Locality History
The suburb of Brunswick is part of the traditional land of the Wurundjeri who occupied this area, which they named Iramoo, for many thousands of years. The area achieved local governance as the newly formed Borough of Brunswick in 1857; the municipality was elevated to the Town of Brunswick in 1888 and to the City of Brunswick in 1908. Brunswick is now part of a larger municipal area, the City of Moreland, which was formed in 1994 through an amalgamation of the former City of Fitzroy, the former City of Coburg, and a small area of the former City of Fitzroy.
Brunswick, located a few miles north of central Melbourne, was first surveyed in 1839 to provide 16 farming allotments ranging in size from 100 to 300 acres. The early allotments each had a frontage to either the Moonee Ponds or Merri Creeks and to a rough north–south track that soon became known as the Sydney Road. The allotments were quickly sold over three auctions, mostly to private speculators, and re-subdivision began almost immediately. On the west side of Sydney Road James Simpson subdivided his allotment, creating Albert (then Carmarthen) and Victoria (then Llandillo) streets. When Thomas Wilkinson purchased the allotment on the opposite side of Sydney Road he extended Victoria and Albert streets. This pattern was repeated many times, and each time the land was divided into smaller and smaller allotments (Context 1990:10). In the 1840s the early settlement at the southern end of Brunswick on the west side of Sydney Road was known as Phillipstown.

The Colony of Victoria expanded rapidly during the 1850s with the gold rushes and in the twenty years between 1846 and 1865 Brunswick's population grew from 146 to 3000, creating a strong demand for housing. People were drawn by the considerable local industry, including stone quarries, brick-works and potteries, and steel works. The sequence of subdivision generally followed transport and access routes. The opening of the railway to Coburg in 1884 and the cable tram along Sydney Road in 1887, providing direct access to the centre of the city of Melbourne, encouraged the subdivision and development of land along these routes. Sydney Road became a busy hub of commercial development, with the strip characterised by double-storey Victorian-era shopfronts, with many highly decorative ‘boom style’ examples.

Brunswick developed as a self-contained and close-knit community that was home to rich and poor. Whilst the vast bulk of its housing was built for the working and artisan classes, there was also a sprinkling of more salubrious residences occupied by the middle-class factory owners, merchants and professionals, notable in Park Street and Brunswick Road. These were generally brick with some early bluestone examples. A large number of double-storey brick terraces in south Brunswick were erected in the period of the 1870s to 1890. Mansions were rare, with Michael Dawson’s ‘Dawsonhurst’ built in the 1850s on his Phoenix Park estate (demolished 1880s) being a notable exception.

The process of subdivision of the larger estates for house blocks accelerated rapidly during the economic boom of the 1880s, and was accompanied by an escalation in land prices; in the twenty years from 1865 to the 1880s the population of Brunswick more than tripled to 14,000. Many of the houses built during the boom were small cottages, particularly in the form of terrace housing, which were built to accommodate the growing number of workers employed in the expanding local industries. A large proportion of workers’ housing was erected a rental accommodation. Typically, it was the members of the local middle class and the aspiring working class, who were engaged in speculative housing development, became the landlords for many local workers’ rental accommodation. These small tenements were either weatherboard, often block-fronted, or built from locally made bricks and often using decorative bi-chromatic treatments. A network of laneways served rear outside toilets on the narrow allotments. Although they were small dwellings with only a pocket handkerchief front garden, the workers’ cottages of Brunswick, like others across inner suburban Melbourne, were usually plumbed for cooking and washing purposes and ‘offered
living space and a level of material comfort well beyond the reach of the urban poor in other countries’ (Dingle 1984: 173).

