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**Name:** Home Hill  
**Status:** Permanently Registered  
**Tier:** State  
State

**THR ID Number:** 1310  
**Municipality:** Devonport City Council  
**Boundary:** CPR9104

**Location Addresses**

77 MIDDLE RD, MIANDETTA 7310 TAS

**Title References**

224549/1

**Property Id**

7707148



Home Hill, Devonport  
DPIPWE, 2009



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DPIPWE, 2009

**Statement of Significance:** (non-statutory summary)

Home Hill at 77 Middle Road Miandetta is of historic cultural heritage significance as a house, garden and collection of state and national significance, the home of Joseph (Joe) Lyons, Premier of Tasmania and Prime Minister of Australia, and his wife, Dame Enid Lyons, the first woman elected to the Federal House of Representatives and the first woman in a Federal Cabinet.

Home Hill evolved in concert with the growth of Joe and Enid Lyons' family, the rapid ascendancy of their political careers and is the only example of a Prime Ministerial residence in Tasmania. It is a rare Tasmanian example of an intact historic house and collection, a physical manifestation of the philanthropic nature of the Lyons family, donated to the Tasmanian people by Dame Enid Lyons and one of only three residences owned by Prime Ministers in Australia open to the public.

Home Hill has the potential to yield information regarding several firsts associated with the residence, but particularly the daily life of a Prime Minister and family, in contrast to the formal curatorship of the home by Dame Enid prior to her death. Home Hill, its gardens and museum collection have meaning to the wider Tasmanian community for their aesthetic qualities and subsequent tourism value, and special association with the Lyons family, a political dynasty involving four family members who had a profound role in Tasmanian and Australian politics spanning over seventy-five years.

### **Why is it significant?:**

The Heritage Council may enter a place in the Heritage Register if it meets one or more of the following criteria from the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995:

**a) The place is important to the course or pattern of Tasmania's history.**

Home Hill is of historic cultural heritage significance as it demonstrates the family life of two of Tasmania's most well known politicians, Tasmanian Premier and Prime Minister of Australia, Joseph (Joe) Lyons, and first female member of the Federal House of Representatives and Cabinet, Dame Enid Lyons. Home Hill evolved as the Lyons family grew to number eleven surviving children and provided a refuge for the family from the rigours of political life. Significantly, their ownership of the property traversed Joe Lyons' time in both state and federal politics and after his death, Dame Enid's time as a widow and Federal politician, until her own death in 1981.

**b) The place possesses uncommon or rare aspects of Tasmania's history.**

Home Hill is a rare example of Prime Ministerial residence in Tasmania, and the family home of Australia's first female member of Federal Parliament and Cabinet. It also a rare example of an intact historic house and contents donated to the people of Tasmania, and the ongoing philanthropy of the Joseph and Dame Enid Lyons' descendants. Home Hill houses a rare intact presentation collection of national significance, sourced predominantly during Joseph Lyons' prime ministerial travels across Australia and overseas, and a tangible manifestation of pre-World War Two political life.

**c) The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Tasmania's history.**

Home Hill and its gardens may potentially yield information that may contribute to the understanding of the family and working life of the only Tasmanian to become Prime Minister of Australia. Home Hill's contents have been determined by Dame Enid as a meticulously designed house museum prior to her death and thus underfloor deposits have the potential to step away from this form of curatorial censorship by a subject and provide a prism through which to view daily life at Home Hill. Under floor deposits also have the potential to reveal further information about Home Hill firsts - the first radio call and answer between Tasmania and England, the first Prime Minister to broadcast to the nation via radio, and the first woman parliamentarian to enter Cabinet who used her broadcasts from home to enter the national consciousness - apart from several recordings there are no objects that survive from these uses of the residence that had such an impact on the nation.

