Locality: YARRAM

Place address: 216 COMMERCIAL ROAD

Citation date 2016

Place type (when built): Post office

Recommended heritage Local government level

protection:

Local Planning Scheme: Yes

Vic Heritage Register: No

Heritage Inventory (Archaeological): No

Place name: Yarram Post Office



Architectural Style: Federation Free Classical

Designer / Architect: Not known

Construction Date: 1913

Statement of Significance

This statement of significance is based on the history, description and comparative analysis in this citation. The Criteria A-H is the Heritage Council Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance (HERCON). Level of Significance, Local, State, National, is in accordance with the level of Government legislation.

What is significant?

The Yarram Post Office at 216 Commercial Road, Yarram, is significant. The original form, materials and detailing as constructed in 1913 are significant.

Alterations and additions to the building, and outbuildings, are not significant. The alterations to the façade, including the in-fill of the 1913 first-floor balcony is not significant. The 1950s extension of the first-floor towards the rear is not significant; this addition was built on top of the 1913 one-storey residence which is significant.

How is it significant?

The Yarram Post Office is locally significant for its historic, social and aesthetic values to the Shire of Wellington.

Why is it significant?

The Yarram Post Office and attached residence is aesthetically significant at a local level for its architectural details which reflect the Federation Free Classical style, with Arts and Crafts influences. The key elements of the 1913 building include the hipped roof clad in slate, the wide eaves with exposed rafter ends, red brickwork with contrasting Portland cement detail, bluestone window sills, and Art Nouveau sign POST OFFICE, which reflects an Arts and Crafts influence. Also significant is the dominating Palladian-inspired Classical Portland cement portico entered via 4 wide bluestone steps, with its refined banded rustication, arched openings with large keystones, Classical stylised pilasters and capitals, entablature and projecting cornice with dentils surmounted by a parapet with a round arched centre, encompassing the clock. The interior of the portico has brick to the dado level with decorative render to the top portion. The side elevations of the 1913 post office have one-overone double-hung sash timber windows with stone sills and rendered lintels. The windows of the 1913 residential section (the first floor to the rear) have square or segmental-arched brick heads and brick sills. The Yarram Post Office is also significant for its ornamental contribution to the streetscape, particularly the Palladian-inspired Classical portico, as viewed from the street. (Criterion E)

The post office and attached residence is historically significant at a local level. Built in 1913, it illustrates the importance of the town as an established commercial centre for the surrounding pastoral and agricultural district and as the seat of government for the Alberton Shire. (Criterion A)

The Yarram Post Office **is socially significant at a local level** for its importance as a meeting place for people in the town and the outlying districts for over 100 years. A public subscription was opened to have the clock installed. (Criterion G)

Statutory Recommendations

This place is recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Wellington Shire Planning Scheme to the extent of the title boundary as shown on the map.

External Paint Controls	Yes
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Outbuildings or fences which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3	No
Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted	No
Incorporated Plan	No
Aboriginal Heritage Place	Not assessed

Map of recommended boundary for Heritage Overlay



KEY

Recommended for Heritage Overlay

Title boundary

Post Office 216 Commercial Rd, Yarram

Project: Wellington Shire Stage 2 Heritage Study

Client: Wellington Shire Council
Author: Heritage Intelligence Pty Ltd

Date: 12/2/16

History

Locality history

The Tarra Creek pastoral run was taken up in the 1840s, in the area that now encompasses the Yarram township. In the early 1850s, John Carpenter built a flour mill and sawmill near the Tarra River, upon which a bridge was soon built. A small township began to develop on private land on the west side of the River, which was first named Barkly, after Victorian Governor Sir Henry Barkly. However, the small township soon became known as Yarram Yarram; the parish name. Yarram is an Aboriginal word though to mean 'plenty of water' or 'billabong'. The town would be called Yarram Yarram until 1924 (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:79; YDHS website)

Yarram was part of the first Shire established in Gippsland – Alberton Shire established 1864 – where a District Road Board was formed in 1855 (Context 2005:38). In 1857, the first store was opened in the town of Yarram Yarram by Charles Devonshire. Soon other stores were established as the town grew, including a shanty on the site of the Yarram Hotel. The development was a result of the marketplace located in Yarram, which served local farmers who preferred the location over the more distant Port Albert (YDHS website). The first mechanics' institute was built in 1860 and a school opened in 1861. All communication during this period was via Port Albert to the south (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:80).

