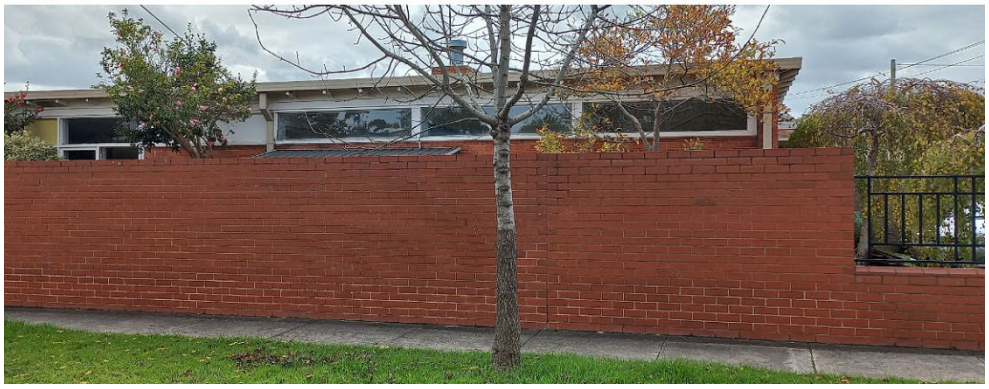
Place name:	Barden Residence (former)
Address:	269 Napier Street, Strathmore
Place typology:	Residential
Construction date range:	1957
Architectural style:	Post-War Modernist
Assessment:	Built Heritage Pty Ltd, May 2022
Recommendation:	To be included in the schedule to the heritage overlay

Photos of place:







269 Napier Street, Strathmore. Photographs by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, May 2022 and Megan McDougall, May 2021

Statement of Significance:

What is significant?

269 Napier Street, Strathmore is a single-storey, flat-roofed post-war modernist brick house on a stepped C-shaped plan. It was erected in 1957 for Jim and Marlene Barden, to a design by AK Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall.

The significant features of the house include:

- The minimalist expression with stark orange brick walls and limited fenestration
- The uncommonly low roofline with exposed beams and unlined eaves
- The feature wall of pebbled pre-cast concrete slabs to the south side of the garage
- The tall original brick fence

How is it significant?

269 Napier Street, Strathmore is of local architectural and aesthetic significance to the City of Moonee Valley.

Why is it significant?

269 Napier Street, Strathmore, is significant as a fine and substantially intact example of an architect-designed modernist house of the late 1950s. It demonstrates the principal characteristics of that style including its stark orange brickwork, flat roof with broad eaves and carefully-considered fenestration that includes both full-height window bays and horizontal strip windows. The very low roofline, the unlined eaves with exposed beams, and the feature wall of pebbled pre-cast concrete panels, are all more unusual and distinctive elements within the broader modernist vocabulary. (Criterion E)

Description:

The former Barden Residence at 269 Napier Street, Strathmore, is a single-storey post-war modernist house of orange brick construction, with a flat roof that has narrow unlined eaves with exposed beams. Occupying a corner site, the house is expressed in a somewhat introspective and minimalist fashion, with plain facades to the two street frontages. The principal facade, to Napier Street, is double-fronted and asymmetrical, with a central front entrance and a projecting garage wing to the right (north) side. The entrance, sheltered by a small flat-roofed porch, had a wide doorway flanked by sidelights, with a stone feature wall to the right side. The front door, painted blue with a series of six horizontal strip windows, is not original. To the left of the front door, the façade is entirely blank. To the right, the projecting garage has a tilt-up door of panelled metal sheeting, while its side wall is made up of precast concrete panels with a pebbled finish.

The Henshall Road (south) elevation of the house is similarly understated, with more expanses of plain orange brickwork, interrupted by a series of narrow horizontal window bays that run below the eaves line, and a single doorway. At the rear of the house, full-height window bays open on to a compact and courtyard-like rear garden.

The property is enclosed along both street frontages by a tall fence with brick piers and simple black-painted mild steel railings, which gives way to a tall brick wall at the far end of the Hensall Road frontage, with a matching mild steel gateway to the side entrance.

History:

Contextual History

City of Moonee Valley occupies part of the Traditional lands of the Wurundjeri-willam clan of the Woi-wurrung people. Many sites in the area now known as City of Moonee Valley show evidence of Woi-wurrung activities and spiritual connections. Fish were trapped in the rivers and creeks, stone was quarried from the river edges, murnong daisy was collected and kangaroos hunted across grassland areas, and bark was harvested from trees in the river valleys. This relationship between the Woi-wurrung

and the land, water, animals and plants, continues to this day (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.29).

