

# Heritage guideline 1

## Fences



**Merri-bek**  
City Council

### Introduction

If your property has a Heritage Overlay, you will require a planning permit if you want to build, alter or demolish a fence on your property, including fencing on side and rear boundaries. Contact Council's Urban Development Branch if there is any doubt about permit requirements

Council has a Local Heritage Policy at Clause 15.03-1L of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme. This Local Policy forms the basis of these Guidelines which have been developed to help property owners understand what type of fencing is suitable for their house. You can arrange to meet with a Planning Officer if you would like further help preparing your planning permit application.

### Background

Front fences have always been a fashion accessory to a building and as styles and functional requirements have changed, so have fences. From early settlement, fences were traditionally four feet (1200mm) high as a balance between keeping out livestock roaming the streets and the desire to maintain views of the street from the front gardens.

Front fences have generally been of transparent design in order to display the house and garden behind. This applied through the 19th century to the First World War. By the interwar period, livestock was not such a threat and the height of fences was reduced. In the post war period, often no front fences were built.

In the late 20th century, people became more security and privacy conscious. Traffic noise also became an issue. As a result, high, solid security fences became more common. In some locations, high walls enclosed whole streetscapes.

Front fences are intended to:

- Provide an interface between the street and private property that limits but does not exclude access, surveillance and interaction.

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For more information please phone Merri-bek City Council's Planning Department on (03) 9240 1111 or visit [www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au](http://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au).

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- Reinforce the stylistic character of the building they front and the streetscape they are located in.
- Provide a balance between security and exposure of a private property.

Generally, fences that are high and solid along the street frontage will not be consistent with the character of Merri-bek's heritage precincts.

### General guidelines for front fences

- Front fences should always be located on the property boundary.
- Fences should be of appropriate style and height to the period of construction of the dwelling.
- Fences should not be more elaborate in style or materials than the dwelling itself, and the fence should be in the simplest design for the period.
- Reconstruction of an original fence will be the best heritage outcome for any site.
- Generally, noise reduction will not be accepted as a reason for varying these guidelines.
- Fences can either follow the slope of the land or be stepped. In order to keep the fence simple,

### Assistance on heritage matters

This document is one of a series of Guidelines developed by Merri-bek City Council, on all aspects of heritage conservation to assist in preparing planning permit applications.

Council also provides a Heritage Advisory Service which is available free of charge to all property owners in Merri-bek. Consultation with Council's Heritage Adviser is recommended. Heritage advice can be provided on site or at the Council Offices.

An appointment can be made through Council's Urban Development Branch on telephone (03) 9240 1111. This consultation is suggested before any ideas about your proposal are finalised. Early consultation will always improve the progress of your application.

following the slope of the land is generally preferable.

- Traditionally, front fence designs return around side street corners to the line of the front of the dwelling. However, on lanes, the side fence continues to the fronting street or has a short slope down to the height of the front fence.
- Fences between properties in the front setback are generally lower versions of the traditional side fence. Occasionally, where dwellings are in groups, the front fence type is used.

## Gates in front fences

- Traditionally openings in fences are gated. This pattern should be maintained and the gate's location should match the style of the fence proposed.
- Recessed entries were common for large properties with deep setbacks, but not for smaller dwellings. Lych gates (traditionally with a roof and a seat, such as for churches) are rarely appropriate. Recessed entries, entry portals and lych gates will only be appropriate where it is in keeping with the scale of the front garden area and the style of the dwelling.

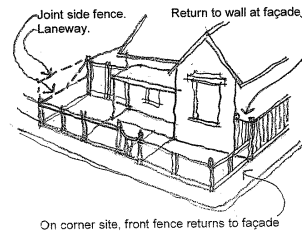
## Reconstruction of original fences

The reconstruction of an original fence will be supported as a first option for any place on the basis of credible documentary or physical evidence (e.g. an early photograph or a remnant portion of the fence).