Yarram's growth was constrained by the release of private land for sale. Development within the town gained momentum from the 1880s, with town allotments purchased from private landholders (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:80). One such developer was James Nicol, who owned the land east of Commercial Road, between (just north of) Gipps Street and James Street. Nicol subdivided the land and sold town allotments from 1889. By the 1890s, Yarram had established itself as a commercial centre, servicing an extensive dairying and grazing district. The Yarram Butter Factory (1891) was a major component of the industry in this area of the Shire (Context 2005:12, 38). The township of Yarram Yarram was gazetted in 1893 and in 1897 the Alberton Shire offices were relocated to Yarram, establishing the southern town as a seat of Government (Context 2005:38; YDHS website).

From the early 1900s, large areas of land were selected in the Strzelecki Ranges to the north and west of Yarram for dairying, supplying cream to the butter factory. By 1903, Yarram Yarram also had a Shire hall, four churches, the Commercial and Yarram hotels, Masonic and Rechabite Lodges and a state school. At the centre of the pastoral district, Yarram remained the cattle market for southern Gippsland (*Australian handbook* 1903). The Yarram courthouse opened in 1908, the hospital was officially opened in 1914 and a higher elementary school was established in 1918. In 1921, the Great Southern railway Line from Melbourne reached Yarram (Context 2005:30, 41, 44). The Forests Commission established an office in Yarram in 1945 to manage the reforested lands in the region. From the 1950s, the Housing Commission and several housing co-operatives built many new homes in Yarram. However, the town was affected by the decline of rural industries in the 1970s. The milk factory and railway line closed in 1987 (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:80).

In 1994, Wellington Shire was created by the amalgamation of the former Shires of Alberton, Avon and Maffra, the former City of Sale, most of the former Shire of Rosedale, as well as an area near Dargo which was formerly part of Bairnsdale Shire (Context 2005:39). The town continues to serve as an important regional centre. It is also the location of the regional headquarters for the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:80).

Thematic context

This place is associated with the following themes from the Wellington Shire Thematic History (2005):

- 5. Transport and communications
- 5.6 Communications

The following is based on information taken from the *Wellington Shire Thematic Environmental History* (Context 2005:30-1):

From the earliest days of settlement, the first residents of the shire maintained contact with the outside world via mail that was carried on horseback by settlers or travellers. The first post office in the shire was established at Alberton in 1843 and the mail was brought by coastal steamers. From 1848 a regular service was established with the mail coming overland from Melbourne through Sale. A post office was opened at Sale in 1848. With increasing population, regular mail services were established to post offices in stores, hotels and homesteads, such as Rosedale where the first post office was conducted in Henry Luke's store or at Won Wron where the school housed the post office. Loose bags of mail were left for settlers to collect and distribute. Postal services eventually reached the most isolated communities. One of the oldest post office buildings still existing in the shire is the former Port Albert post office. Built in 1865, it closed in 1972 and is now a private home.

The telegraph line from Melbourne reached Sale and Port Albert in 1864. Rosedale was connected in 1867 and this link to civilisation gradually reached many scattered communities. From the 1890s, the telephone network spread throughout the region. The Yarram district was connected in the early 1900s. Glenmaggie was linked in 1906, the line coming six miles from Heyfield, strung on trees and fences. In recent times, consolidation and improvement of services has seen the introduction of automatic telephone exchanges and the closure of small post offices, while modern telecommunications have improved links with the world.

