Files [Chief Architect's Branch]: Coburg C2', VPRS 1808, P000, Public Record Office Victoria.

The early 1960s saw a distinct change of direction for the HCV. Between 1962 and 1975, the HCV delivered a programme of public housing towers across Melbourne, comprised of high-rise towers, initially in combination with walk-ups but subsequently in a tower-only form. The towers program signalled a shift in approach. It was grounded in an acceptance of modernism as a force for social progress and urban renewal, and responded to a need for greater efficiencies and density, in combination with the provision of open space to the estates.²⁵ Between 1962 and 75, the HCV constructed 47 high-rise towers across Melbourne, including, locally in Darebin, the lone-person tower known as Frank Wilkes Court, 1 Holmes Street, Northcote (1971).

HCV estates in Darebin

As for other areas of Melbourne, from the end of the 1930s, numerous housing estates of different types were delivered by the HCV in the City of Darebin and in the northern suburbs more generally.

The theme of public housing is an important one in Darebin's history as identified in the thematic environmental history prepared by Context in 2008,²⁶ but was and is more typically demonstrated by the larger HCV estates which have had a major impact on the layout of Darebin's suburbs, with smaller sites like Eric Street far less typical.

HCV estates in Darebin have included the following, noting this is not an exhaustive list:

- Bell-Street Estate (Huttonham), Preston (1939-40, demolished)
- Newlands Estate, Elizabeth Street, Preston (1940-53)
- Oakover-Road Estate (Kenwood Court), Preston (c. 1950s, redeveloped)
- Bailey-Avenue Estate, Preston (c. 1940-50s)
- Strathmore Street, Reservoir (c. 1955)
- Summerhill Road Estate, Reservoir (c. 1950)
- West Preston Estate, Reservoir (1945)
- Raglan Street Estate (Railton Grove), Preston (c. 1940s-50s)
- David Street Estate (Walker Avenue), Preston (c. 1940s-50s).
- Walker Street Estate, Northcote (1959-61, demolished)
- Frank Wilkes Court, 1 Holmes Street, Northcote (1971)

While acknowledging the influence of the HCV in the municipality, only two HCV estates have been recognised for heritage reasons and included in the HO in the Darebin Planning Scheme, these are the Newlands Estate (HO95) and the subject site. The Newlands Estate (1940-1953) (also subject to HO controls in the Merri-bek Planning Scheme) is a far earlier example of HCV estate and includes different typologies including cottages, duplexes and walk-ups (in brick, in the Merri-bek portion of the estate).

²⁵ *Home Truths*, Winter 1963, p. 4.

²⁶ City of Darebin Heritage Study, Volume 1 Draft Thematic Environmental History, Stage 2 Report, August 2008
<https://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/v/1/planning-and-building/documents/HeritageStudy2007FinalVolume1ThematicEnvironmentalHistoryMay2008pdf.pdf>, see pp. 72-78

Also located outside the municipality, a small component of the former Olympic Village at Heidelberg (referenced in the statement of significance as a comparator) has been recognised by its inclusion in the HO in the Banyule Planning Scheme as HO184, however this is for shops, the former Olympic Village Hall and single-storey detached houses.²⁷

Comment:

In the local (municipal context), the flats at Eric Street are the only examples of HCV concrete walk-up flat blocks known to survive in Darebin. Given the diversity of the programme and the many variations in the delivery of public housing across the metropolitan area and state more broadly in this period, however, this fact is not particularly notable and it is more pertinent to consider the flats in the context of the breadth of the HCV's public housing programme. In this context, the flats blocks at Eric Street are not an early examples of walk-up flat blocks generally, of concrete walk-ups nor of housing for elderly/ lone persons. By the time the Eric Street flat blocks were constructed in 1960-61, the HCV had constructed significant numbers of concrete walk-up flat blocks of various types, including for lone persons. It has been suggested that Eric Street flats were an early or the earliest flats to accommodate single men. If confirmed, this would be of interest in terms of the social history of this particular site rather than a factor that would elevate heritage significance. There is no evidence of this as a factor in terms of their design and delivery.