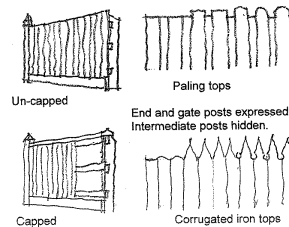
## Side and rear fences (all periods: 1850–current)

Side and rear fences have remained of consistent construction since the mid 19th century. They are

usually constructed with either timber palings or corrugated iron, without the intermediate posts exposed. Use of a capping rail is acceptable. Gates should match the fence. Brick and rendered side and rear fences should only be used in special circumstances. Side and rear fences should not exceed 2 metres in height. The high side fence should be returned to the dwelling at the front façade, if additional privacy to a rear yard is required.



## Side and rear fence types

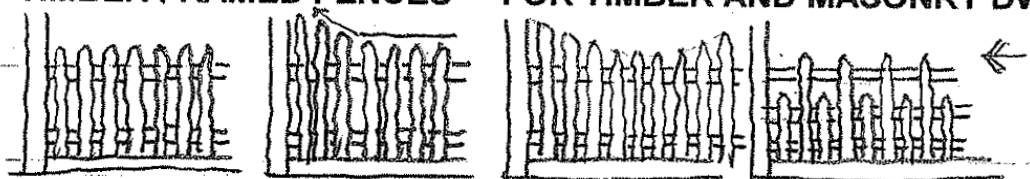


## Types of fencing for various periods of construction

These guidelines are accompanied by diagrams showing fencing for specific periods of construction including Victorian, Edwardian and Federation, inter-war and post-war dwellings. Ask a planning officer for assistance if you are unsure of the period of your house.

# Front fences for Victorian dwellings (mid-late 19th century)

## TIMBER FRAMED FENCES - FOR TIMBER AND MASONRY DWELLINGS.



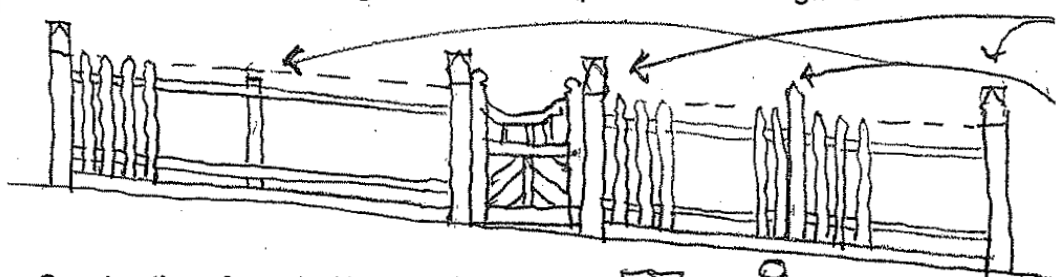
Simple picket      Step-up picket      Swag picket      Palisade picket.

Generally 1200mm high, with posts and step-ups higher.



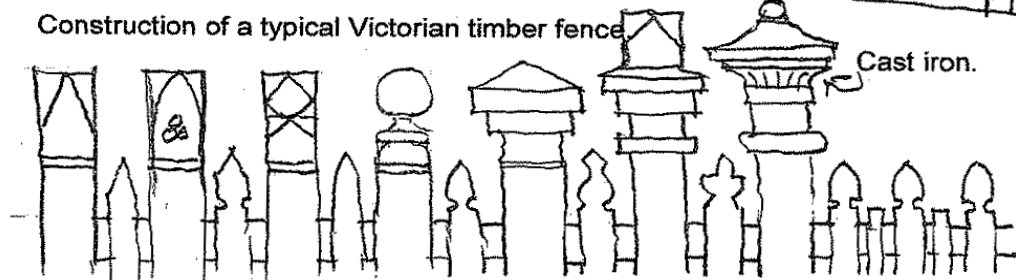
Picket with cap.      Corrugated iron with cap.      Various gates

Use dressed hardwood or cypress pine for posts and pickets. Do not use treated pine



Major posts 120mm sq min. at gates and ends only. Secondary posts either hidden or smaller. Follow slope of frontage rather than step fence. Gate opposite door.