Place history

In 1861 the Yarram Yarram post office was established with T. Collis as postmaster. The post during this period was routed from Port Albert via Alberton. From 1866, the post office operated from the public hall or a local store, including the McKenzie's Store (YDHS). A public meeting was held at the Mechanics Institute in February 1887, which discussed the need to erect a post and telegraph office, to serve the rapidly growing town (YDHS). In 1888, the Post Master General confirmed that Yarram Yarram would receive a purpose-built post office. A post office was designed by E. Scanlon and erected for a cost of 355 pounds by Jacobson and Flanagan. This building opened on 25 October 1888. By 1889 a mail delivery service operated and the post office savings bank had been established in Yarram. In 1909 a telephone exchange was opened (YDHS).

In 1911, the Yarram Town Improvement Association called for a new post office building on behalf of the community. Approval was granted and the postmaster laid the first brick. Construction began in March 1913 and the post office was completed in December 1913, opening in January 1914. The building included a commodious office and living quarters for the post master, with a Medusa-white Portland cement porch. A public subscription was opened to have a clock installed. The earlier post office building was demolished at this date (YDHS).

Photos dating between 1917 and 1930 (SLV; NAA) showed the facade and side elevations of the recently constructed post office, and the single-storey residence to the rear (Figures H1 & H2). The facade comprised the entrance porch, without the clock or any attached names or insignia at this date. The interior of the porch was brick with decorative render to the top portion (as remains in 2015) with a central door flanked by a pair of sash windows (since altered; one sash window remains). At each end of the porch was a small window/opening (since altered at the north end). The first floor was an open recessed balcony, supported by single and pairs of slender classical columns (later in-filled). At this date the two-storey portion of the building was three openings deep (at the first floor; extended in the 1950s), while the ground floor residence extended beyond this. The residential entrance was visible on the north elevation (this may remain in 2015), entering the single-storey portion of the building, which had a tall chimney. The residence also had wide eaves with exposed rafter ends. A timber picket fence marked the east boundary, either side of the post office.

A photo dating to 1943 (NAA) showed the rear elevation of the post office (Figure H3). The two-storey portion was followed by the single-storey portion of the building which had a slate roof and

two tall brick chimneys and a projecting hipped roof bay. A back garden and outbuildings were visible at this date.

In the late 1950s, the post office was extended to the west (a 9 metre extension to the first floor) to serve as a mail and strong room. It appears, by looking at the openings in the historical photos, that the ground floor was retained and built upon. In 1960 the telephone exchange, with multi coin telephone boxes, was installed in the manager's residence. In 1974, the exchange became automatic (YDHS).

A photo dating to c1969 (SLV) showed that the clock and post office name had been installed on the entrance porch (Figure H4). The recessed balcony to the first floor was also in-filled with three windows by this date.

In 2015, the words 'Yarram' and 'Post Office' remain on the entrance porch, below the clock. On the right side of the entrance porch is the cypher of Queen Elizabeth II, above a plaque bearing the Yarram postcode, which are later additions. Access ramps have been constructed at a later date off the north elevation. Modern signs have been attached to the porch and above the entrance door.



Figure H1. Photo of the post office dating between 1917-1930. The clock had not been installed and the first floor retained its recessed balcony supported on elegant classical columns. The single storey residential residence is visible on the side elevation (SLV).



Figure H2. The post office between 1917-1930 in its original unpainted state. The first floor was only three rooms deep (later extended) (NAA).