The push for thrift, sobriety, self-improvement and industriousness among the poorer classes, keenly advocated by the Protestant churches, had its ultimate goal in home ownership (Davison 1978: 177). Building societies, which required members to make regular contributions, played an important role in enabling working men to acquire their own homes. Victoria’s first building society had been established in 1858 to help house the booming population on Bendigo’s goldfields. This was followed by a string of others, including the Fourth Victoria Permanent Building Society in 1867, which was responsible for constructing many Melburnian homes, including several throughout Brunswick and its surrounds (Victorian Building Societies Association 1981:11-12). Building societies mushroomed during Melbourne’s property boom of the 1880s and their widespread operations made a significant contribution to speculative property development.

Following the bank crash of 1891 and the extended depression of the 1890s, development ground to a halt. Many newly built houses in Brunswick were left vacant and many of the new estates offered for sale toward the end of the boom remained undeveloped until the early twentieth century (Historica 2010:59-62). There was considerable unemployment and financial distress amongst residents. Many were unable to keep up with the instalments on their new homes and faced foreclosure by the buildings societies.

Development recommenced during the early-twentieth century when houses began to be built on the vacant nineteenth-century subdivisions. As such, many of the new dwellings were constrained by small narrow blocks. Also, perhaps due to the overall retarding effect of the depression, a relatively high proportion of new houses built in the early 1900s fit with the so-called ‘Victorian Survival’ style (c.1895–1914) (Johnston and Oliver 1994). Renewed local prosperity in the early 1900s was fuelled by a boom in industrial development in Brunswick, which benefited from the introduction of import duties after Federation.

There was another burst of prosperity in the period following World War I and by 1930 there were 300 factories in Brunswick, employing over 6000 workers (Historica 2010:32). These were predominantly in the clothing, textiles and footwear industries, which employed a significant number of women workers. During this time, many of the nineteenth-century subdivisions were re-offered for sale whilst the remaining areas of farming land and large estates in the east and west of Brunswick were carved up to meet the unprecedented demand for housing. By the end of the 1930s the suburban development of Brunswick was almost complete (Context 1990:12).

In 1905 the population had reached 24,000 and by 1928 it had more than doubled to 55,799 (Barnes 1987:64). The rapid growth of Brunswick during the early twentieth century was once again driven by the expansion of employment opportunities and improvements to public transport. The crash of 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression hit Brunswick hard, with thousands of men and women out of work and facing financial distress.
The large population was served by a large number of churches. The major Christian denominations had a strong presence in Brunswick and there was also a relatively strong representation of less common, minor sects. Hotels and picture theatres were also an important part of social life. Public buildings were well built, and were centred around the corner of Sydney Road and Dawson Street. The City of Brunswick opened Victoria Park in 1908 and opened the avant garde Brunswick Baths (HO61) in 1913, which was a notably early municipal swimming pool. Brunswick was not well endowed with areas for public recreation, which was compensated to some extent by the suburb’s close proximity to the extensive Royal Park. Some of its public parks, such as Gilpin Park and Clifton Park, were developed in more recent times on abandoned industrial land.

After World War II, cheap housing in Brunswick attracted a growing migrant population, of predominantly European immigrants who had left war-torn Europe. Many migrants found employment in local factories, such as Craig and Seeley, Holeproof Hosiery, Lincoln Mills, Millers Ropeworks and Gordon Brothers. The influx of Europeans to the suburb saw many existing nineteenth century and early twentieth century dwellings modified and modernised, and suburban flower gardens transformed into productive fruit and vegetable gardens. Through the postwar decades, social and cultural life became richly diverse in terms of language, food and music, and Sydney Road developed a distinctive Mediterranean character. Commercial development was reinvigorated along Sydney Road, with many shop premises taken over by migrants, who opened businesses such as licensed delicatessens, restaurants and cafes, barber shops, green grocers and ‘continental’ butchers. Other shops and several picture theatres were demolished to make way for large supermarkets.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, the character of the suburb of Brunswick has been strongly shaped by its early industrial development, left-wing politics and social diversity. In the early 1900s it became a strong bastion of the labour movement and in the 1930s was a stronghold of the Communist Party. In the latter decades of the twentieth century, Brunswick became known for its progressive environmental politics, reflected in its extensive use of Eucalypts and Melaleucas as street tree plantings. The many layers of history in Brunswick — from the 1840s and up until the postwar period, when it became the ‘most ethnically diverse’ suburb in Melbourne (McConville 1989: 127) — remain evident in the physical fabric of the suburb.