Construction of a typical Victorian timber fence

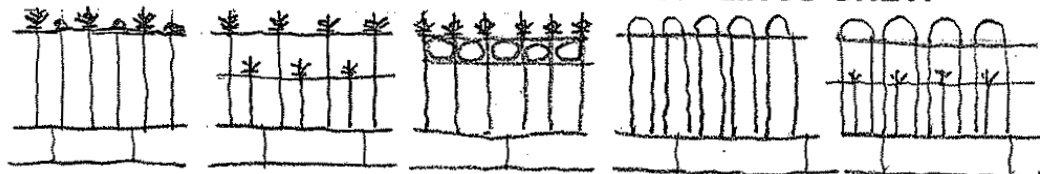


A selection of posts and pickets.

Cast iron.

Use simple types for small and simple houses. More fancy types for more elaborate houses. Space pickets 25-50mm. Alternating pickets.

## METAL FENCES - FOR MASONRY DWELLINGS ONLY.



Generally 1200 high for single storey houses. Up to 1500 high for double storey houses. Base in rendered brick.

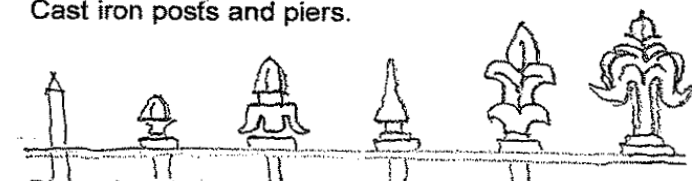
Iron fence types.



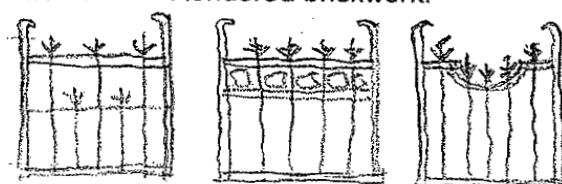
Cast iron posts and piers.

Timber.

Rendered brickwork.



Picket heads and gates.





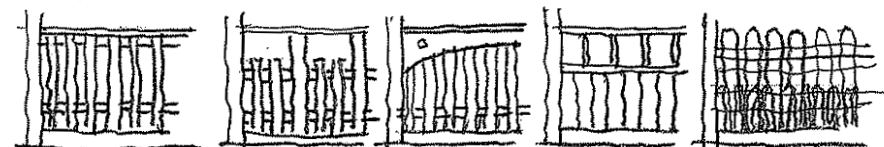
# Front fences for Edwardian and Federation dwellings (late 19th century-1914]

## TIMBER FRAMED FENCES - FOR TIMBER AND MASONRY DWELLINGS.

Victorian types can also be used, especially for transitional Victorian to Edwardian dwellings..



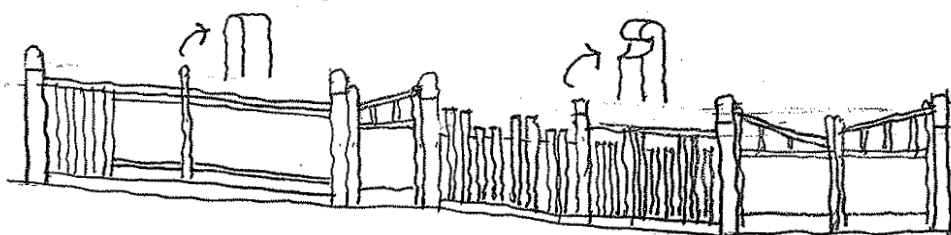
Slim picket Alternating Castellated Profiled.



Picket with cap. Dual height. Valance Ladder frame Woven wire

Generally 1200mm high, with posts and step-ups higher.

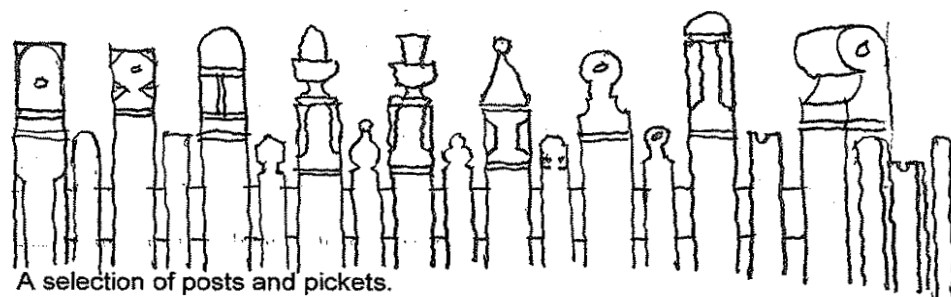
Use dressed hardwood or cypress pine for posts and pickets. Do not use treated pine



Construction of a typical Edwardian/Federation timber fences.