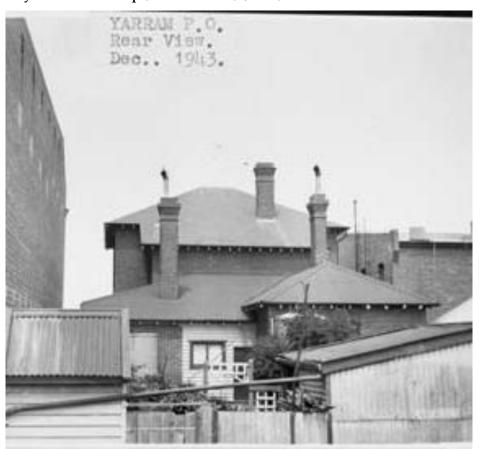


Figure H3. The original rear elevation of the post office in 1943, prior to the extension of the first-floor in the 1950s (NAA).



Figure H4. The post office in c1969. The first floor balcony had been in-filled by this date. The clock and name had been installed on the entrance porch (SLV).

Sources

Australian handbook (1903), as cited in Victorian Places 'Yarram', http://www.victorianplaces.com.au/maffra, accessed Feb 2016.

Context Pty Ltd (2005), Wellington Shire Heritage Study Thematic Environmental History, prepared for Wellington Shire Council.

Fletcher, Meredith & Linda Kennett (2005), Wellington Landscapes, *History and Heritage in a Gippsland Shire*, Maffra.

National Archives of Australia (NAA), picture collection, image nos. B5919, 15/214 & B5919, 14/267), http://www.naa.gov.au/, accessed 28 Jan 2016.

State Library of Victoria (SLV), picture collection, image nos. H89.105/270 & H89.105/271, http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/, accessed 28 January 2016.

Victorian Places, 'Yarram', http://www.victorianplaces.com.au/, accessed 16 February 2016.

Yarram & District Historical Society (YDHS) collection: historical information and photos generously provided by Cate Renfrey, Nov 2015. Including the booklet 'Heritage Trail along Commercial Road, Yarram'.

Yarram & District Historical Society (YDHS) website, 'The history of Yarram & District', http://home.vicnet.net.au/~ydhs/history%20of%20yarram.htm, accessed 16 February 2016.

Description

This section describes the place in 2016. Refer to the Place History for additional important details describing historical changes in the physical fabric.

The Yarram post office was built in 1913 and comprised an office and single-storey residence to the rear. The Federation design reflects Classical and some Arts and Crafts influences. The building is located on the front title boundary, flush with the footpath, on the west side of Commercial road which is the main street of Yarram.

Figure D1. The post office is a two-storey red brick building with a hipped roof clad in slate and wide eaves with exposed rafter ends, which reflects an Arts and Crafts influence. The dominating Palladian-inspired portico is finished in Medusa-white Portland cement (overpainted) entered via 4 wide bluestone steps, with its refined banded rustication, arched openings with large keystones either side of the central large opening supported by classical stylised pilasters and capitals, entablature, projecting cornice with dentils, surmounted by a parapet with round arched centre, encompassing the clock. The interior of the portico has brick to the dado level with decorative render to the top portion.

The side elevations of the 1913 post office have one-over-one double-hung sash timber windows with stone sills and rendered lintels. The windows of the 1913 residential section (the first floor to the rear) has square or segmental-arched brick heads and brick sills.

The cypher of Queen Elizabeth II is positioned above a plaque bearing the Yarram postcode, to the right of the portico, which were added later. The portico is entered by four long bluestone steps

The first floor of the façade is set back behind the portico, with three large timber framed windows. The first floor was originally a recessed balcony, but was in-filled by c1969 (originally the balcony was supported by narrow columns in the Classical idiom, see Figure H2). A recent ladder extends from the central window, possibly to manage the clock. A modern sign has been attached to the portico.

The most important part of the building, the ground floor façade of the 1913 post office building has very high integrity and is in good condition (although the recent paint on the portico is in poor condition) and overall, the building retains a medium level of integrity.

Figure D2. The interior of the portico is brick to the dado level with decorative render to the top portion. One-over-one timber sash windows remain, while the entrance doors have been replaced with modern metal-framed doors. Modern signs have been attached above the entrance door.

