

House, 12-14 Tannock Street, Balwyn North Statement of Significance

Heritage Place:	House, 12-14 Tannock Street, Balwyn North	PS ref no:	HO928
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What is significant?

The former Wood House at 12-14 Tannock Street, Balwyn North, is a single-storey gable-roofed brick house with an elongated split-level plan that spreads across its double block. Designed by Robin Boyd for chemist Don Wood and his family, the house was realised in three stages built over more than 20 years: the original modest two-bedroom house (1948-49), expanded with garage and a bedroom/playroom wing (1959) and a further addition with ensuite master bedroom and further living area (1971).

The significant fabric is designed as the entire exterior of the house (encapsulating all three stages designed by Robin Boyd), as well as hard landscaping to the extent of the rock retaining walls, paved pathways and timber steps as shown on Boyd's drawings.

How is it significant?

The former Wood House is of architectural, aesthetic and associative significance to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

The house is architecturally and aesthetically significant as a notable achievement in modernist residential architecture. The original house was designed and built in 1948-49, when private homebuilding was still hampered by wartime restrictions on labour and building materials. Nevertheless, the house encapsulated many of the innovative ideas associated with the burgeoning modernist movement, such as open-planning, split-level design and extensive

glazing (most notably in this case, with an improbably large single pane plate glass window). Its elongated plan form, low roofline and generous glazing also articulated a distinct housing form described by Boyd as the “Victorian” type, which prominently recurs in his early output (including plans that he prepared for the Small Homes Services) as well as in later works. The original house was extended to Boyd’s design in 1959 and again in 1971, providing evidence of the architect’s skill and sensitivity in making additions to his own work, simultaneously demonstrating a continuity of form, finishes and details while still being readily identifiable as later accretions. (Criterion E; Criterion F)

The house is significant for associations with eminent architect and writer Robin Boyd. Documented in late 1948, the house was one of the first projects undertaken by Boyd after he left the partnership of Kevin Pethebridge and Frank Bell, effectively embracing sole practice whilst employed as foundation director of the Small Homes Service. The house demonstrates rarity as one of relatively few surviving examples from this brief but seminal phase of Boyd’s career, prior to his celebrated partnership with Roy Grounds and Frederick Romberg. It is one of several outstanding early houses by Robin Boyd in the Balwyn and Balwyn North area, which, considered collectively, provide rare and valuable evidence of the innovation, boldness and fresh design approaches of a young architect on the cusp of an illustrious career. (Criterion B; Criterion H).

Primary source

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