**Historical Context**
Places of worship were among the earliest community buildings to be erected in Brunswick and Coburg. They started as very humble chapels but were soon replaced by substantial, architecturally designed churches that were major investments of capital and commitment by their congregations and prominent expressions of their faith (Historica 2010:120).

Most of Moreland’s nineteenth-century churches were built as prominent landmarks on Sydney Road, their handsome architecture contributing to the civic qualities of this increasingly important thoroughfare. Additionally, some smaller churches were built away from Sydney Road, such as the former Independent church of 1888 at 103A Blyth Street, Brunswick, and the former Wesleyan Methodist church of c.1877 at 53 Nicholson Street, Brunswick East (Historica 2010:123).
As the suburbs now comprising the Moreland municipality developed into the twentieth century, their expanding communities built more churches, peaking with larger, more elaborate complexes in the postwar years and then declining (Historica 2010:123). Moreland’s places of worship have experienced change since the mid-twentieth century due to shifts in its demographic and religious affiliations.

English Methodists had been in Melbourne since its foundation and had settled in Brunswick by 1840. Methodists built the first church in Brunswick. These were self-improving and service-oriented people who had a strong conscience for fairness and for actively bringing reform to the social world. Methodism had a considerable input into British working-class culture, and its values transplanted easily to the increasingly urban, working-class communities of Brunswick and Coburg. Wesleyan chapels were soon built, followed by churches, schools and assembly halls. Methodism was particularly influential in Brunswick, its members initiating the Brunswick Mechanics Institute, which established a school of design for training apprentice workers, eventually leading to the Brunswick Technical School. Their working-class ideal of bringing positive reform to their social world filtered through to various other local initiatives that benefited the public – innovative educational programs in schools, provision of welfare services, and council as well as industry-sponsored endeavours (Historica 2010:23).

The Primitive Methodists established their first church in Union Street, Brunswick, in 1860 and commenced Sunday School classes in 1866. A group from the parent church in Union Street established a new branch at Albert Street, Brunswick, in 1888, where they purchased land and a building (Fowles 1902: 8-9). Unlike the mainstream Wesleyan Methodists, who by the 1860s were erecting large and ornate churches in Victoria (many designed by Crouch and Wilson), the Primitive Methodist eschewed ornamentation, extravagance and expense in their church buildings, and upheld an honesty and simplicity in building form as being integral to communication with God.

**Place history**

The Primitive Methodist Mission Hall at 170 Albert Street, Brunswick, was built in c.1889. The church appears in the *Sands & McDougall* directories from 1889 (SM 1888, 1889). An article in the *Age* also confirms that approval was granted by the Central Board of Health in 1889 for the building of a Primitive Methodist mission hall in East Brunswick (*Age*, 6 April 1889:11). The church would have been used for Sunday School classes, as well as for regular church meetings (*Coburg Leader*, 15 December 1894:2; 9 November 1892:3; 7 December 1892:2). The building in Albert Street was only listed in the municipal rate books from 1899 (RB 1898, 1899). Possibly the Council elected to waive the rates on the property because it was a religious building and providing welfare to the poor.

Primitive Methodism was a Protestant Non-Conformist denomination that had its origins in Britain during the Industrial Revolution in the early nineteenth century. The denomination flourished on the Victorian goldfields in the 1850s, where it practised its proud tradition of open-air meetings. As in Britain, adherents of Primitive Methodism in Victoria were largely working-class, they upheld the values of temperance, thrift, industriousness and self-improvement amidst a keen spiritual vigour. The Primitive Methodist Church was absorbed by the Methodist Church of
Australasia in 1902 and in 1977 the Methodist Church joined with other Protestant denominations to form the Uniting Church in Australia.

