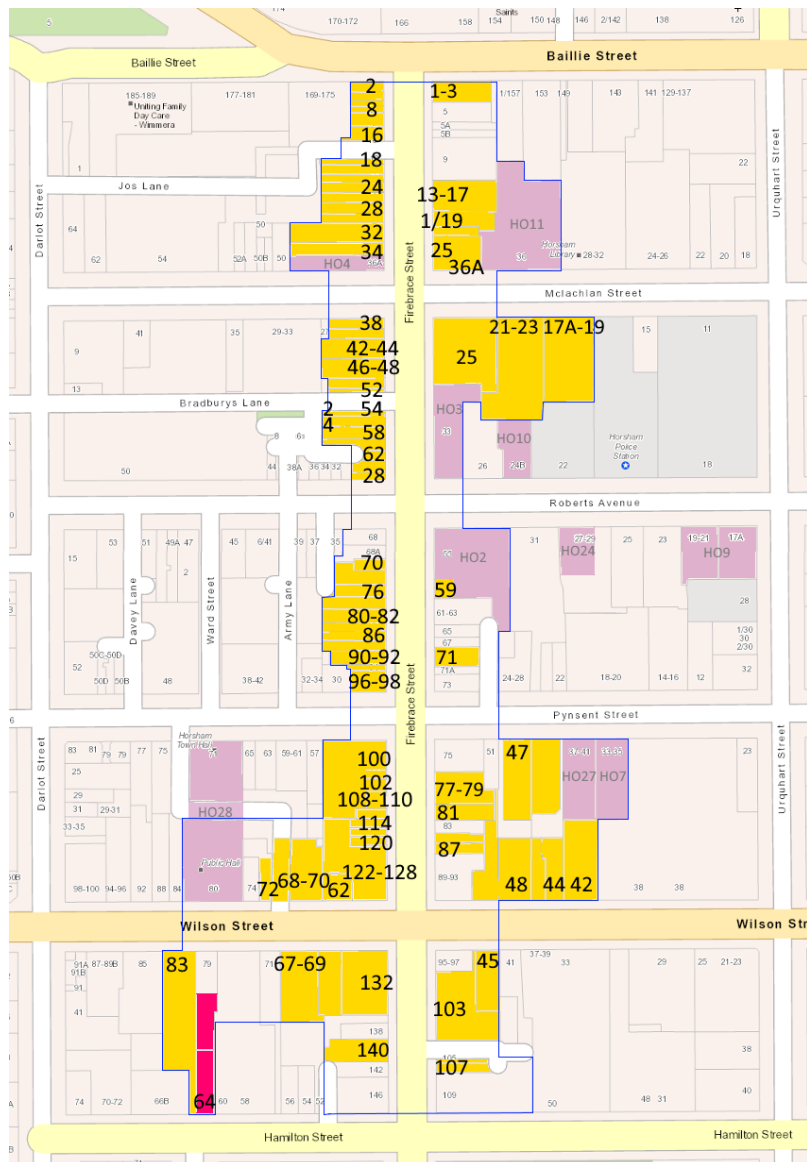


# HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

**name:** Firebrace Street Commercial Precinct  
**Address:** 1-109 & 2-146 Firebrace St HORSHAM  
17A-25 & 36-46A McLachlan St HORSHAM  
35-51 Pynsent St HORSHAM  
28 Roberts St HORSHAM  
45-83 & 42-80 Wilson St HORSHAM  
**Place Type:** Commercial Precinct  
**Citation Date:** 2022



Firebrace Street Commercial Precinct

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**Recommended  
Heritage Protection**      **VHR -**  
  
   **HI -**  
  
   **PS**  
   Yes

## Integrity

High - 70% of streetscape of heritage value. A number of early shops' front parapets have been concealed in the postwar period with metal cladding, for example, a c1880s balustraded parapet is visible from the rear at 52 Firebrace Street, and an early hipped roof at 128 Firebrace Street. For this reason, shops with concealed parapets have all been graded contributory, as it is assumed that an early (interwar or earlier) parapet or upper floor survives beneath this cladding.

Of the late-1960s and early-1970s bank and financial institution buildings, those which have best retained the integrity of their post-war facade designs have been graded as contributory.