Figure D3. The original 1913 extent of the north elevation has single one-over-one double-hung sash windows with bluestone sills and (overpainted) rendered lintels (except for the most eastern window of the first floor, on both elevations, which was originally an opening to the balcony; see Figures H1 & 2). The original extent of the first floor (before the first floor was extended 9 metres in the late 1950s) is evident on the north elevation by the wide eaves with the exposed rafter ends. The original extent of the first-floor is also indicated by the colour of the roof cladding, as seen in the aerial map. The 1913 entrance to the residential portion of the building appears to remain behind an arched entrance. A concrete access ramp with metal balustrade, has been constructed to an opening created to the entrance porch (originally a wall with a small window).

Figure D4. The south elevation has single sash windows with stone sills and (overpainted) rendered lintels on the original 1913 section of the building. The 1913 residence to the rear (ground floor) has some segmental-arched windows. On the south elevation, the section of the first-floor built in the 1950s has wide eaves and exposed timber rafters like the 1913 section. The windows of the 1950s section appear to be lower, which may suggest a change in floor height internally. There is a small window/opening on the side of the portico.



Figure D1. The post office with its hipped roof clad with slate and wide eaves with exposed rafter ends, and the rendered Palladian-inspired Classical portico dominating the facade. The first floor balcony was in-filled with windows by c1969.



Figure D2. A detail of the rendered Palladian-inspired Classical portico with the clock and name.



Figure D3. The north elevation. The 1913 section of the first-floor has the wide eaves and exposed rafter ends. To the rear of this is the 1950s first-floor addition, built on top of the 1913 single-storey residence.

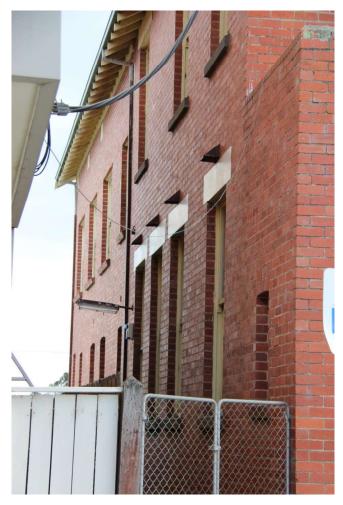


Figure D4. The south elevation. The 1950s addition to the first floor was built with wide eaves with exposed rafter ends, like the original 1913 section.

Sources

All photos taken in 2015 by Heritage Intelligence Pty Ltd as part of Wellington Shire Stage 2 Heritage Study.

Comparative analysis

The size, grandeur and architectural style of post offices tend to reflect the size and status of the town and the era, in which they are built. All of the extant ones in Wellington Shire have very high to excellent integrity and are in very good condition and are all built in red brickwork.

The fine Federation Freestyle 1913 post office in Yarram, was built when Yarram was the seat of government for the Shire of Alberton, and it is the only one of its type in Wellington Shire. Stratford, once the seat of government for the Avon Shire, is a fine complex comprising an 1885 council chambers, courthouse, and post office with residence, of the Victorian Free Classical style. The post office has Queen Anne half-timbered projecting gables (added c1900) which gives the post office and its residence a more domestic scale and homely appearance compared with the more forbidding taller and windowless façade of the court house adjacent. The Heyfield Post Office, built in 1924, in the Stripped Classical style, is a domestic scaled building with openings in vertical classical proportions, divided into vertical bays which are delineated by red brick pilasters with brick capitals, supporting a plain rendered entablature. One of the oldest post office buildings still existing in the shire is the former Port Albert post office. Built in 1865, it closed in 1972 and is now a private home. A larger and

very impressive post office was built in Sale, which was the largest city in the area at the time, but it has been demolished, although the clock tower was rebuilt in a different location as a street feature.