**d) The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of place in Tasmania's history.**

Home Hill, despite the obvious political association with the Lyons family, is characteristic of a modest Queen Anne Federation residence built during World War One, and extended to meet the needs of a growing family. These characteristics are demonstrated by the varying assemblage of roofline shapes, bluestone foundations, use of bay windows and decorative wooden treatments to gables and windows, all of which are the principal characteristics of the Queen Anne Federation movement.

**e) The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement.**

No Data Recorded

**f) The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social or spiritual reasons.**

Home Hill and its museum collection and gardens are valued by the wider Tasmanian community for their aesthetic qualities and subsequent contribution to the north-west Tasmanian tourism industry, the extensive and intact collection acquired by the Lyons family for its connection with their lives in public office, and recent joint management by the Devonport City Council and National Trust, the latter considered a body of international repute for its protection and promotion of heritage places important to the nation.

**g) The place has a special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Tasmania's history.**

Home Hill has a special association with the life of Joseph Lyons CH (1878-1939), member of the Parliament of Tasmania (1909-1929), Premier of Tasmania (1923-1928), member of the Parliament of Australia (1929-1939) and Prime Minister of Australia (1931-1939) and Dame Enid Lyons, AD, GBE (1897-1981) member of the Parliament of Australia (1943-1951), the first woman member of the House of Representatives and first woman member of Federal Cabinet. Together with their two sons Kevin and Brendan, the Lyons family had a profound role in Tasmanian and Australian political history spanning over seventy-five years.

**h) The place is important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.**

No Data Recorded

**Heritage approval is required for work that will result in changes to the nature or appearance of the fabric of a Heritage place, both internal and external.**

**Please refer to the Heritage Council's Works Guidelines ([www.heritage.tas.gov.au](http://www.heritage.tas.gov.au)) for information about the level of approval required and appropriate outcomes.**

**Heritage Advisors are also available to answer questions and provide guidance on [enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au) or Tel 1300850332**

**This data sheet is intended to provide sufficient information and justification for listing the place on the Heritage Register. Under the legislation, only one of the criteria needs to be met. The data sheet is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of the heritage values of the place, there may be other heritage values of interest to the Heritage Council not currently acknowledged.**

### **Setting:**

Home Hill at 77 Middle Road, Miandetta is located on the southern fringes of the seaside city of Devonport in northern Tasmania. The former residence of Tasmanian Premier and Prime Minister of Australia, Joseph (Joe) Lyons; his wife, politician and author Dame Enid Lyons; and their extended family, is now a house museum and surrounded by parkland and formal gardens. To the north lies Olive Court, a residential subdivision overlooking the Bass Highway; to the west Middle Road, the chief thoroughfare to the town of Spreyton south of Devonport. To the rear of Home Hill looking south is Berrigan Road with further residential housing stock, and to the east Miandetta Primary School, built on land donated by the Lyons family.

### **Description:**

Home Hill at 77 Middle Road, Miandetta is a single-storey Federation Queen Anne weatherboard house with numerous extensions to meet the needs of a growing family. As a result, the residence features an assemblage of varying roof forms and period features with the core original house on bluestone foundations facing north. This elevation comprises a projecting bay window with gable; enclosed front entrance door with cast iron decorative treatments, and large wooden pergola above dolerite paving laid by Dame Enid Lyons.

A common feature throughout Home Hill is a series of double-hung windows, with clear glass lower sashes and multi-pane treatment to the upper section. The eastern elevation comprises an enclosed verandah with cast iron decorative treatment and French door opening onto an enclosed garden. This landscaped garden area was said to have been treated by Dame Enid almost as another room of the house (pers. comm., Tassell, 2010). This part of the garden contains two elements of the sandstone headstone from Joe Lyons original gravesite at Our Lady of Lourdes church in Devonport.

In the south-eastern corner of Home Hill is the Library and Dining Room, likely an inter-war extension to the main residence. Both these spaces feature extensive collection material relating to the public lives of both Joe and Dame Enid Lyons. At the rear of the property is a stone wall at a right angle attributed to Dame Enid. It abuts a small avenue of macrocarpa trees planted by the Lyons family. At the rear of Home Hill is a kitchen, original to the construction of the house in 1916 (Lyons (ed) 2007:10-11). The western elevation of the house incorporates the living spaces used by Dame Enid and her housekeeper in the later years of her life, and in recent years, the council caretakers' quarters.