Major posts 120mm sq min. at gates and ends only.

Secondary posts either hidden or smaller. Follow slope of frontage rather than step fence. Gate asymmetrical or at corner.



A selection of posts and pickets.

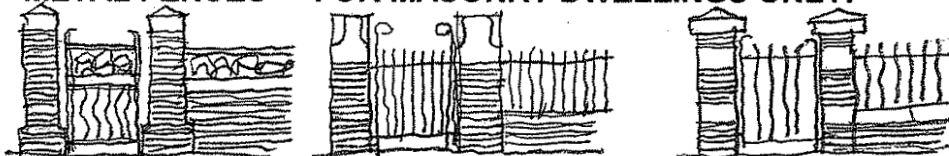
Use simple types for small and simple houses.

More fancy types for more elaborate houses

Alternating pickets.

Space pickets 25-50mm

## METAL FENCES - FOR MASONRY DWELLINGS ONLY.



Brick and wrought iron fence types.

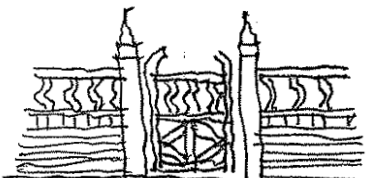
Generally 1200 high for single storey houses. Up to 1500 high for double storey houses Bases in rendered brick.



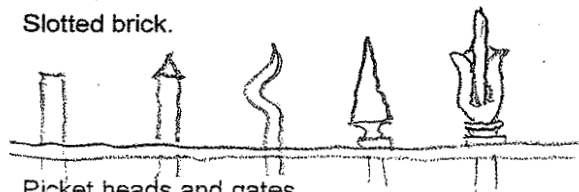
Slotted brick.



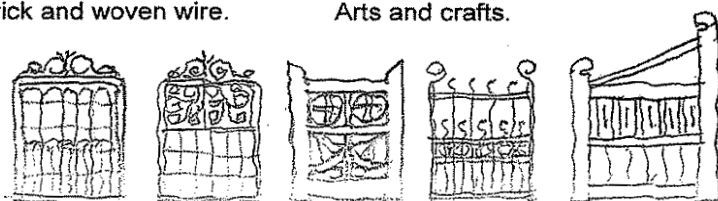
Brick and woven wire.



Arts and crafts.

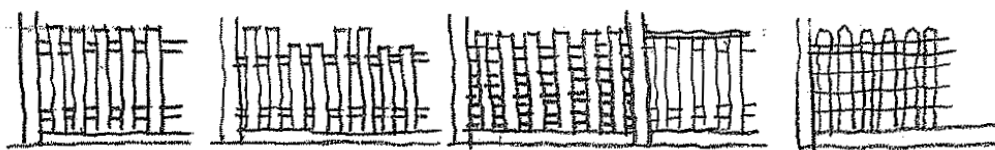


Picket heads and gates.



# Front fences for inter-war dwellings (1918-1940)

## TIMBER FRAMED FENCES - FOR TIMBER AND MASONRY DWELLINGS.



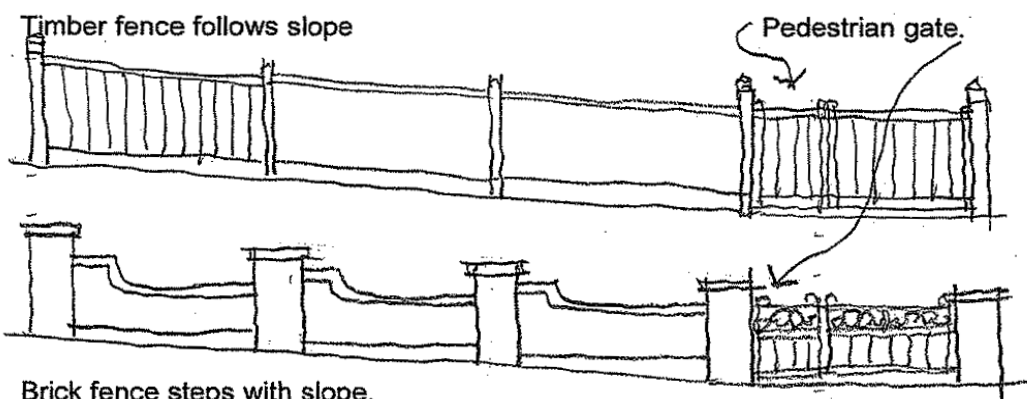
Simple picket      Castellated      Trellis.      Woven wire.