Management Guidelines

Whilst landowners are not obliged to undertake restoration works, these guidelines provide recommendations to facilitate the retention and enhancement of the culturally significant place, its fabric and its setting, when restoration works or alterations to the building are proposed. They also identify issues particular to the place and provide further detailed advice where relevant. The guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive and a pragmatic approach will be taken when considering development proposals. Alternative approaches to those specified in the guidelines will be considered where it can be demonstrated that a desirable development outcome can be achieved that does not impact on a place's heritage integrity.

- 1. Additions and new buildings
 - 1.1. Retain clear views of the front elevation.
 - 1.2. Retain the visual connection of the Post Office with the Soldiers/war memorial.
 - 1.3. New structures should be restricted to the rear of the property and concealed behind the heritage fabric when viewed from Commercial Road.

2. Accessibility

- 2.1. A concrete ramp has been installed on the north side of the building, forming a new entry. Fortunately it has been installed so that the ramp does not obstruct good airflow under the floor which will allow the wall structure to evaporate moisture and reduce termite and rot attack to the subfloor structure and damp in the brick walls. Ensure water drains away from the subfloor vents, and walls and the gap between the wall and the ramp remains clear of debris. Insert additional sub floor vents if the ramp has blocked any of them.
- 2.2. Metal bannisters have been installed at the front steps. They are functional and minimalist and they have a minor visual impact on the architecture and therefor they are a suitable design for an accessible addition.

3. Reconstruction and Restoration

- 3.1. The rendered lintels, and entry porch have been painted, and this is in poor condition and has remnants of other colours possibly graffiti, however, these architectural features were not designed to be painted. They were a light coloured unpainted render and in this case it was Medusa-white Portland cement. It is strongly recommended that the paint be removed chemically (never sand, water or soda blast the building as this will permanently damage the bricks, mortar and render and never seal the bricks or render as that will create perpetual damp problems.) Removal of the paint will not only restore the architecture, but it will remove the ongoing costs of repainting it every 10 or so years. The cost of removing any future graffiti will be the same whether it is on paint, brick or render. However, if it is decided to repaint the render, it should be one colour only, (do not paint the base a different colour) and closely resemble the colour of Medusa white Portland cement.
- 3.2. The render inside the porch appears to have damage from damp, indicated by black algae. If the damp is still active the source of the damp must first be solved, then the algae treated.
- 3.3. It is recommended that a heritage specialist industrial cleaner be engaged to do this and remove the paint (including the orange coloured substance) chemically from all the rendered surfaces. The former bank at Rosedale was recently cleaned of paint by this method.
- 3.4. If an opportunity arises, consider restoring:

- 3.4.1. The front façade of the first floor balustrade and classical columns (Fig H2) (perhaps with glass panels across the façade fixed behind the columns enabling the space to remain an internal room.
- 3.4.2. The original timber doors.
- 3.5. Consider relocating the telephone booth to the side, and away from the front of the building.

