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### Former Police Station

24 Roberts Avenue, Horsham



Photo: 1997

#### Existing Registrations:

Victorian Heritage Register: nil

National Estate Register: nil

National Trust Register: nil

**History:** An 1840's police encampment near a river crossing on James Darlot's North Brighton pastoral run, established government presence in what was to become the township of Horsham. These associations between river crossing, police administrative centre and the beginnings of a town were common to many of Victoria's early settlements.

Thomas Halfpenny was the first chief constable for the Wimmera region. He had a staff of two in 1849 and presided over the police headquarters located in what would become Darlot Street. It consisted of a courthouse, a watch house, constables' quarters and a garden

By the early 1920's, the nature of police work was changing with the increased use of motor transport. As well, a police union had been formed; a building program embarked upon by the PWD (1922) and a Royal Commission established under Sir John Monash (1924). The most visible outcome of events for Horsham was the erection of a new brick

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police station and sergeant's quarters. It was erected in 1923 on the Police Reserve in Section 7 on the north side of Roberts Avenue between Firebrace and Urquhart Streets. It was designed by the Public Works Department under Chief Architect E. Evan Smith (chief architect 1922-29) and was one of 24 centres built for the Police Department at the time. It cost 2,476 pounds, and was the most expensive country station of the period.

The station was described in the Victorian Public Gazette in 1935 as "...seven -roomed brick dwelling (with) tiled roof, used as offices and barrack rooms; five rooms (sergeant's quarters) unused..." A new concrete cell block was built in 1939 at the rear of the police station to replace a log lock-up. It had three cells and a storeroom.

The building ceased to be used as a police station in 1978, by which time it was considered to be inadequate. A new building was erected east of the courthouse and the old building given over to various uses, mostly community based. During its history, it had been affectionately known as "Ye Olde Cop Shoppe".

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**Description:** An Arts and Crafts influenced brick and rough cast former police station having a central round arched porch with Classical Revival references and flanking segmentally arched windows. There is a terra cotta tiled gable roof and a side porch, the strength of the design hinging on the marriage between the Arts and Crafts and the Public Works Department's long established Classical Revival traditions.

**Integrity:** High                      **Condition:**              Sound

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**Comparative examples:** In Horsham compares loosely with the former RSSILA building of 1921. Compares at the State level with other work of the Public Works Department undertaken during E. Evan Smith's term as chief architect, possibly including the Horsham State Public offices, now demolished.

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**Significance:** The former Horsham police station at 24 Roberts Avenue is important as the earliest surviving public building within the land reserved for public purposes bounded by Roberts Avenue, McPherson, Firebrace and McLachlan Streets (Criterion A). It is also important in the history of police activities in the region and as a locally rare example of the buildings of the Public Works Department during the inter-war period (Criterion B).

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**References:** Police File, Horsham Historical Society. (Contains Historic Buildings Register item 6050981).  
Brian Brooke and Alan Finch, A Story of Horsham, A Municipal Century, City of Horsham, 1982, pp.5 and 199.  
Town of Horsham, Parish plan, Department of Lands and Survey, 28.2.1928.  
Horsham Sewerage Plan no. 132, c.1927, amended June 1948.

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Data sheet prepared by Andrew Ward 2/98