## History and Historical Context

Firebrace Street was named after Major William Firebrace, an early squatter of NSW and Victoria, who took up the Vectis pastoral run in the Wimmera in the early 1840s. With Langlands Store and a police presence already established here by 1849, it is possible that Firebrace Street loosely followed a pre-existing route taken by pastoralists and others, who used the Wimmera River as a convenient stop-over point.

Firebrace Street was marked out in the first town survey of Horsham in 1849, as a central roadway running north-south through the centre of the town. Because it was the main thoroughfare through the township, Firebrace Street was established early on as the most desirable location for much needed goods and services to those who were becoming established as settlers, such as provision stores (grocers, butchers, bakers, etc), stables, blacksmiths, farming supplies, agricultural machinery manufacturers, lodging houses, and later, hotels. Initially, these were simple, single-storey premises, mostly built of timber. One of the first was George Langland's store, established in 1849 on the north-east corner of Hamilton and Darlot streets, just south-west of the precinct.[0] By the 1870s, when Horsham experienced significant growth on account of the attractions of land selection in the area, Firebrace Street had become a major commercial centre that served a growing farming district. By the early 1880s Horsham was also serving the needs of two municipalities: both the Shire of Wimmera and the Borough of Horsham, established in 1882, in which the town centre was located.

Firebrace Street continued to develop as the spine of the township, with development generally spreading from the southern to the northern end. As a regular transport route for graziers, drovers and others, it was an important supply stop and the many varied stores experienced good trade. Early photographs of Firebrace Street in the late 1800s and early 1900s show a concentration of shops along both sides of the street, mostly with pitched verandahs on posts that came to the edge of the footpath. Many built double-storey premises and built in brick rather than timber. Considerable development of the precinct took place in the period from the 1870s until the early 1900s, when elaborate Victorian and Federation-era shops were constructed, with deep verandahs edged with decorative cast iron. Shop rows were given a uniform decorative treatment, which is evident in surviving first-floor facades. Several larger buildings defined the corners with imposing double-storey edifices, such as the White Hart Hotel, erected 1883, the Wimmera Shire offices (1875) and the Horsham Post Office (1878-80). St John's Anglican Church in Baillie Street, erected in the late 1870s, was a prominent feature that marked the culmination of Firebrace Street at its northern end. Some of the simple earlier structures also remained at this time, such as the Wimmera Times office, which commenced in the early 1870s in a log hut.[1] The wide, tree-lined street with its dominant Victorian/Edwardian character, that was also a regular thoroughfare for drovers and their livestock, had a rough elegance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. By the late nineteenth century Firebrace Street boasted a wide range of commercial premises, with the addition of such things as drapers and furniture stores, and other suppliers of domestic accoutrements for the home, reflecting

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the permanency of settlement.

The local council was concerned to beautify Firebrace Street, on account of it being the main face of Horsham to visitors and was much used by local people. Street trees were planted as early as the 1870s by the Wimmera Shire Council, which can be seen in early surviving photographs of Firebrace Street. A photograph taken in c.1870s, for example, shows young street trees protected by tree guards. Further street tree planting was undertaken in the 1880s by the newly established Borough of Horsham, and again in the early 1900s. There was on-going tension surrounding tree-planting in Firebrace Street. Whilst making the street more attractive was appealing, local business interests did not want Firebrace Street developed as an avenue in case it might impede business and trade in the street.[2]

As the population of Horsham and its outlying townships continued to grow, the commercial centre in Firebrace Street developed to serve a wider population. From the late 1800s and into the twentieth century, local farming families from around Horsham and the outlying towns would travel to Firebrace Street on a Friday (the traditional 'market day') to do their weekly shopping. This weekly chore also provided otherwise relatively isolated settlers with the opportunity for social interaction, and the chance to catch up with friends, and Firebrace Street was the site for this.

