

Heritage Council Determination

Determination date	7 August 2025
Place/Object name	Toorak/South Yarra Library
Location	338-344 Toorak Road, South Yarra, Stonnington City, Wurundjeri Country
VHR number	H2463
Category	Registered Place and Registered Object Integral to a Registered Place
Relevant legislative provision/s	Inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register, pursuant to section 49(1)(a) of the <i>Heritage Act 2017</i>

Determination of the Heritage Council

The Heritage Council of Victoria determined on 7 August 2025, in accordance with section 49(1)(a) of the *Heritage Act 2017*, that the above place is to be included in the Victorian Heritage Register in the category of Registered Place and Registered Object Integral to a Registered Place.

The Heritage Council also determined to:

- Include categories of works or activities which may be carried out in relation to the place for which a permit is not required (specific permit exemptions), that would not harm the cultural heritage significance of the place, pursuant to section 49(3)(a) of the *Heritage Act 2017*.
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Executive Director's Recommendation ('the Recommendation')

The Executive Director made and accepted a nomination to include the Toorak/South Yarra Library ('the Place') in the Victorian Heritage Register ('Heritage Register'). On 19 May 2025 the Executive Director made the Recommendation to the Heritage Council that the Place be included in the Heritage Register. The Recommendation was advertised publicly for a period of 60 days, beginning on 23 May 2025.

Section 44 submissions

During the 60-day public advertisement period, no submissions were received pursuant to section 44 of the *Heritage Act 2017*.

The Place

Description

Extracted verbatim from page 3 of the Executive Director's Recommendation (factual corrections marked in red):

The Toorak/South Yarra Library (1973) is a municipal public library located in the Melbourne suburb of [South Yarra], on Wurundjeri Country. It is sited on a parcel bounded by Toorak Road to the north, Cromwell Road to the east and Surrey Road North to the west. The Library, designed in a minimal modernist style, is a rectilinear building of steel and glass, elevated above the ground on a concrete plinth. Although the building presents as a single storey, it comprises two levels, the concrete plinth being the exposed part of a basement level. The upper level is distinguished by its exposed steel frame, which is painted black, and full-height glazing. The glazing is split into regularly spaced bays, divided by black painted steel columns. The main public entrance is located in the centre of the north elevation, facing Toorak Road, and can be accessed either via a pair of ramps or a central staircase, both of which were installed in 2024 and replaced the original access ramps.

Internally, the upper level forms the main public library area. The foyer is divided from the main library area by full-height glazed walls. It contains a travertine-clad passenger lift (1998) and a floating staircase that provides access to the basement. A services core is located on the north side of the foyer. The main library area is an open-plan, U-shaped space that occupies the remainder of the upper level. The basement level is more utilitarian, containing staff work areas, meeting rooms, toilets, and kitchens. No original furniture remains at the library or in other locations.

*To either side of the building are open, grassed areas that have been planted with Gold Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra lutescens*) trees, which are estimated to be 30-40 years old and replaced the early plantings of birch trees at the site. The Elms are planted in rows that mirror the location of the steel columns of the building. There are two original steel signs (with non-original plexiglass) located at the eastern and western ends of the building. To the rear of the building is a sloping, asphalt car park. A substation and other utilities and services are located on the south side of the building.*

*The foyer contains a mixed-media artwork by Lauren Berkowitz titled *Collected Histories* which was installed in 1995.*

Heritage Council's findings

State-level cultural heritage significance

The Heritage Council's findings accord with the Executive Director's Recommendation. The Heritage Council finds that the Toorak/South Yarra Library is of State-level cultural heritage significance as a notable example of both a municipal library and a modernist building in the formal minimalist style, and is to be included in the Heritage Register. The Heritage Council finds that the artwork in the foyer, by accomplished artist Lauren Berkowitz, has long been a prominent feature within the building and is integral to understanding the cultural heritage significance of the Place.

The Heritage Council agrees that the Place is one of Victoria's finest examples of the formal minimalist architecture developed by influential German-born architect Ludwig Miles van der Rohe, and that it represents one of the most distinctive and architecturally fine libraries and municipal public buildings erected

in the era. The Toorak/South Yarra Library is an important smaller-scale work of Yuncken Freeman Architects.