The first Europeans to explore the area known as Moonee Valley was a surveyor, Charles Grimes in 1803. In 1836, settlers moving from Van Diemen's Land crossed the area in the hope of finding empty, cheap and plentiful land for sheep. By 1842, surveyors had created the first map of the Parish of Doutta Galla and then Woi-wurrung lands were offered for sale by the British Crown to Europeans (noting that the land was never ceded). The Wurundjeri were moved off their land which had a profound impact on their culture, health and language. By 1860, the entire parish was sold (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.32-33).

Early development of the area began with the goldrush period of the 1850s which saw Mount Alexander Road used as a thoroughfare to the diggings with over 30,000 people estimated as moving along the dirt road each week. Businesses and shops sprang up providing sustenance, transport and accommodation to service the passing gold rush trade. Some very early wayside hotels and shops still survive from this period (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p. 51-54). After the heady days of the goldrush, the 1860s saw Essendon, Ascot Vale, Moonee Ponds and Flemington develop into permanent townships. The development of railways by private companies gave huge impetus to suburban development of the area with the opening of the Essendon railway in 1860. The government purchased the line in 1868. Suburban trains terminated at Essendon and it wasn't until 1889 that Ascot Vale, Moonee Ponds and Newmarket stations were completed. By 1893 stations opened at Strathmore and Pascoe Vale and in 1922 Glenbervie Station opened. The railways provided an enormous boost to residential development along the line and those who had previously moved to areas without trains, now clamoured for them (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.59).

By the 1880s Essendon had become a Borough and by 1891 had a population of 14,411. Many subdivisions occurred during the land boom of the 1880s and many failed to eventuate due to the depression of the 1890s. In the interwar period a boom in subdivision and residential infill occurred in Travancore, Essendon, Ascot Vale, Strathmore and Moonee Ponds, which was focused on new transport routes along the tram lines, first established to Essendon in 1905. In 1919 the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board was formed and lines were extended and improved. The tram lines saw development occur either side of Maribyrnong Road, further along Mt Alexander Road, Buckley Street and Keilor Road (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.65-68, p.115).

Education was an important consideration in the development of the municipality, with schools having been established in Essendon and Flemington in the 1850s. The development of State schools in the area reflects the major phases of education and includes a number of 'firsts'; the first non-denominational school in Victoria was set up in Essendon in 1850, the first purpose-built infants school in the state was set up in 1902, and Essendon High School was the first purpose-built high school in the Melbourne metropolitan area. Denominational schools were also set up in the area in the early 1850s, with more private schools established during the boom period of the 1880s. Residents wanted a better life than the one most had left behind in Britain, including a good education for their children (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.157-161).

In the three decades after the Second World War, Melbourne's suburbs ballooned outward to cater for post-war migration, the baby boom, an increasing need for new housing, and a more car-centred economy. Areas to the north of Essendon had been open paddocks in 1945, but by 1950 the Shire of Keilor found themselves with a developing suburb with no name. It was later called Niddrie. Similarly, Airport West was developing quickly with houses being built before the roads. By 1964 it was claimed that Airport West had the cheapest cream brick veneers in Melbourne (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.120-121). Many houses in these post-war areas were austere weatherboard or brick veneer bungalows, with a few scattered architect-designed or project homes on new blocks, particularly along the Boulevard in Aberfeldie. These post-war housing areas were car-centred communities located close to industry along Keilor Road, Matthews Avenue around Essendon Airport and East Keilor. By 1960 Airport West had its first hotel, the famous Skyways Hotel and then in the 1970s the first shopping centre, owned by Westfield, was begun (heritage ALLIANCE, G*ap Heritage Study*, 2005: p.28-30).

Post-war housing pressure also saw a huge investment by the Housing Commission of Victoria who developed 150 bungalows in concrete, weatherboard and brick in Aberfeldie. They then began an ambitious estate of houses and flats on a 77 acre site at Ascot Vale in 1949. These low-rise walk-up flats eventually gave rise to the high-rise flats of Flemington which opened in June 1965 (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.123).

Many post-war migrants bought or built houses in the outer areas of the municipality, close to employment and industry and where new, cheaper housing was readily available. These developments and public housing in Aberfeldie, Ascot Vale and Flemington have had a long-lasting effect on the nature of the Moonee Valley community which today is one of the most diverse and vibrant in Melbourne (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.124).

Place history

The house at 269 Napier Street, Strathmore was erected in 1957 for Jim and Marlene Barden, to a design by the architectural firm of A K Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall.

The son of a motor mechanic, Donald James "Jim" Barden (1931-1989) was born in Collingwood but his family later settled in Brunswick. It was there that he met Marlene Judith Laidlaw (born 1933), daughter of prominent local clothing manufacturer David Kersell Laidlaw (1902-1979), founder of Yakka Overalls Pty Ltd. Dating back to the mid-1930s, this thriving Brunswick-based business originally occupied modest premises in Weston Street before relocating to larger building on Lygon Street in the late 1930s and thence to an even larger purpose-built factory in Ballarat Street. The latter, officially opened by Premier John Cain in 1955, was a two-storey modernist building designed by the architectural firm of A K Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall. Over the next few years, the same firm would be retained for two private commissions from the Laidlaw family: a new house at Kew for David and his wife Jessie, and another at Strathmore for their daughter Marlene and new son-in-law Jim Barden, who married in February 1957 (*The Age*, 25 February 1957, p.8).