The interior of Home Hill contains a museum collection of national significance but also decorative treatments to the walls and floors that date predominantly to Dame Enid Lyons' widowhood. The central hallway contains a filigree hallway arch with lotus flower and cloverleaf motifs, while the sitting room has a pressed tin ceiling with decorative plaster architraves, likely contemporary to the construction of the house. The sitting room painting scheme was said to have been designed by Dame Enid around a marquette, still hanging on the wall, of the exterior tilework for the ABC Hobart building constructed in the 1960s. A front bedroom contains artwork attributed to Dame Enid inspired by the need to cover up cracks in the plaster, resulting in a tree with limbs sprawling across the walls.

Home Hill is surrounded by extensive and well landscaped grounds. At the entrance to the property is a stone wall running beside Middle Road and Olive Court. The garden at Home Hill is largely the creation of Dame Enid Lyons herself. A small pond, garden beds and stone borders were created by Dame Enid often in her later years with assistance from her large family. A garage and bitumen carpark and driveway were constructed in 2009 for visitors to the home. No fruit trees from the pre-1916 orchard are known to survive.

### **History:**

Home Hill at 77 Middle Road, Miandetta was built for newly married member of Parliament, Joseph (Joe) and trainee teacher Enid Lyons in 1916. Joseph Lyons, a former teacher and then Tasmanian Treasurer and Minister for Railways, later went on to become Premier of Tasmania and Prime Minister of Australia. After his death in office in 1939, his wife

Dame Enid went on to become the first female member of the House of Representatives and first woman in a Federal Cabinet. Home Hill was to become the family home of their surviving eleven children, and donated to the Devonport City Council and National Trust of Tasmania before Dame Enid's death in 1981.

Home Hill was said to have been built on nine acres and bordered on two sides by virgin forest with an orchard (Lyons (ed) 2007: 2). The land was given to Enid by Joe as a wedding present but also financial security, Joe acknowledging the uncertainty of political life (pers.comm. Tassell, 2010). Home Hill was completed by late 1916. Enid recalled the building was: 'relatively small but designed to accommodate Joe's extended family' (Lyons, 2008:71) that included her father-in-law, Joe's two sisters and brother. When first constructed it comprised seven rooms including a living room, office for Joe, double bedroom for Joe's two sisters, a single bedroom each for his brother and father and one for Joe and Enid, the latter said to have been the one with the best view (Lyons (ed) 2007: 3). Lighting was provided by kerosene lamps, water collected from the roof into tanks and a nearby well, and a small toilet separate to the main house.

Home Hill was progressively extended as further children were born to Joe and Enid. Initially there was no telephone, and it was a mile and a half from the seaside town of Devonport. The distance to the train station made travel difficult for Joe; by now State Opposition Leader, for Parliamentary sessions in Hobart and in 1917 Home Hill was leased and the family moved to Deloraine (Lyons, 2008:72). In 1919 the family returned to Home Hill, reluctantly selling it a short time later before moving to Hobart (Lyons 2008:73-74). During their time in Hobart the first direct radio message between England and Tasmania was received and answered in a backroom of Home Hill by a Mr Jensen, the then owner (Lyons (ed) 2007:6).

In 1923 Joe Lyons became Premier of Tasmania. The donation of a Morris Oxford by a group of prominent Hobart businessmen made travel much easier for Lyons and his family. By 1927, they had acquired Home Hill again, involving a 'simple exchange of houses... and the Lyons caravan drove to Devonport, this time in their own car' (Lyons 2008:88). After five years as Premier, Lyons was lured to enter Federal politics and in 1929, while living at Home Hill, he was elected to the Federal House of Representatives. Within several years the family had relocated to Melbourne, but retained Home Hill in order to meet Joe's increasing parliamentary demands.