The Heritage Council determines that the Toorak/South Yarra Library meets the following Criteria for Assessment in the Heritage Council's *Victorian Heritage Register Criteria and Threshold Guidelines* (**Attachment 1**) at State-level:

- **Criterion D** – Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

Extent of Registration

The Extent of Registration is provided as **Attachment 2** and includes all of the place encompassing all of Lot 1 on Title Plan 758641 and including the artwork 'Collected Histories' by Lauren Berkowitz (1995).

Permit exemptions

The Heritage Council determined specific permit exemptions for works or activities which would not harm the cultural heritage significance of the Toorak/South Yarra Library (**Attachment 3**).

Conclusion

The Heritage Council of Victoria determined on 7 August 2025, in accordance with section 49(1)(a) of the *Heritage Act 2017*, that the Toorak/South Yarra Library is to be included in the Victorian Heritage Register in the categories of Registered Place and Registered Object Integral to a Registered Place.



Professor Philip Goad
Chair, Heritage Council of Victoria

Attachment 1

Victorian Heritage Register Criteria and Threshold Guidelines

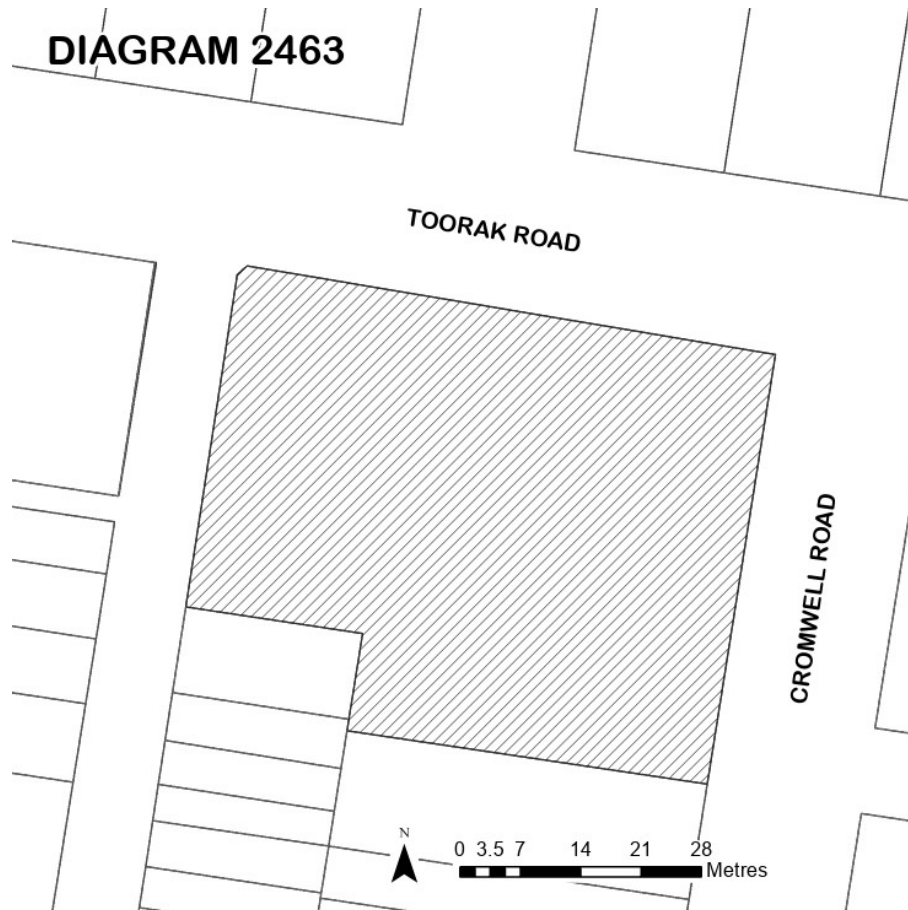
Criterion A	Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.
Criterion B	Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.
Criterion C	Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.
Criterion D	Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.
Criterion E	Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.
Criterion F	Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.
Criterion G	Strong or special association with a particular present-day community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.
Criterion H	Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.