Many bank branches were constructed, including the State Savings Bank, Bank of NSW, CBC, ES&A, and CBA, all since demolished. There is a surviving nineteenth-century bank building at 48 Wilson Street, the former Primary Producers Bank. There were many hotels, both along Firebrace Street and on the side streets, particularly Wilson Street. Those on Wilson Street served locals and travellers. They included the 'Royal', which dominated the Firebrace Street corner from as early as 1881 with stables to the rear, and to its west the 'Farmers Union' (replaced by the Wimmera Coffee Palace, converted in 1928 to the 'Locarno', and now the 'Wilson'), the 'Commercial', the 'Bull and Mouth', and the 'Shamrock' (demolished). John Gillies, owner of Horsham's first flour mill, built the 'White Hart' hotel at 55 Firebrace Street in 1883, to a design by his son, Henry Alexander Gillies. An upper floor and two-storeyed cast-iron verandah were added to it by 1888. George Ryan built the 'Union Store' around 1884 on the north-west corner of Firebrace and Wilson streets (128 Firebrace Street). The brick and rendered building with expansive glazed shopfronts was later given a timber and cast-iron verandah (since removed), and gave the name 'Ryan's Corner' to this spot. Following the purchase of these premises by Langlands emporium c1932, it became known as 'Langland's Corner' until that department store closed in 1976. Joe Puls built the two-storey 'Austral Buildings' at 102-110 Firebrace Street in 1908, where he had a stock and station agent's office providing loans to farmers. Around that same time, the Victoria Buildings 'Picture Hall' was constructed in the Edwardian Free Style at 62 Wilson Street, and the 'Exchange' Hotel at 100 Firebrace Street.[0]

From the 1920s and 30s, the motor car era brought cars into the city on a Friday night, drawn by late-night shopping, cafes, coffee lounges, and the various entertainments on offer. In the 1930s, for example, Friday-night shoppers were treated to a pipe band.[3]

As Horsham's principal thoroughfare, Firebrace Street also served as a public precinct for the town and wider district, a role probably aided by the location of several of the chief public buildings - for example, the first Horsham Mechanics' Institute (1872; rebuilt in 1909), the Horsham Post Office (1878-80), and the new municipal building for the Shire of Wimmera (1875).[4] The corner of Firebrace and Wilson Streets was ornamented with the May and Miller fountain in 1901. Firebrace Street has been used for various public parades and processions, such as the annual horse parade, which ran from the 1870s until the 1930s, and also the large-scale 'Back to Horsham' parade in 1951.

There was further development in the street during the interwar period when there was substantial growth in Horsham. New shops were often built in rows with uniform shopfronts and parapets. A new row of shops adjoining the Albion Hotel, for example, was erected in 1919.[5] Architect Ernest Keogh designed the 'Wimmera Coffee Palace' at 67-69 Wilson Street in 1918, later known as the 'Locarno' and 'Wilson's Hotel'. Its Arts & Crafts design recalled the substantial homes of the time.[0] The Victorian-era 'Criterion' (now Royal) Hotel underwent a high-quality internal remodelling in the 1920s, with the installation of tiles to the external ground

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floor. A branch of the ES&A Bank opened in 1928 and Langlands Store erected a prominent tower above their premises in 1937 to serve as a marker for aircraft, but which provided a landmark for the town. The 1920s witnessed the establishment of the motor industry, represented by the Wilson Bolton Motors garage at 47-49 Pynsent Street.[0] The construction of the T & G Building in 1940 added an imposing Art Deco structure to Firebrace Street that signalled the arrival of modernity, as had the construction of the new Wimmera Shire Offices in 1937 replacing its 1875 predecessor. A RSSILA Building was constructed on McLachlan Street in 1921, designed in a classical revival style by a G[?] Lucas.[0]

The widespread adoption of motor vehicles by the 1920s and 1930s meant the decline of horse-drawn vehicles, and of the horse market that had long characterised Horsham's commercial life. This impacted on some of the traditional traders in Firebrace Street, such as blacksmiths and stables. It also led to the removal of hitching posts and horse troughs, and the eventual introduction in the postwar period of concrete kerbing, road signs, traffic lights, parking meters and roundabouts. The street trees were largely gone by the 1920s, victims of motor traffic and commercial development. The May and Miller fountain was relocated to May Park to accommodate motor traffic in 1947.[6] Some of the older structures in Firebrace Street were replaced during this period by modern shop buildings, and others lost their posted verandahs or were even hidden beneath metal cladding. A redeveloped St John's Church, completed in 1957, retained the church view with the addition of a prominent spire that dominated the north end of Firebrace Street.

During the austerity period of the immediate post-war years, private enterprise development in Firebrace Street was minimal. Various arms of government were still able to marshal resources for building, and under the banner of decentralization which had been developed during the war, Commonwealth and State government departments and utilities were established in new premises in and around Firebrace Street. These reinforced Horsham's status as a regional centre. These were of a similar overall scale to the existing buildings, but Modernist facades of these buildings made a distinctly new contribution to the streetscape.

