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Wesley Performing Arts and Cultural Centre
Former Methodist Church
Corner Roberts Avenue and Urquhart Street, Horsham



Photo: May, 1997

Existing Registrations:

Victorian Heritage Register: nil

National Estate Register: nil

National Trust Register: nil

History: The Wesleyans built a timber church in McPherson Street near the end of Roberts Avenue in 1876. It was moved to the present site in 1882. Following a State wide vote for the union of the various Wesleyan Church groups in 1902, three groups in the Wimmera formed the Horsham circuit of the Methodist Church. The old timber building was again moved, this time to face Roberts Avenue and the foundation stone for the present brick church laid on 30.8.1911. It was opened in 1912 when the Rev George Judkins was minister. In June 1924 the jubilee year of the Church was celebrated with the opening of the present Sunday School hall alongside the church, facing Roberts Avenue.

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During the term of the Rev. Bernie Semmens (1936-1941) the front of the church was rebuilt, the chapel enlarged and new porches added. In 1976 the church joined the Uniting Church with the Presbyterians following in 1977.

Description: The church is a red brick building with stuccoed dressings in a straight forward Gothic Revival manner with distinguishing west window in the Perpendicular style and later castellated pavilions. The floor is understood to be ramped towards the site of the organ, now a stage. The ceiling is varnished timber, following the line of the roof but having more steeply sloping lower sides

The hall is a large timber building, the façade articulated with Arts and Crafts influenced detail including bracketed gable end and diminutive windows characteristic of the early Inter war period.

Integrity: High **Condition:** Sound

Comparative examples: The castellated motif has been used infrequently over many years, an early example being that of Scots Church, Campbellfield (1855) and a later example being the Church of Christ, Caulfield North (1918). The west window is unusual on account of its use of vertical tracery above the cusped arches and constitutes the building's principal link with the Perpendicular style.

At the local level, the use of castellations compares with the Anglican Church, Baillie Street (demolished 1957) and the St. Andrews Church tower (demolished 1962). Within the Rural City, the Lutheran Church, Vectis is a brick building, erected in 1907 but in other respects not comparable.

Significance: The Former Methodist Church of 1911-12 and hall of 1924 situated at the corner of Roberts Avenue and Urquhart Street, Horsham are historically important as the principal centre of worship for the Methodist community in Horsham from 1912 until post 1976, recalling the impetus given to the Horsham circuit following the 1902 union. In these respects it demonstrates an important era in the life of the present Uniting Church congregation (criteria A and G).

Given the demolition of all other nineteenth century churches in Horsham and the absence of any pre First World War churches in the City, the church and hall complex survives as the oldest group of buildings of their type (criterion B), demonstrating aspects of Church life not reflected in more recent comparable buildings (criterion D). The west window, ceiling treatment and castellated pavilions are unique architectural elements in the City whilst the former may be unusual in Victoria (criterion B). The hall is a rare surviving large timber building in Horsham (criterion B).

References: Brooke, B. and Finch, A., A Story of Horsham: A Municipal Century, City of Horsham 1982, p.254.

Data sheet prepared by Andrew Ward 9/97