These were adopted by the Heritage Council at its meeting on 1 December 2022, and replace the previous criteria adopted by the Heritage Council on 6 December 2012.

Attachment 2

Extent of Registration

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 2463 encompassing all of Lot 1 on Title Plan 758641 and including the artwork 'Collected Histories' by Lauren Berkowitz (1995).



Attachment 3

Categories of works or activities which may be undertaken without a permit (permit exemptions)

Introduction

A [heritage permit](#) is required for all works and activities undertaken in relation to VHR places and objects. Certain works and activities are [exempt from a heritage permit](#), if the proposed works will not harm the cultural heritage significance of the heritage place or object.

Permit Policy

It is recommended that a Conservation Management Plan be utilised to manage the place in a manner that respects its cultural heritage significance.

Permit exemptions

General exemptions

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the VHR. General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which do not harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the *Heritage Act 2017*.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must notify the Executive Director before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions. Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

Specific exemptions

The works and activities below are not considered to cause harm to the cultural heritage significance of the Toorak/South Yarra Library subject to the following guidelines and conditions:

Guidelines

1. Where there is an inconsistency between permit exemptions specific to the registered place or object ('specific exemptions') established in accordance with either section 49(3) or section 92(3) of the Act and general exemptions established in accordance with section 92(1) of the Act specific exemptions will prevail to the extent of any inconsistency.
2. In specific exemptions, words have the same meaning as in the Act, unless otherwise indicated. Where there is an inconsistency between specific exemptions and the Act, the Act will prevail to the extent of any inconsistency.
3. Nothing in specific exemptions obviates the responsibility of a proponent to obtain the consent of the owner of the registered place or object, or if the registered place or object is situated on Crown Land the land manager as defined in the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*, prior to undertaking works or activities in accordance with specific exemptions.

4. If a Cultural Heritage Management Plan in accordance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* is required for works covered by specific exemptions, specific exemptions will apply only if the Cultural Heritage Management Plan has been approved prior to works or activities commencing. Where there is an inconsistency between specific exemptions and a Cultural Heritage Management Plan for the relevant works and activities, Heritage Victoria must be contacted for advice on the appropriate approval pathway.
5. Specific exemptions do not constitute approvals, authorisations or exemptions under any other legislation, Local Government, State Government or Commonwealth Government requirements, including but not limited to the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth). Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to obtain relevant planning, building or environmental approvals from the responsible authority where applicable.
6. Care should be taken when working with heritage buildings and objects, as historic fabric may contain dangerous and poisonous materials (for example lead paint and asbestos). Appropriate personal protective equipment should be worn at all times. If you are unsure, seek advice from a qualified heritage architect, heritage consultant or local Council heritage advisor
7. The presence of unsafe materials (for example asbestos, lead paint etc) at a registered place or object does not automatically exempt remedial works or activities in accordance with this category. Approvals under Part 5 of the Act must be obtained to undertake works or activities that are not expressly exempted by the below specific exemptions.
8. All works should be informed by a Conservation Management Plan prepared for the place or object. The Executive Director is not bound by any Conservation Management Plan and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Conservation Management Plan.

Conditions

1. All works or activities permitted under specific exemptions must be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents harm to the registered place or object. Harm includes moving, removing or damaging any part of the registered place or object that contributes to its cultural heritage significance.
2. If during the carrying out of works or activities in accordance with specific exemptions original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the registered place are revealed relating to its cultural heritage significance, including but not limited to historical archaeological remains, such as features, deposits or artefacts, then works must cease and Heritage Victoria notified as soon as possible.
3. If during the carrying out of works or activities in accordance with specific exemptions any Aboriginal cultural heritage is discovered or exposed at any time, all works must cease and the Secretary (as defined in the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*) must be contacted immediately to ascertain requirements under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.
4. If during the carrying out of works or activities in accordance with specific exemptions any munitions or other potentially explosive artefacts are discovered, Victoria Police is to be immediately alerted and the site is to be immediately cleared of all personnel.
5. If during the carrying out of works or activities in accordance with specific exemptions any suspected human remains are found the works or activities must cease. The remains must be left in place and protected from harm or damage. Victoria Police and the State Coroner's Office must be notified immediately. If there are reasonable grounds to believe that the remains are Aboriginal, the State Emergency Control Centre must be immediately notified on 1300 888 544, and, as required under s.17(3)(b) of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, all details about the location and nature of the human remains must be provided to the Secretary (as defined in the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*).