Some substantial bank buildings in Firebrace Street from the nineteenth century and early twentieth century survived into the post-war period, but by the 1960s these were being demolished and replaced with new premises which provided a modern customer experience, and which were designed in International Modernist style. An early example was the ES&A bank (no longer extant). To the south of the post office on the east side of Firebrace Street a new 'Bankers Row' developed, which included the Commercial Bank (1962), AMP building (1970) and ANZ Bank (1973) as well as the later National Australia Bank. [7]

The status of Horsham as a regional centre was reinforced in an emphatic manner by the construction of the imposing five-storey tower of the State Public Offices (1970) in McLachlan Street. This status was reinforced soon after by the near-Brutalist new Post Office, opened in 1972.

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[0] Andrew Ward, 'Limited Heritage Study for the Rural City of Horsham', 1998.

[1] *Horsham in Focus*, 1999, p. 44.

[2] *Horsham Times*, 30 April 1901.

[3] *Horsham Times*, 29 May 1931.

[4] *Horsham in Focus*, 1999, p. 32.

[5] *Horsham Times*, 19 January 1919.

[6] *Horsham in Focus*, 1999, p. 15.

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[7] Brooke, Brian and Finch, Alan 1982, *A Story of Horsham: a municipal century*, pp.95-96.

## Description

### Physical Description

High number of 1880 – 1970s buildings, of one and two storeys typically - centred along the main commercial/civic street of the city of Horsham. Buildings vary in date from the early 1880s (none survive from the early settlement period (1849-1880) with many of the city's 1880s hotels centred around the Wilson St corner. Hamilton Street was the early focus of horse and stock yards and the area around Roberts Avenue contained many of the civic buildings - such as Council offices and the nearby (now demolished) post office and court house. Single storey shops of the early 20thC to interwar period line the west side of Firebrace Street, at the Baillie St end. A small number of shops retain an intact original shopfront, notably 8 & 28 Firebrace Street, with partially surviving examples at 2 & 22 Firebrace Street. Of particular note is the dominant landmark at the north end of Firebrace Street, St John the Divine church. This church visually dominates the street and defines the north end of the Precinct. The most intact area of interest is the Firebrace/ Wilson St corner, illustrating pre 1920 development in the street. Moderne era buildings such as the Town Hall, the landmark tower of the T&G building and the former Wimmera Shire offices illustrate the prosperous 20thC inter-war period of development within the town.

Private enterprise development of central Horsham was slow after the Second World War but several buildings for government departments and banks were constructed from the late 1940s to the early 1970s. A number of these created a new presence in the main street with Modernist/International style facades. The early 1970s and saw the construction of two landmark buildings, the five-storey tower of the State Public Offices which was of a scale entirely new to Horsham, and the massive facade of the new Post Office.

### Physical Condition

Fair condition. Most buildings have lost early verandahs and most shopfronts of commercial premises have been replaced in the late 20th century.

### Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

Relevant HERCON Criteria

*Criterion A:* Importance to the course, or pattern, of our cultural or natural history. (early buildings remaining illustrate the settlement and early physical development of the district due to pastoral and agricultural prosperity)

*Criterion D:* Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments. (substantial regional centre in Victoria – illustrating the settlement and growth of post-contact Victoria in western Victoria)

*Criterion E:* Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics. (late 19thC buildings of design merit. Inter-war buildings of design merit, including several Moderne buildings of design merit. Further, built form representation of early grid plan for city)

### Comparative Analysis

Firebrace Street is the premier commercial and civic centre of the Rural City of Horsham. It contains a high concentration of late 19th and early 20th century shops, hotels and banks, as well as civic and community buildings such as the Wimmera Shire Offices, the Horsham Town Hall, the Horsham Theatre, the Mechanics' Institute and the RSSILA. The precinct boundary has been drawn to include the most intact part of the Firebrace Street streetscape as well as nearby commercial and civic buildings on the cross streets.

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## Statement of Significance

### What is significant?

Firebrace Street Commercial Precinct is significant, comprising:

- 1-109 & 2-146 Firebrace Street,
- 17A-25 & 36-46A McLachlan Street,
- 35-51 Pynsent Street,
- 28 Roberts Avenue, and
- 45-83 & 42-80 Wilson Street, Horsham.