The post-war firm of A K Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall traced its origins back to the inter-war practice of Albert Keith Lines (1897-1981), who started his career in 1916 as an articled pupil of Claude Merritt. After wartime service, Lines worked for a prolific house building firm before opening his own office in1923. Five years later, he took on a teenage Jessica MacFarlane (1911-1995) as his articled pupil. The firm's prestige rose during the 1930s, focusing on residential projects in the inner eastern suburbs. Following wartime hiatus, the practice reopened in 1945 with MacFarlane as a full partner. Three years later, they were joined by Bruce Robson Marshall (1923-1999), a RAN ex-serviceman, who was promoted to third partner in 1952. MacFarlane left the office in 1954 (when she married and moved to South Australia), but her surname was retained in the firm's title. Much of the subsequent output of A K Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall was guided by Bruce Marshall, whose expertise was in larger-scale commercial and industrial work. The firm undertook some post-war residential commissions (several of which were profiled in newspapers and magazines) as well as retail and small-scale hospital work. However, the firm was to become best known as designers of municipal offices and other buildings for local councils, continuing to specialize in that field for several decades from the mid-1950s. Albert Lines retired in 1967 but his firm remained in operation into the early twenty-first century.

Marlene and Jim Barden were residing in their new house at Strathmore by 1958, when electoral rolls listed their address as 269 Napier Street, with Barden's occupation cited as engineer. The next few years saw considerable expansion of his father-in-law's business, with Yakka Pty Ltd developing additional factory premises at 29-31 Tinning Street, Brunswick (1962) and an expansive new manufacturing complex in King William Street, Broadmeadows (1960-63). This period also saw David Laidlaw's sons, Brian and John, become increasingly involved in the family business, duly taking over as joint managing directors. In July 1963, their brother-in-law Jim Barden became director of a new subsidiary company, Barden Clothing Pty Ltd. Initially operating from a small factory at 35 Tinning Street, the business soon expanded into larger premises at 219 Albion Street. Specialising in workwear, Barden Clothing became a leading brand in its own right, expanding in later years to supply high-visibility attire and other specialist items.

During the 1960s, Jim and Marlene Barden continued to reside in Napier Street, Strathmore, with their sons Michael, Grant and Tony. Following the birth of their fourth son, Andrew, in 1967, the family moved to Main Road, Lower Plenty, taking up residence in a much larger house on acreage.

Sources:

Primary Sources

The Age, 25 February 1957, p.8.

"Architectural time and motion study", *Architecture & Arts*, July 1955, p.30-31. [Yakka factory, Brunswick]

"A three-level point of view", *Australian House & Garden,* January 1961, p.18-19. [Laidlaw Residence, Kew]

"Barden Clothing Pty Ltd", Company File No 57,667, VPRS 932/P1. Public Records Office of Victoria, North Melbourne.

Secondary Sources

Telephone interview with Mrs Marlene Barden, October 2021

Built Heritage Pty Ltd, research file on A K Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall.

Thematic Context:

City of Moonee Valley Thematic Environmental History, 2012

6.0 Building towns, cities and the garden state

6.7 Making homes for Victorians

Comparative Analysis:

The following are some notable architect-designed modernist houses in the City of Moonee Valley from 1955 to 1959:

- Robinson Residence, 73 Mooltan Street, Flemington (Bruce Robinson/Armstrong & Orton, 1955) – *part of HO23*
- House, 53 Matthews Avenue, Airport West (Small Homes Service, circa 1956) – *demolished 2014*
- Manse for Essendon Presbyterian Church (now St John's Uniting Church), 853 Mt Alexander Road, Essendon (Earle & Bunbury, 1957) – *standing*
- Goddard Residence, 49 Clydebank Road, Essendon (Ernest Fooks, 1957) – *standing*
- Barden Residence, 269 Napier Street, Strathmore (Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall, 1957) – *included in this study*
- Colwell Residence, 163 Keilor Road, Essendon (Anatol Kagan, 1957) – *demolished 2018*
- W C Abbey Residence, 31 Wickham Grove, Strathmore (Earle & Bunbury, 1958) – *included in this study*
- Robertson Residence, 31 Alfred Road, Essendon (Norman Brendel, 1958) – *included in this study*
- Residence and dental clinic, 309 Keilor Road, Essendon North (Borland & Trewenack, 1958) – *demolished*

It is noted that only one of these examples is currently protected by a heritage overlay (HO), as part of a precinct rather than individually.

