

Statement of Significance: St Margaret's Presbyterian Church, 106 Hotham Street, St Kilda East

Date of Statement: August 2020

Address: 106 Hotham Street, St Kilda East	Name: St Margaret's Presbyterian Church
Place Type: Church	Grading: Significant
PS ref no: HO229	Constructed: 1953-54



Photograph by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, October 2019

What is significant?

St Margaret's Presbyterian Church, at 106 Hotham Street, St Kilda East, is a cream brick church comprising a gable-roofed hall-like nave with a flat-roofed front foyer wing that incorporates a projecting covered walkway. Erected in 1953-54 to a design by leading Presbyterian architect K Murray Forster, the building represented the culmination of several decades of fundraising for a congregation that had occupied the site, in a series of 'temporary' buildings, from 1916.

The significant fabric is defined as the exterior of the entire building, including the original stained glass windows.

How is it significant?

St Margaret's Presbyterian Church satisfies the following criteria for inclusion on the heritage overlay schedule to the City of Glen Eira planning scheme:

- Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics
- Criterion F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

Why is it significant?

St Margaret's Presbyterian Church is significant as an excellent and remarkably intact example of an early post-WW2 church in the newly emerging modernist style. With its simple expression of a hall-like nave, low gabled roof, projecting walkway and stark brick walls with varied fenestration and virtually no applied ornament, the church represented a bold departure from the established pre-WW2 convention where designers of churches felt obliged to reference historicist detailing (such as buttresses and arches) associated with the traditional ecclesiastical styles. Forster's building, entirely devoid of such allusions, anticipated a new approach to church design that would become the norm in the later 1950s and 1960s. (*Criterion E*)

St Margaret's Presbyterian Church is significant for its creative achievement in taking inspiration from modernist church architecture that K Murray Forster had seen during a recent European trip, completed just six months before finalising his working drawings. While contemporary accounts of his building broadly acknowledged these Continental sources, noting the influence of recent church architecture of Holland and Switzerland, a specific single precedent has been identified in the eerily similar Swiss Reformed Church at Zurich-Balgrist (Hans & Kurt Pfister, 1950-52). St Margaret's Church, the unusual design of which generated an uncommon degree of comment in the daily and architectural press, is thus notable as an example of a Melbourne architect directly introducing progressive European influences into the local architectural scene. (*Criterion F*)

Primary sources

Heritage Citation PW14, *City of Glen Eira Post-war & Hidden Gems Heritage Review 2020, Stage 2: Citations*, prepared by Built Heritage Pty Ltd.