The elements of heritage value include:

- . Commercial and civic buildings constructed between 1880 and 1945, including some whose parapet and/or upper floor is hidden behind later metal cladding
- . Surviving early shopfronts, found at 2 (partial), 8, 22 (partial) & 28 Firebrace Street
- . Views from the south terminating in the spire of St John's Anglican Church (which is protected by an individual HO)

Individually significant places in the precinct include HO4 T&G Building at 32-36 Firebrace Street & 40-46A McLachlan Street; HO3 Former Wimmera Shire Offices at 35-51 Firebrace Street; HO2 White Hart Hotel at 55 Firebrace Street; HO11 RSSILA Building at 36 McLachlan Street; HO7 Former Mechanics' Institute at 33 Pynsent Street; HO27 Horsham Theatre at 37-41 Pynsent Street; HO28 Horsham Town Hall at 78 Wilson Street, and the former Young Bros. Stable at rear of 79 Wilson Street and 64 Hamilton Street.

Contributory properties are at 1-3, 13-27, 71, 77-79, 59, 81, 85, 87, 103-107, 2-30, 38-64, 70-132 & 140A-140B Firebrace Street; 17A-25 & 36A McLachlan Street; 43-47 Pynsent Street; 28 Roberts Avenue, 45, 59-69, 83 & 42-72 Wilson Street. Among these properties are many keynote buildings important for their historical and landmark qualities, including the Exchange Hotel at 100 Firebrace Street; the Royal Hotel (former 'Criterion') and stables at 132 Firebrace Street; Wilsons Hotel (former 'Wimmera Coffee Palace' and 'Locarno') at 67 Wilson Street; the former Primary Producers Bank at 48 Wilson Street, the Victoria Buildings 'Picture Hall' at 62 Wilson Street, and the former Wilson Bolton Motors Garage at 47 Pynsent Street.

### How is it significant?

The Firebrace Street Commercial Precinct, Horsham, is of local historic, representative and aesthetic significance to the Horsham Rural City.

### Why is it significant?

The Firebrace Street Commercial Precinct, Horsham, is of local significance, due to:

- . the remnant, early commercial and civic Horsham, settled from 1849. The extant 1880 -1915 era buildings along Firebrace St illustrate the scale, prosperity and needs of the mid-late 19th century town and the surrounding agricultural community, as pastoralism gave way to closer settlement and high yield grain production. Horsham grew from an 1851 survey to become a substantial town in the Wimmera district by the end of the 19th century, known by many locals as the 'centre of the Wimmera'. Many of the surviving nineteenth-

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century buildings are hotels, being some of the most substantial and well-built structures in the area, which have survived despite Horsham's highly reactive soil. (Criteria A and D)

. the substantial redevelopment of the town during the 20th century inter-war period. The Wimmera region underwent a substantial economic boom during this period, due to improvements in farming technology, soil management, transport and several very good harvest years. A substantial part of the 19th century civic and commercial heart of the town was rebuilt during this period. These new 'Art Deco' or 'Moderne' styled buildings are of heritage significance as they illustrate the emergent modern and prosperous aspirations of the community during this period, and many are of design merit. (Criteria A and E)

. private investment in Firebrace Street in the Austerity period after the Second World War was limited, but government utilities and departments built substantial infrastructure and offices. These modern and substantial buildings illustrate the consolidation of the role of Firebrace Street as the main street and the role of Horsham as a regional centre. The renewal of the street front contributions of banks and other financial institutions in the 1960s and 1970s, again marked with striking up-to-date styles, reinforced the role of Firebrace Street as the financial heart of the town. (Criteria A and D)

## Recommendations 2022

<b>External Paint Controls</b>	Yes
<b>Internal Alteration Controls</b>	No
<b>Tree Controls</b>	No
<b>Fences &amp; Outbuildings</b>	No
<b>Prohibited uses may be permitted</b>	No
<b>Incorporated Plan</b>	-
<b>Aboriginal Heritage Place</b>	No

## References

**Literature title:** A story of Horsham : a municipal century

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:** Brooke, Brian. & Finch, Alan

**Literature publisher:** City of Horsham

**Literature year:** 1982

**Literature title:** Horsham in focus: 1849-1999

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:** Foley, Marie. & Jenkinson, Noelene M. & Horsham Historical Society

**Literature publisher:** Horsham Historical Society Horsham, Vic

**Literature year:** 1999

**Literature title:** Horsham Times Newspaper

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:**

**Literature publisher:**

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Literature year:

**This information is provided for guidance only and does not supersede official documents, particularly the planning scheme. Planning controls should be verified by checking the relevant municipal planning scheme.**