No. 15-17 Eric Street is noted in the 1991 statement of significance as an 'unusual development of pre-cast concrete walk-up flats'.²⁸ This is not accurate, however, with the Eric Street flats coming several years after the first three-storey pre-fabricated concrete panel flat blocks constructed by the CHP, the Pigdon Estate of c. 1956-7 at Park Street, North Carlton, noting these are still extant (Figure 15).²⁹ There are also other similar HCV walk-up flats in other municipalities, including those at Derby Street, Kensington (c. 1957-8)³⁰ and at Inkerman Heights, St Kilda (1964-5).

The statement of significance notes on the stair form, that 'Almost certainly the stairs were influenced by those at Cairo Flats, Nicholson Street, Fitzroy designed and built before the Second World War by Best Overend and Partners.' This comment is speculative with no supporting evidence provided, noting that Cairo Flats was designed and constructed in 1936, more than 20 years earlier. The flats at Eric Street were also not the first nor were they only the only set of lone person walk-up flats with external concrete stairs of this form. Earlier examples include those at Derby Street, Kensington (c. 1957-8, extant, Figure 14), the Barkly Street Estate, Brunswick (1959, demolished, Figure 16) and at Emerald Street, Collingwood (1959, demolished).³¹ Of the concrete stairs, the HCV noted that these were 'especially designed to make full use of post-tensioning techniques' advanced by the CHP.³²

²⁷ Olympic Village Green, 15 Alamein Road and 180 Southern Road and 1-17 Moresby Court, <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/124829>

²⁸ Timothy Hubbard Pty Ltd, *City of Coburg Heritage Conservation and Streetscape Study*, Volume Two Datasheets, 1991, p. 72.

²⁹ These flats are identified as non-contributory place in the Princes Hill Precinct (HO329) in the *City of Yarra Database of Heritage Significant Areas (City of Yarra, March 2024)*; Peter Mills, *Refabricating the Towers: The genesis of the Victorian Housing Commission's high-rise estates to 1969*, PhD thesis, School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies, Monash University, 2010; Housing Commission Victoria, *Annual Report*, 1956-57, p. 24.

³⁰ HCV *Annual Report*, 1958-59, pp. 13 and 29.

³¹ *Home Truths*, Autumn 1960, p. 3; *Home Truths*, Spring 1959, p. 3; HCV *Annual Report*, 1958-9, p. 29. Another example of three-storey walk-up flats with semi-circular planned stairs were built at Browning Street, Prahran, *Home Truths*, Spring 1962, p. 1.

³² HCV *Annual Report*, 1957-58, p. 14.



Figure 13 Newlands Estate, Preston, 1949
Source: Lyle Fowler, H92.20/2726, State Library Victoria



Figure 14 Three-storey flats at Derby Street, Kensington, stair in the background
Source: Google Streetview, December 2020



Figure 15 Concrete flats at the Pigdon Estate, North Carlton, view south from Park Street, c. 1957
Source: VPRS 8935, P0001, Unit 3, Public Record Office Victoria



Figure 16 Lone person flats at Barkly Street Estate with concrete stairs, 1959, since demolished
Source: *Home Truths*, Spring 1959, p. 3

4.0 Proposed works

The buildings are currently vacant and have been assessed by Homes Victoria as no longer suitable for the provision of social housing and the residents have been relocated.

The buildings were assessed as no longer fit-for-purpose as social housing for the following reasons:

- Poor condition of the buildings, including fire damage
- Limited levels of amenity provided
- Poor environmental credentials
- The requirement to retrospectively comply with the Building Regulations 2018 if the buildings are altered in accordance with Regulation 233, which is neither practicable nor feasible.

In their current dilapidated condition, the buildings are vulnerable to security breaches, and have been the target of vandalism and other anti-social behaviours giving rise to some community concern.

Having regard for the above factors, full demolition of the buildings is proposed. This includes both flat blocks, the carpark areas and other services. While there are no tree controls under the HO, it is noted that existing trees will be removed only if necessary based on arboricultural assessment and advice. The future of the site and its potential redevelopment are under consideration by Homes Victoria and has not yet been confirmed.