Exempt works and activities

Landscape

1. Gardening and soft landscape maintenance (for example: weeding, mulching, planting, pruning and tree lopping).
2. Repairs and maintenance to hard landscape elements (for example: walls, paths and steps) with like-for-like materials and finishes.
3. Repairs and maintenance to the two original fixed signs on the library grounds, and replacement of the nonoriginal plexiglass signage within the original steel structures.
4. Removal of trees when they pose a risk to people or property (this exemption does not apply to the Gold Wych Elms to the east and west of the building).
5. Removal of Gold Wych Elms when they pose a risk to people or property, provided they are replaced with an example of the same or similar species in the same location.
6. Repairs, maintenance and removal of the outdoor timber seating area, located on the western open space area.
7. Repairs, maintenance and removal of street and park furniture (for example: bins, benches, bollards and bicycle hoops).
8. Installation of standard council street and park furniture provided it is installed in the open areas to the east, west or south of the library building.
9. Sub-surface and drainage works to the south side of the building.

Library building exterior

10. All repairs and maintenance to the roof, and the replacement of roof cladding and flashings with like-for-like materials and finishes.
11. All repairs, maintenance and replacement of the solar energy system, and installation of additional solar panels provided that the appearance of the building from street level is not altered.
12. All repairs and maintenance to the external steel structure, including repainting, with like-for-like materials, finishes and colours.
13. All repairs and maintenance to the windows (for example: resealing, cracks etc) provided the existing visual appearance is maintained.
14. All repairs and maintenance to the concrete retaining wall that surrounds the rear carpark to the south of the site.
15. All like for like repairs and maintenance to the staircase and ramps located within the front setback (including balustrades).
16. All repairs and maintenance to the exterior rendered concrete wall that forms the base of the building (for example: repairing any cracking) provided works are planned and carried out in consultation with an appropriately experienced Heritage Advisor.
17. Works to the bin cage at rear of building, including removal.
18. Installation and removal of temporary banners and signage (related to celebrations, events, and community activities, excluding advertising) affixed to exterior surface of windows, provided that the temporary banners or signage are in place for no more than three months per year.

Library building interior

19. All non-structural works within the lower ground floor (exclusive of staircase).
20. All works to the existing customer service desk and associated fixtures, provided they do not impact any elements of the original building.
21. All works within the toilets, kitchens, IT/Server/Print Room, plant room and staff administration areas.

22. All works to the existing specialist library infrastructure and equipment (for example: PC stations and self-checkout machines) required for the day-to-day functioning of the place as a library.
23. All works to the passenger lift (for example: repairs, maintenance and replacement of the lift system).
24. All works to services, plant, HVAC and emergency management systems within existing locations.
25. All repairs and maintenance to the book returns lift.
26. Like-for-like repairs and maintenance of the balustrade and glazing surrounding the staircase, as well as the staircase itself, in the entry foyer.
27. Like-for-like repairs and maintenance of the internal glazing that faces the entry foyer.
28. Replacement of floor coverings (for example: carpet and linoleum).
29. Replacement of non-original light fittings.
30. Installation of artwork and signage to the surface of the services core that faces the foyer.
31. Installation and removal of temporary banners and signage (related to celebrations, events, and community activities, excluding advertising) affixed to interior surface of windows, provided that the temporary banners or signage are in place for no more than three months per year.

Semi-detached plant room and substation at rear of library building

32. All works to the substation/plant building within the existing building envelope.

Flood management

33. All repairs, maintenance and rectification works required as a result of a flood event.

Objects integral

34. All repairs, maintenance and conservation of the *Collected Histories* artwork, located in the entry foyer, provided works are undertaken by the artist or an appropriately qualified art conservator.
35. Relocation of the *Collected Histories* artwork, provided it remains within the entry foyer.