4. Care and Maintenance

- 4.1. Obtain a copy of "Salt Attack and Rising Damp" by David Young (2008), which is a free booklet available for download from Heritage Victoria website. It is in plain English, well illustrated and has very important instructions and should be used by tradesmen and Council maintenance staff. Further assistance is available from the Shire's heritage advisor.
- 4.2. The slate roof is now a rare feature in Yarram, and should be maintained to avoid future expensive repairs. The roof has not been inspected but it is evident from Commercial Road, that lichen is growing on parts of it (this is not doing any harm and is better left untouched), however, the roof has a bow in it on the north side near the ridge lines and if left unrepaired, will require very expensive works, especially if the slates crack and water enters the building.
- 4.3. The timber windows are in urgent need of repainting.
- 4.4. If there is damp in the walls, or the timber floor is failing, it is imperative that the drainage is fixed first. This may involve the lowering of the ground outside so that it is lower than the ground inside under the floor, installation of agricultural drains, running the downpipes into drainage inspection pits instead of straight into the ground. The reason for the pits is that a blocked drain will not be noticed until so much water has seeped in and around the base of the building and damage commenced (which may take weeks or months to be visible), whereas, the pit will immediately fill with water and the problem can be fixed before the floor rots or the mortar falls out, the bricks start to crumble, and the building smells musty.
- 4.5. Ensure good subfloor ventilation is maintained at all times to reduce the habitat for termites and rot of the subfloor structure. Subfloor ventilation is critical with solid masonry buildings. Check that sub floor vents are not blocked and introduce additional ones if necessary. Ensure the exterior ground level is 250mm or more, lower than the ground level inside the building. Good subfloor ventilation works for free, and is therefore cost effective.
- 4.6. Never install a concrete floor inside a solid masonry building as it will, after a year or so, cause long term chronic damp problems in the walls. Do not install a new damp proof course (DPC) until the drainage has been fixed, even an expensive DPC may not work unless the ground has been lowered appropriately.
- 4.7. Never seal solid masonry buildings, they **must be able to evaporate water** which enters from leaking roofs, pipes, pooling of water, storms, etc. Use appropriate cleaning materials, agents and methods, as recommended by the Shire's heritage advisor. The biggest risk to solid masonry buildings is permanent damage by the use of cleaning materials, agents and methods. Sand and water blasting removes the skilled decorative works of craftsmen as well as the fired surface on bricks and the lime mortar from between the bricks. It is irreversible and reduces the life of the building due to the severe damp that the damage encourages.
- 4.8. Never use cement mortar, always match the original lime mortar. Traditional mortar mixes were commonly 1:3, lime:sand. Cement is stronger than the bricks and therefore the bricks will eventually crumble, leaving the cement mortar intact! Lime mortar lasts hundreds of years. When it starts to powder it is the 'canary in the mine', alerting you to a damp problem fix the source of the damp problem and then repoint with lime mortar.
 - 4.8.1. Remove the dark grey patches to the mortar joints. This is cement mortar which will damage the bricks and longevity of the walls. Repoint those joints with lime mortar. The mortar is not the problem it is the messenger.

4.9. The pidgeon droppings should be removed by a trained person, as the droppings can be toxic. Ensure only bristle or nylon brushes and wooden scrapers are used, not metal. See http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/113378> for more details. Install spikes to deter pidgeons from sitting in those locations.

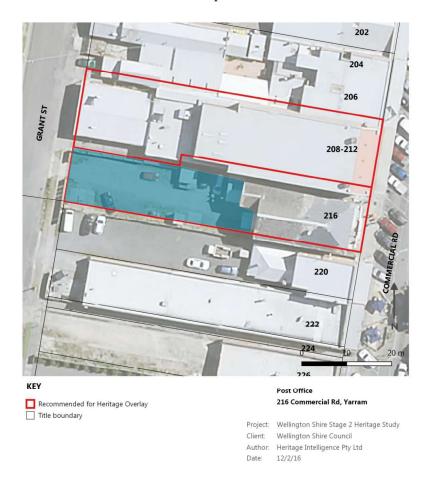
5. Signage

- 5.1. Ensure all signage is designed to fit around the significant architectural design features, not over them.
- 5.2. Retain the Yarram Post Office signage. If the place is not used as a post office in the future, do not remove the sign, preferably remove the paint so that it is not a feature, and if necessary, place a removable sign over the writing in such a way that the original writing will not be damaged.

6. Services

6.1. Ensure new services and conduits, down pipes etc, are not conspicuous. To do this, locate them at the rear of the building whenever possible, and when that is not practical, paint them the same colour as the building or fabric behind them. Therefore if a conduit goes up a red brick wall, as is the case on the front façade (north side) it should be painted red, and when it passes over say, a cream coloured detail, it should be cream.

NOTE The blue shaded area is the preferred location for additions and new development



Sources

Young, David (2008), "Salt Attack and Rising Damp, a guide to salt damp in historic and older buildings" Technical Guide, prepared for Heritage Victoria.