5.0 Heritage considerations

Clause 52.20-5 of the Darebin Planning Scheme (Requirements for plans and documents) requires the following:

A site description and analysis plan that accurately describes the natural, physical, cultural heritage, built heritage, landscape, vegetation, access and any other notable features, characteristics and significance of the site and surrounding area including the existing use and development of the site and surrounding land

And

A report that addresses the proposed use or development and how:

- It responds to the purposes, objectives, decision guidelines or statements of significance or risk of any zone, overlay, or other provision that would apply to the use or development were it not for the exemptions in Clause 52.20-2. This does not include Clauses 54, 55, 57, 58 and 59.

Accordingly, the sections that follow assess the proposal against the relevant heritage policy frameworks, strategies, and provisions in the Darebin Planning Scheme that would normally apply to the subject site, given its inclusion in the Schedule to the HO in Clause 43.01. These are:

- Clause 15.03-1S 'Heritage conservation'
- Clause 15.03-1L 'Heritage'
- Clause 43.01 'Heritage Overlay'

A summary of these provisions follows:

Clause 15.03-1S 'Heritage conservation' is directed at the conservation of heritage places and encourages identifying, assessing, and documenting heritage places to include them in the planning scheme and encourages development that respects these identified values.

Clause 15.03-1L 'Heritage' encourages the retention of any significant original fabric in heritage places and discourages demolition of significant heritage buildings.

Amongst the stated purposes of the HO are the following:

- To conserve and enhance heritage places of natural or cultural significance.
- To conserve and enhance those elements which contribute to the significance of heritage places.

Clause 43.01-8 sets out the HO decision guidelines with the following of relevance to the issue of demolition:

- The significance of the heritage place and whether the proposal will adversely affect the natural or cultural significance of the place.
- Any applicable statement of significance (whether or not specified in the schedule to this overlay), heritage study and any applicable conservation policy.
- Whether the demolition, removal or external alteration will adversely affect the significance of the heritage place.
- Whether the proposed works will adversely affect the significance, character or appearance of the heritage place.

6.0 Assessment

The proposed demolition of the two flat blocks at 15-17 Eric Street would essentially result in the loss of the identified heritage values for this listed place.

It is observed that this impact can be seen in the wider context of the history of the HVC housing programmes, given these were delivered by a state government agency on a state-wide rather local basis. In this context while the Eric Street flat blocks are of interest as representative examples of HCV walk-ups, they are not, as described in the statement of significance, 'an unusual development of pre-cast concrete walk-up flats.' There are numerous other examples (including earlier examples) of similar HCV concrete walk-up flats elsewhere in the metropolitan area, as well as examples of two and three-storey walk-ups in brick and other materials.

In the municipal context, as noted, Darebin retains significant building stock and estates of varying typologies developed by the HCV through the mid to-late twentieth century and these will continue to provide evidence of this important historical theme.

It is recommended that prior to demolition the buildings be recorded through the preparation of an archival quality photographic record in accordance with Heritage Victoria's guidelines. This should cover the exterior of the buildings, focussing on fabric with identified heritage qualities, including details such as the stair, the pressed metal bins and the like. The record should include a representative example of a typical flat (interior).

Consideration could also be given to an interpretative acknowledgement of the history of the Eric Street site as HCV lone-person housing since the early 1960s. Depending on the nature of future development on the site, this could be by way of a simple plaque or panel integrated to that development.

APPENDIX A

Heritage study data sheet



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City of Coburg
Heritage Conservation and
Streetscape Study

VOLUME TWO
DATA SHEETS

52 Balmoral Avenue — 57 Rainer Street

MARCH 1991

ISBN 1 875224 41 6

BUILDING TITLE: **BUILDING ADDRESS:** 15-17 Eric St, Coburg

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: A !! B !X! C !! D !! **BUILDING TYPE:** Flats

DESIGNATION: HBR Reg No File # AHC File # HT File # Class !! Rec !!