The church hall in Albert Street is a relatively primitive and unpretentious religious building. It is a simple gabled linear form with a skillion enclosed front entrance porch that sits flush with the footpath. There is only a slight hint of ecclesiastical detail to the two front windows and side windows through the slight shaping of the timber window frames. It is significantly unadorned in accordance with Primitive Methodism’s ‘original’ ideals for church buildings, which is in contrast to the ornamental excesses of Wesleyan Methodist buildings in Victoria which by the 1860s had become extravagant and highly decorative. The small, unassuming building was in keeping with the scale of workers’ housing in the neighbourhood.

The church was built on allotment 24 and was rated as having a 30-foot frontage (RB 1917, 1918). From the mid-1920s, the frontage was rated as 31 feet and 6 inches (RB 1925). A Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works plan dated 1904 shows the Primitive Methodist Mission Hall was located on the corner of Albert and Minnie Streets at this time (MMBW 1904).

MMBW Detail Plan No. 1880, dated 1904 (source: State Library of Victoria)

The Primitive Methodist Church in East Brunswick supported a small but active congregation through the 1890s. Various social events were held by the members in the 1890s, including picnics and social evenings (Coburg Leader, 9 November 1892:3; 15 July 1893:2; 13 April 1895:1). A well-attended ‘anniversary service’ for the Primitive Methodist Sunday School in Albert Street was held in December 1894 (Coburg Leader, 1 December 1894:1). Assuming that the building was erected in c.1889, the year 1894 would have marked its 5th anniversary. The Primitive Methodist Mission Hall in East Brunswick played an important role in the local community, particularly during the 1890s depression when it provided social welfare. A soup kitchen was started by the church in 1893 and they also asked for donations of money, food and clothing for those in distress living in Brunswick (Age, 17 July 1893:7).

Due to declining numbers in the congregation, the Albert Street Methodist Church was closed in 1915 and remaining members were transferred to the Brunswick
Methodist Church. Many local men from the church had enlisted for service in the First World War (Barnes 1987:46; Glew 1994:178). The building was thereafter used as a factory (Barnes 1987:46).

Robert Coldstream took over ownership of the church hall in 1917 and it remained in his name until his death (RB 1917). According to an advertisement in the Age, Coldstream ran a shirt factory in the building (Age, 28 November 1918:5). From the late 1930s, however, Coldstream leased the property. During the 1950s, Stanley and Sophie Linger purchased the church hall and between the publication of the 1958/59 Rate Book and the 1971/72 Valuation Register, I. Shannos purchased the property (RB).

As the street numbers changed in Albert Street, the Primitive Methodist Church was allocated numbers 154, 102 and finally 170 by 1958 (RB 1958/59).

References
Age, 6 April 1889: 11.
Age, 17 July 1893: 7.
Age, 28 November 1918: 5.
City of Brunswick, Municipal Rate Books (RB), 1898, 1899, 1917, 1918, 1925, 1958/59.
Coburg Leader, 9 November 1892: 3; 15 July 1893: 2; 1 December 1894: 1; 5 December 1894: 2; 7 December 1892: 2; 13 April 1895: 1
Historica 2010, ‘City of Moreland Thematic History’, prepared for the City of Moreland.
Sands & McDougall, Melbourne and Suburban Directories (SM), 1888, 1889.
Summerton, Michelle 2010, ‘City of Moreland Thematic History’ (MTH), prepared for the City of Moreland.
Description and Integrity
The former Primitive Methodist mission hall, now used for a Martial Arts Academy at 170 Albert Street, Brunswick, is situated on a small corner site and located toward the front of the site. Externally, the mission hall is a simple variation on the theme of churches and church halls that adopt a vernacular Gothic Revival style, suited to either brick or timber construction. The features of the style include steeply pitched roofs, small, regularly-spaced windows (often with pointed arches) to each side. Often there are projecting porches as is the case with this mission hall.

