

# Dow's Pharmacy



## The place

From 1859 the site of Dow's Pharmacy was occupied by an earlier medical dispensary before being replaced by the existing pharmaceutical shop and residence in 1868. Roy and Hilda Dow occupied the pharmacy from 1929 until 1968, when it closed.

The interior appears as it was during the Dows' occupancy. The collection, dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, includes stock in original packaging, bottles containing ingredients for medications, shop fittings, records, and pharmaceutical equipment.

In 1988 Hilda Dow donated the building to the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). The building is now open to the public as a museum.



## Location

Chiltern, Indigo Shire

## Traditional Owners

Yorta Yorta People

## Main Impacts



Average annual temperature **increase** of up to **2.4°C**



More **intense** downpours

## Type

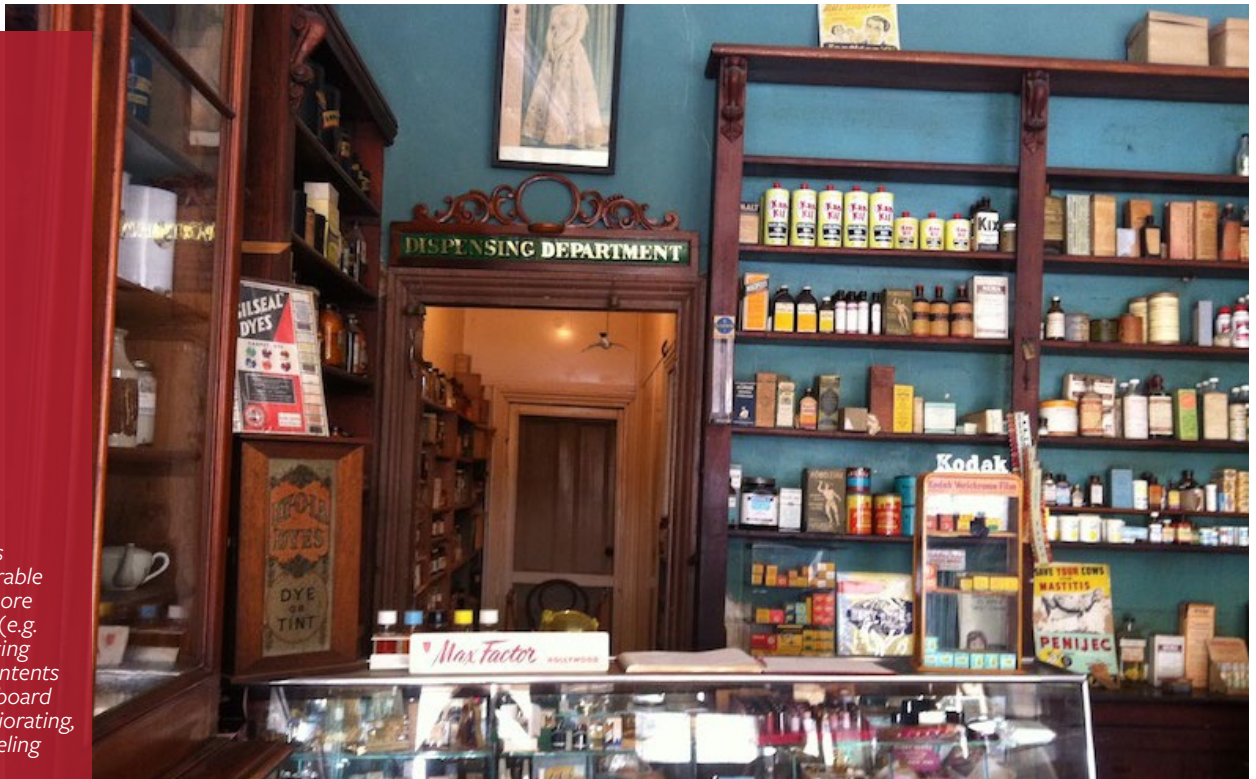
19<sup>th</sup> century brick shop, comprising:

- low-fired soft brick walls and metal roofs
- internal collections.

## Heritage Listing

Heritage Overlay

The collection is especially vulnerable to hotter and more humid weather (e.g. labels delaminating from bottles, contents expanding, cardboard packaging deteriorating, and silvering peeling off glass).



## Heritage significance

Dow's Pharmacy is significant as a rare example of an early goldfields medical dispensary, retaining a pharmaceutical collection dating from the gold era to the mid-twentieth century. The pharmacy is also important for illustrating a range of medical treatments and equipment over the 100 years of its operation, and for the completeness of the collection of pharmacy items preserved inside.

## Climate change impacts

Dow's Pharmacy is expected to experience changes in seasonal rainfall and higher mean temperatures. Droughts are expected to be longer and more intense, and the climate is likely to become drier.