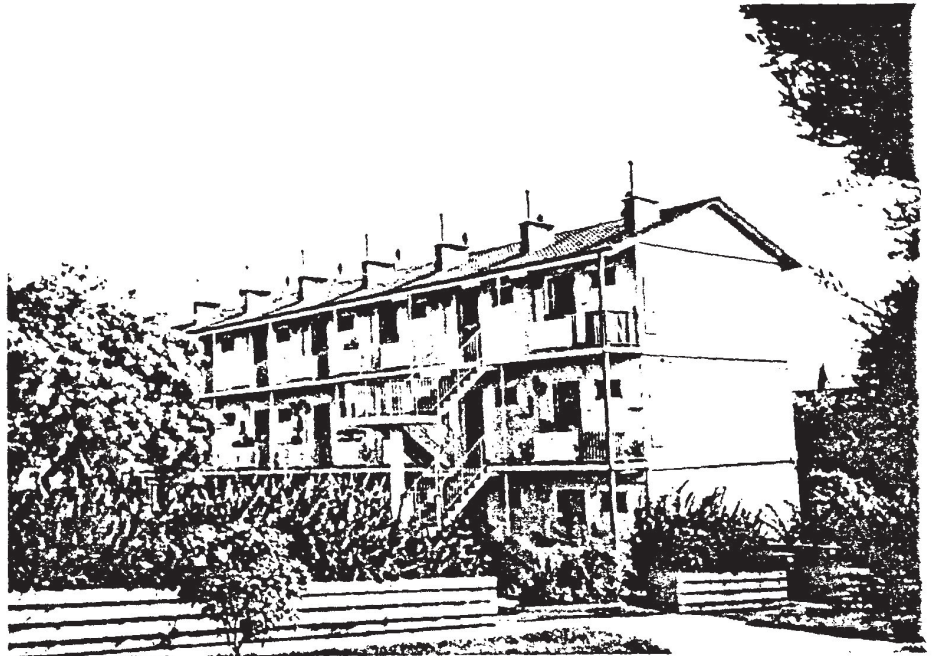
CONSERVATION AREA: **LEVEL OF STREETScape SIGNIFICANCE:** 1 !! 2 !! 3 !!

STYLE: Modern (International)

CONSTRUCTION DATE & ALTERATIONS:

1. c.1960
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Sources:



MATERIALS:

Roof: Tiles
Walls: Concrete
Dressings:
Plinth:
Windows:
Paving:

SURVEY DATE: 07/03/90 **NEG FILE:** 9/7,8 **REPORTER:** ABR

INTEGRITY: G !X! F !! P !! **NOTABLE FEATURES:** External concrete stairs project dramatically from building face. March of chimneys across roof. Pressed metal rubbish bin recess on balcony.

CONDITION: G !! F !X! P !!

COMMENTS: Two identical blocks of 1960's flats.

ALTERATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

Appropriate:	Rec	Inappropriate:	Rec
Cipressus Sempervivens (Cypress)		Recent native planting	R

O=reinstate original design S=reinstate sympathetic alternative R=remove RAN=remove by approved method

SIGNIFICANT OWNERS/TENANTS: **ARCHITECTS/BUILDERS:** **TITLE:**

Housing Commission Vol Fol

Statement of Significance

Bachelor Flats 15-17 Eric Street, Coburg

The two blocks of three storey walk-up flats at 15-17 Eric Street, Coburg were built by the Housing Commission of Victoria in 1960-61. (1) Designed by the Commission's architectural division, they were constructed in pre-cast concrete panels from the Commission's Holmesglen factory. Access to the individual flats is from open balconies on the east elevations reached by dramatic staircases in off-form concrete. Almost certainly the stairs were influenced by those at Cairo Flats, Nicholson Street, Fitzroy designed and built before the Second World War by Best Overend and Partners. All flats are standard in plan, with a single room for living and sleeping and an attached bathroom and kitchen. The major windows are on the west elevation so that the flats enjoy good light and an excellent view across the Merri Creek valley and the Commission's Newlands Estate.

The Bachelor Flats are of regional significance as an unusual development of pre-cast concrete walk-up flats and as a contrast to the rest of the Commission's development in Coburg and other northern suburbs. They should be compared with developments at Heidelberg, built for the 1956 Olympic Village.

1 Housing Commission of Victoria, Annual Report 1960-61.