1931 saw Lyons leave the Labor Party and lead the newly formed United Australia Party to an election victory in December that year. Lyons first act as Prime Minister was to write to his wife: 'whatever honours or distinctions come are ours not mine it has been a great day for me but I would be happier on the hill with you and all the children' (Lyons 2008: 137-138). Joe's elevation to the Prime Ministership saw the family move into the Prime Minister's official residence in Canberra, the Lodge; however Home Hill remained the family home. Their Devonport home was exposed to millions in magazines, newspapers and radio, the line installed by the previous owners of Home Hill used by Lyons and later his wife for broadcasts to the nation.

Lyons' period as Prime Minister was an economically challenging one in Australian history, coming in the midst of the Great Depression and lead-up to World War Two. He won three elections and was a pioneer in the use of air travel and radio for election campaigns (Moorhouse in White, 1987:10). Sir Robert Menzies described Lyons as the finest parliamentarian he had seen in action (Hart & Lloyd, 1986:184-189). In 1935 and 1937 Joe and Enid visited Europe and the United States, souvenirs from their travels forming a significant part of the presentation collection now on display at Home Hill.

After battling ill-health and internal party politics, Joe Lyons died in office in 1939. Enid was at Home Hill for Easter 1939 when Joe collapsed. He was admitted to Sydney's St Vincents Hospital, where he suffered further heart attacks. Travel between Tasmania and the mainland was then difficult. Without BHP's plane for the leg to Melbourne, Enid would not have reached Sydney before Joe died on Good Friday. Joe Lyons was remembered by large crowds at services in Sydney and Canberra before his body was taken by navy vessel to Devonport where another large crowd saw him buried. Dame Enid had sharply turned down Cabinet's suggestion that Joe should be buried in Canberra, saying he 'would go home'. Her husband's death left her bedridden for months (Grattan 2000: 167).

Joe Lyons was buried at Our Lady of Lourdes Church at Devonport within eyesight of Home Hill. Dame Enid later had his body relocated to Mersey Vale Lawn Cemetery at Quoiba in 1969 (Henderson, 2008:334). Dame Enid Lyons despite battling her own health problems and managing a large family, successfully stood for Federal Parliament in 1943. The result thrust Dame Enid back into the national spotlight, as no less than the first woman elected to the House of Representatives. In 1949 she became the first woman member of a Federal cabinet.

Despite her position, Home Hill remained a family home and refuge from political life. As children left home grandchildren became regular visitors. Dame Enid was well known for her handiwork around the house. In 1964 a journalist discovered antique wrought iron panels were being hung outside the sitting room by Dame Enid herself and that she was Home Hill's carpenter, paper-hanger, upholsterer and painter (Examiner 4 July 1964:5). Dame Enid conducted radio broadcasts regularly from the house discussing family life, her home and her garden. Two of her sons, Kevin and Brendan, went on to become members of the Tasmanian Parliament in their own right. In 1951 Dame

Enid retired from politics, writing newspaper articles and several autobiographies. Her public life was marked as an excellent public speaker, moderate feminist, advocate for women's and children's rights and in 1980 she was created a Dame (Alexander 2005:222).

Dame Enid Lyons commenced negotiations with the National Trust of Australia (Tasmania) and Devonport City Council in the early 1970s to ensure the conservation of Home Hill and its contents. In 1976 the Devonport City Council acquired the building and a year later the Trust the contents of Home Hill. Dame Enid continued to live at the house until shortly before her death in 1981. She prepared the rooms and their contents for display and at Dame Enid's request the house was opened for visitation in 1982. The residence is one of only three homes of an Australian Prime Minister currently open to the public. In 2010 Home Hill is one of a suite of properties managed by the National Trust of Australia (Tasmania) and rare example in Tasmania of a residence with much of its original contents intact.

**References:**

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