Storms with more extreme rainfall and stronger winds will be more frequent and severe. This could periodically raise the local water table, resulting in significant impacts to the building and collection that are already at risk due to chronic damp.

## Site vulnerability and heritage impacts

Dow's Pharmacy is a low-fired brick building on shallow stone footings. It has a corrugated iron roof and a timber-framed rear extension. As an aging vernacular building in an inland

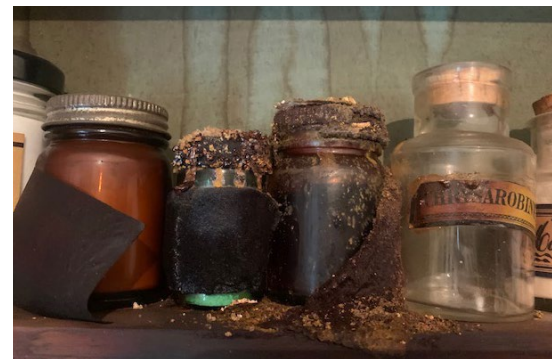
regional town, its rate of decay and fabric deterioration will be accelerated by climate change.

Hotter temperatures and more frequent and intense storms will increase movement in the shallow stone footings and consequent cracking of the walls. High winds could damage or dislodge roofing or fixings, allowing rain into the building, and damaging signs and awnings. The risk of flash flooding will increase, allowing surface water to enter the subfloor space more often. The damper conditions will also accelerate rot in timber elements (stumps, bearers or joists) and carry more salts into the soft, porous brickwork, resulting in more rapid decay.

Greater expansion and cracking of other building fabric, and deterioration of the collection inside, could accelerate because of the damper conditions and more extreme wet-dry cycle predicted.

A hotter and damper environment will also result in damage to the collection, with labels delaminating from bottles, silvering peeling off glass, and cardboard packaging deteriorating. Higher daily temperatures are likely to result in some contents expanding and changes to any unstable chemicals in the collection.

The significance of the collection will be compromised if its documentation is not completed before further deterioration occurs.



Issues of rising damp and humidity will impact the collection through the growth of mould and increased insect activity.

## Current management for climate resilience

The National Trust's *Climate Action Plan 2021-2023* sets its agenda for responding to climate change risk. The Trust believes that the best strategy for climate resilience is pre-planning and timely maintenance.

The Trust and the property manager are putting systems in place to take a more proactive approach to the management of the site. Climate change impacts are being integrated into these new management plans and processes, and an asset management strategy and asset management plan are being developed. The strategy will develop the overarching policy and resources. The plan will deal with specific challenges that Dow's Pharmacy will face. It will include a section on climate risk, framing more proactive management approaches. Climate resilience will be managed through the continued refinement of existing plans and policies and the development of new ones, informed by continuing discussions with stakeholders.

A data logger was installed in 2021 to monitor the internal environment for damp. A maintenance plan for the property is revised each year, and a disaster plan is in place. Disaster bins are ready to store and transport the collection in an emergency.

Proposed works to mitigate climate impacts on Dow's Pharmacy include replacing and repairing the corroded roofing and increasing the gutter size and number of downpipes to accommodate increased rainfall.



*Drainage issues at the base of the building will result in movement in the shallow stone footings and consequent cracking of the walls.*

Other vulnerabilities and consequent priorities are difficult to determine at present because the collection is still being investigated and documented.

## Potential strategies for building resilience

Immediate actions that would improve climate change resilience include:

- improving drainage or other works to prevent oversaturation of the soil around the building, in consultation with local authorities
- replacing guttering and downpipes with a larger-capacity system to prevent further decay of the building
- repairing structural cracking and desalting and repointing fragile brickwork
- reducing the risk of rising damp, salt attack and subfloor flooding by lowering the surrounding ground level
- removing or replacing impermeable cement renders, coatings and other fabric with permeable materials
- coating the exposed western wall with permeable limewash to improve weather protection



*Rising damp and humidity carry more salts up into the brickwork. Salts on the wall surfaces will result in more rapid decay of the soft, porous brickwork.*

- commissioning conservation documentation to scope funding for improvement works
- installing air-conditioning to dehumidify the interior
- restumping the building.

In the longer term, collaboration and knowledge-sharing with managers of properties that are facing similar vulnerabilities would support and improve the collective climate change response. The preparation of a conservation management plan would help guide planning and develop a climate change strategy for the site. The completion of the collection cataloguing and documentation will be essential for informing the prioritisation of actions.

The climate change resilience of the place would also be enhanced by developing an evacuation plan for the contents and training staff and volunteers in disaster response.

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