

# Vulnerability Assessment Guide

This guide has been produced to assist managers and owners in assessing how vulnerable their place, object or collection is to the effects of climate change. It aligns with the Heritage Council's 'Principles on the protection and conservation of cultural heritage places and objects from the impacts of climate change'.

It is not intended to replace advice from qualified and experienced heritage specialists.

## Steps in Vulnerability Assessment

## Issues to consider

### Principle 1:

Taking a values-based approach: understanding the values of the place or object

a) What are the heritage values of the place, object or collection?

- Are there state-level heritage values for which it is included in the Victorian Heritage Register?
- Are there local heritage values for which it is included in the Heritage Overlay?
- Are there other values that also need to be considered? These may include use or economic values to the community.

b) What are the features of the place, object or collection that represent these values?

- What are the features of each of these values in the physical place, object or collection? Are they:
  - tangible (e.g. decorative features, construction style, building fabric or landscape setting, garden elements, etc.)?
  - intangible (e.g. associated with a particular person or historical event, etc.)?

### Principle 2:

Evidence-based decision making

c) What climate hazards have the potential to impact the place, object or collection?

- What are the predicted changes in climate and resulting climate hazards in the region in which it is located?

d) What is the exposure of the place, object or collection to climate hazards?

- Where is its geographic location?
- What is the local environment in which it is situated? For example, it may be urban, rural, forested; coastal and include proximity to waterways; located on a slope, in a valley or hilltop, or a streetscape and be exposed in a certain direction; etc.

e) What are the sensitivities of the place, object or collection?

- What materials are included?
- What methods of construction / creation have been used?
- What is its setting? This may include natural features, vegetation, other buildings, views, whether it is in a building or outside etc.
- What is its condition? Is it structurally sound and intact? What modifications have been made that may affect its sensitivity?
- In complex sites or collections, is there a range of sensitivities?

**Steps in Vulnerability Assessment**

**Issues to consider**

**Principle 3:  
Assessing risks  
and resilience**

**f) What are the resulting vulnerabilities of the physical place, object or collection to climate stressors?**

- What are the potential short-term and long-term impacts of the identified hazards on its fabric and heritage value? Are there any that are cumulative? Each hazard should be systematically reviewed and its potential impacts assessed, also taking into account the exposure and sensitivities (see Principle 2d and 2e).
- What is the likely magnitude (e.g. negligible, moderate, severe or catastrophic) of the threat climate change poses? This requires systematic assessment of the vulnerability of the fabric, in relation to the features of the heritage values (see Principle 1b).
- What is the resilience of the place, object or collection? That is, what is its ability to experience these impacts while retaining its heritage values?

**Principle 4:  
Engaging  
communities**

**g) Develop and implement an engagement plan**

- Who has a legitimate interest in the place, object or collection? Always consider the communities who may have an association with it.
- What level of engagement is appropriate with each group of stakeholders? For example: consult for the values assessment, inform the community about impacts etc.

**Principle 5:  
Responsive  
strategies**

**h) Develop flexible strategies for enhancing resilience and / or planning for loss**

- What places and objects are relatively more important than others within the management body?
- What impacts can be mitigated, and what impacts cannot be?
- How can resilience be enhanced?
- What are the uncertainties?
- What level of flexibility is appropriate while also providing real direction?

**Principle 6:  
Integrating  
management  
approaches**

**i) Integrate management of climate change impacts into existing and new management plans and processes**

- How does adaptation / defence against climate change align with other strategic priorities?
- Are there any 'no-regret' actions that should be prioritised, i.e. low-cost interventions that achieve several strategic objectives, such as climate adaptation, general maintenance and improved resilience? An example of this could include basic drainage maintenance / improvements and low cost re-vegetation in areas of low bushfire risk, to offer protection and shade to heritage structures while at the same time fixing soil deposits and preventing the exposure of significant subsurface deposits.
- What are the statutory requirements – e.g. permits, etc.?
- What could be the unintended adverse impacts of the proposed actions? For example, the construction of a sea wall to protect a heritage place may promote coastal erosion at other points along the coast, increasing impacts on coastal infrastructure of heritage value.

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ISBN 978-0-7311-9224-3 (pdf/online/MS word)  
Author: Extent Heritage. Design: Green Scribble.  
Photograph: Visit Victoria / Jarrod Andrews.

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