In the City of Moonee Valley, as elsewhere, architect-designer houses of the mid- to late 1950s tend to follow the prevailing International Modernist style, characterised by a rectilinear block-like expression with low-pitched rooflines, a limited palette of finishes and generous glazing, often as full-height window sashes and glazed doors. This was typified in the study area by the quintessential skillion-roofed Small Homes Service house in Matthews Avenue (demolished), a fine two-storey example at 163 Keilor Road with the fashionable butterfly roof (demolished), and, further along Keilor Road at No 309, the exceptional example (also demolished) with a box-like second storey in a decidedly Seidler-esque mode, with double-height window wall and geometric mural. With these three key manifestations all now demolished, the extant example at 269 Napier Street, with its characteristic flat roof, planar walls of stark cream brick and strip windows, remains as a notable local survivor of its style.

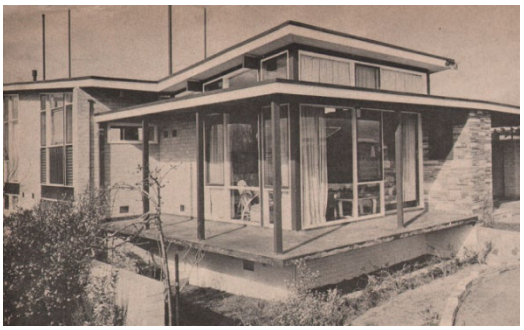
Other extant examples listed above tend to be more varied in their expression of the modernist idiom. The house at 31 Wickham Grove, for example, departs from the norm with its canted U-shaped courtyard plan and irregular roofline incorporating tile-clad gables. The house at 31 Alfred Road, while having a conventionally modernist flat roof and stark brick walls, is otherwise highly idiosyncratic in its curvilinear plan form, reflected in curved walls ad eaves to the street facade. Other houses, such as those at 73 Mooltan Street and 853 Mt Alexander Road, utilize a low gabled roofline rather than a flat roof, while the example at 49 Clydebank Road has a steeper gable and an otherwise more conventionally domestic character.

Other examples of the work of A K Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall

In 1941, the office of Albert K Lines called tenders for the erection of a brick veneer residence in Essendon (*Age*, 12 July 1941, p.19). Five years later, re-badged as A K Lines & MacFarlane, the office called tenders for the erection of another

brick veneer residence in Essendon (*Age*, 7 September 1946, p.12). Neither of these projects, however, can be conclusively identified (nor located), as the respective tender notices did not include street names.

To date, only one other example of the firm's post-war work has been identified in what is now the City of Moonee Valley. The following table illustrates two further examples of the firm's work that, while both located outside of the City of Moonee Valley, are worth citing for their shared association with the Laidlaw family and its business interests.

Office building for Australian Friesian Cattle Club, 504 Racecourse Road, Flemington (1957) This modest two-storey office building, built on a site facing the RAS Showgrounds, is the only other example of the firm's work that can be conclusively identified in the City of Moonee Valley. It is comparable to the Barden Residence in both its date and stark modernist expression, although the latter aspect is obviously more overtly commercial in nature, with its slick aluminium-framed curtain-walled aesthetic. As a non-residential building by the same architects, it does not represent an entirely pertinent comparator.	 *Source: Google StreetView, November 2019*
Factory for Yakka Overalls Pty Ltd (former) 2-6 Ballarat Street, Brunswick (1955) This purpose-built architect-designed factory in Ballarat Street was erected as the third premises for Yakka Overalls Pty Ltd, which had expanded rapidly since the company was founded in the 1930s. The new building, expressed in the trademark modernist form of an elevated rectilinear volume with projecting frame around a glazed infill, attracted considerable attention and was published in *Architecture & Arts*. It is currently protected by an individual local heritage overay, in the City of Moreland.	 *Source: Photograph by Simon Reeves, 2006*
Laidlaw Residence 56 Elm Grove, Kew East (1957) Exactly comparable with the Barden Residence, and designed for Mrs Barden's parents, the Laidlaw Residence in Kew is a pertinent stylistic comparator, despite being located in another municipality. While the latter is a larger and grander dwelling (distinguished by a butterfly roof, return verandah and slate-clad feature wall), the two houses are very similar in their stark modernist expression, C-shaped plan (with integrated garage), plain brickwork and use of full-height and horizontal strip windows.	 *Source: Australian House & Garden, Jan 1961*

Recommendation:

That the whole of 269 Napier Street, Strathmore, be included in the Heritage Overlay schedule.

Schedule:

External Paint Controls	No
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Solar Energy Controls	Yes

Fences and Outbuildings	Yes
Prohibited Uses	No
Aboriginal Heritage Place	No