This Primitive Methodist mission hall conforms to that pattern with the projecting front porch, which in this case is located close to the front boundary of the small site. The timber-framed fixed windows are detailed with minimal embellishment, including an arch-headed top sash. Small square louvres provide ventilation to the roof space and it is likely that the plain fascia boards have been replaced. The porch is internally lined with timber boarding and the interior retains its one main space and has timber lining boards. A series of skillion roofed additions are at the rear. The weatherboards and galvanised iron roof are in a deteriorating condition. Overall, 170 Albert Street, Brunswick, is a representative example of a simple vernacular Gothic Revival mission hall of a type more common in rural areas than the inner suburbs.

Comparative Analysis
Brunswick has a relatively large number and variety of small Non-Conformist churches and halls that demonstrate the important local influence of these denominations on community life. The examples below date from the different periods of development and represent a range of Protestant denominations. The former Merlynston Salvation Army Hall & Officers Quarters, built c.1925, is historically significant as a place that provides tangible evidence of the early development of the Merlynston community during the 1920s and represents the important role that the Salvation Army played in local community life. The Maranatha Gospel Hall in Brunswick East is a modest timber structure not unlike the Primitive Methodist Mission hall. The Wesleyan Methodist church at 53 Nicholson Street, Brunswick East, is a more substantial brick church built for the main Methodist congregation in Brunswick East.
4 Mathieson Street, Coburg North – Merlynston Salvation Army Hall & Officers’ Quarters (former), (HO398)

Wesleyan Methodist church (former), 53 Nicholson Street, East Brunswick, (HO128)

Maran-atha Gospel Hall, 127A Stewart Street, Brunswick East (HO229, part of Stewart Street Precinct)

Gospel Hall, 235 Victoria Street, Brunswick, assessed as part of Moreland Gap Study and recommended for HO

The Primitive Methodist Mission Hall at 170 Albert Street, Brunswick, is like other small vernacular mission hall buildings in Brunswick that demonstrate the many different forms of worship practised in Moreland. Its vernacular design is quite like the Gospel Halls built for the Maran-atha and Bethany congregations and that used by the Salvation Army at Merlynston.
Like other minor Protestant sects, the Primitive Methodist Mission Hall in Brunswick is notably simple and unadorned, reflecting the ideology of the denomination.

**Statement of Significance**

**What is Significant?**
The Primitive Methodist mission hall at 170 Albert Street, Brunswick, built in 1898-99 for the small Primitive Methodist congregation, is significant.

**How is it significant?**
The Primitive Methodist mission hall at 170 Albert Street, Brunswick, is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Moreland.

**Why is it significant?**
The Primitive Methodist mission hall at 170 Albert Street, Brunswick, built in 1898-99 for the Primitive Methodist congregation of Brunswick is historically significant as tangible evidence of the role of Non-conformist denominations that flourished in working-class Brunswick from the mid-nineteenth century. The Primitive Methodists, a small breakaway denomination had its beginnings in Britain during the Industrial Revolution with an aim to return to the teachings of the Methodist founder John Wesley. The Primitive Methodist mission hall is historically significant for its association with the Primitive Methodists from 1899 until 1915 when the small congregation joined the Wesleyan Methodists at Brunswick East. (Criterion A)

The Primitive Methodist mission hall at 170 Albert Street, Brunswick, is historically significant for its simple, unpretentious and unadorned form which directly reflects the ideology of the denomination, which upheld an honesty and simplicity in building form as being integral to communication with God (Criterion A)

The Primitive Methodist mission hall at 170 Albert Street, Brunswick, is aesthetically significant for its intact vernacular Gothic Revival elements, including the steeply pitched roof, projecting porch and windows with restrained timber decoration. (Criterion E)

**Planning Control Recommendations**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Moreland Planning Scheme as an individually Significant place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Moreland Planning Scheme:

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<td>Is the place included on the Victorian Heritage Register?</td>
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<td><strong>Prohibited uses may be permitted</strong></td>
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<td>Can a permit be granted to use the place for a use which would otherwise be prohibited?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Aboriginal Heritage Place</strong></td>
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