Generally 900mm high, with posts higher.



Picket with cap.      Boards with cap.      Castellated boards.      Wire mesh and pipe

Use dressed hardwood or cypress pine for posts and pickets. Do not use treated pine



Timber fence follows slope

Pedestrian gate.

Major posts 120mm sq min. at gates and ends only.  
Secondary posts either hidden or smaller.  
Follow slope of frontage rather than step fence.  
Gate at side or paired with vehicular gate.

Brick fence steps with slope.

Construction of a typical Interwar fence.



A selection of posts and pickets.

Frames over gates.

Use simple types for small and simple houses.  
More fancy types for more elaborate houses  
Space pickets 25-50mm  
Alternating pickets.

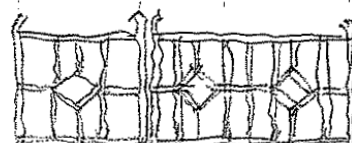
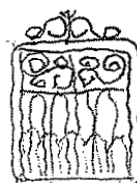
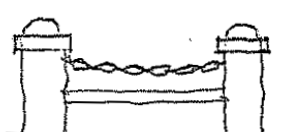
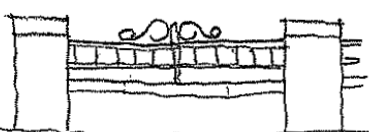
## MASONRY FENCES - FOR MASONRY DWELLINGS OR WHERE THERE ARE MASONRY PORCHES ON TIMBER DWELLINGS.



Brick

Render/roughcast

Generally up to 900 high  
Paneled with repeating projecting piers.  
Stepped down slope.  
Wrought iron or pipe and wire gates



Render and wrought iron

Chains

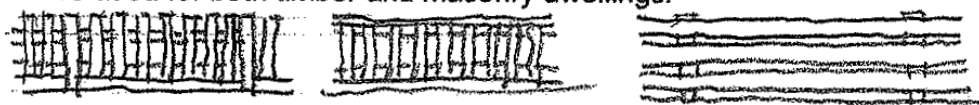
Gates



## Front fences for post-war dwellings (1940-1960)

### FENCES FOR TIMBER AND MASONRY DWELLINGS.

Post war front fences were generally very low, around 450-600 high. Some places had no fences following the American practice. Public housing estates used basic timber or chain-wire mesh on galvanized pipe frames. Masonry fences used many materials and surface patterns in brick and stone. Masonry fences were used for both timber and masonry dwellings.



Plain picket

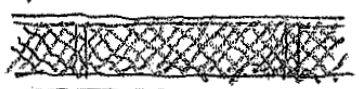
Capped picket.

Horizontal board.

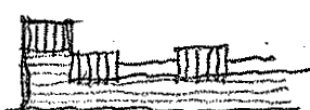
Generally 600mm high, with piers/posts higher.



Chain wire mesh on pipe  
**Lightweight fences**

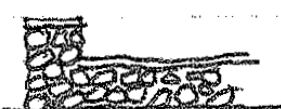
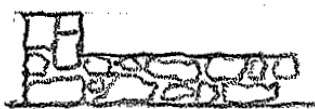


Chain wire mesh on timber



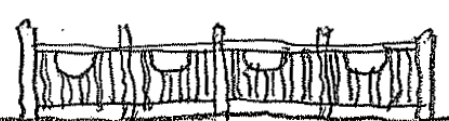
Piers generally not projecting

Brick. Patterns of red, cream, salmon and manganese bricks.



Use simple types for small and simple houses.

Stone – Castlemaine slate, layered slate and rock rubble.



More fancy types for

Rock border.

**Masonry fences.**

Render and wrought iron

Pre-cast concrete

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