

# What is heritage?

**Our heritage is a part of who we are. It's what we inherit, appreciate today and think is important to protect and pass on to future generations.**



**The heritage protection system exists to conserve, manage, promote and celebrate our heritage. But the concept of heritage is often broader than we might think:**

## Heritage is more than just buildings

Heritage can be something we appreciate just by knowing it exists. The heritage that we can see and touch, is known as 'tangible heritage,' and can include buildings and objects. Other things that have no physical presence, such as language and tradition, are known as 'intangible heritage'. By protecting the former, we often can protect the latter.

Heritage can be buildings, objects, archaeological remains, gardens, shipwrecks, streetscapes and more. But heritage is not always built by humans; it can be natural, like forests or coastlines.

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage includes knowledge and lore, practices and people, objects and places that are valued, culturally meaningful and connected to identity and Country.

'Heritage values' and 'cultural heritage significance' are interrelated concepts that provide the framework for the care and management of heritage places of all types and scales.

Heritage values describe the cultural meaning found in heritage and help explain why heritage is important to our communities. Heritage can have more than one heritage value and may have a range of values for different individuals or groups.

The cultural heritage significance of a place or object is the sum of all the heritage values that can be recognised in that place or object for past, present or future generations. This can change over time with use, and as the result of new information.

## Heritage is not always old

The passage of time allows the cultural heritage values of a place or object to be more fully documented, consolidated and better evaluated, so heritage places and objects are typically old. But there are examples of heritage from more recent periods, even from our own lifetimes.

## Heritage can seem ugly to some and pleasing to others

Heritage values can differ between individuals or groups – so opinions about heritage are not always shared. Across generations or different communities, what is considered aesthetically pleasing may change over time. There are many examples of heritage that some people may not find pleasing to look at but are of cultural heritage significance and deserving of protection.

## Heritage can include places and objects used in everyday life

We may think of heritage as sites to visit and admire, but it can also include places we come across or use every day: for example, schools, markets, and places of worship. It is common for this type of heritage to be protected by local councils as it is of most significance to the communities who interact with it regularly.



## Common questions

### Do I have a say in whether a place or object is heritage, and what happens to it?

Yes. Everyone has a role to play in recognising, respecting, and promoting heritage. Participate in local council consultation on heritage matters when the opportunity arises or nominate a place or object for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register if it demonstrates state-level heritage significance.



### If a place or object is identified as heritage, can it still be used?

Yes. Many heritage places are valued for the purpose they serve in the community. It is important that heritage buildings are used as it means these places will be maintained and looked after.

### Can heritage buildings be sustainable?

Yes. Heritage protection allows for the addition of solar panels and other sustainable measures. Adaptive reuse of heritage buildings saves embodied energy and reduces landfill waste, production of new materials and energy used in demolition and construction.

### Can I develop or renovate heritage buildings?

Yes. The degree of change will be guided by the significance of the place. Expert advice and assistance are available.

### Do properties always lose value when identified as heritage?

No. A collective heritage ambience has been shown to be an attraction to living or working in an area.

### If heritage is only protected locally, does that mean it is not as important as other heritage?

No. Most heritage protection happens at the local level. Places included in a Heritage Overlay as part of a local planning scheme are highly valued within local communities.



**Heritage belongs to all of us. We need to protect it, because if we don't, it's lost forever.**



For more information about Victorian heritage and how it is protected, see all the resources from the Heritage Information Pack, at [heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/heritage-protection/heritage\\_info\\_pack/](https://heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/heritage-protection/heritage_info_pack/)

