

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF VICTORIA

Strategic Plan

2026–30



**For noting –
cultural heritage
and the *Heritage
Act 2017***

The statutory scope of the *Heritage Act 2017* includes places and objects of cultural heritage significance to the State of Victoria but, following section 8, ‘does not apply to a place or object that is of cultural heritage significance only on the ground of its association with Aboriginal tradition’, such as Aboriginal archaeological sites, scarred trees and rock art. This heritage is protected under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and included in the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register, which is administered by First Peoples – State Relations who work with Registered Aboriginal Parties and Traditional Owners to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria.

In this strategic plan, the terms ‘cultural heritage’ and ‘heritage’ are used generically and interchangeably to refer to the ‘heritage’ to which the *Heritage Act 2017* applies, recognising that heritage places and objects may have multiple attributes and values.

Published by the Heritage Council of Victoria

© State of Victoria. The Heritage Council of Victoria 2025

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. You are free to re-use the work under that licence, on the condition that you credit the Heritage Council of Victoria as author. The licence does not apply to any images or branding, including the Victorian Coat of Arms, the Victorian Government logo and the Heritage Council of Victoria logo. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Design by Billington Prideaux Associates

ISBN 978-0-7311-9366-0 (pdf/online/MS word)

All photographs as credited.

Cover image: Bendigo Chinese Temple (VHR H1791)

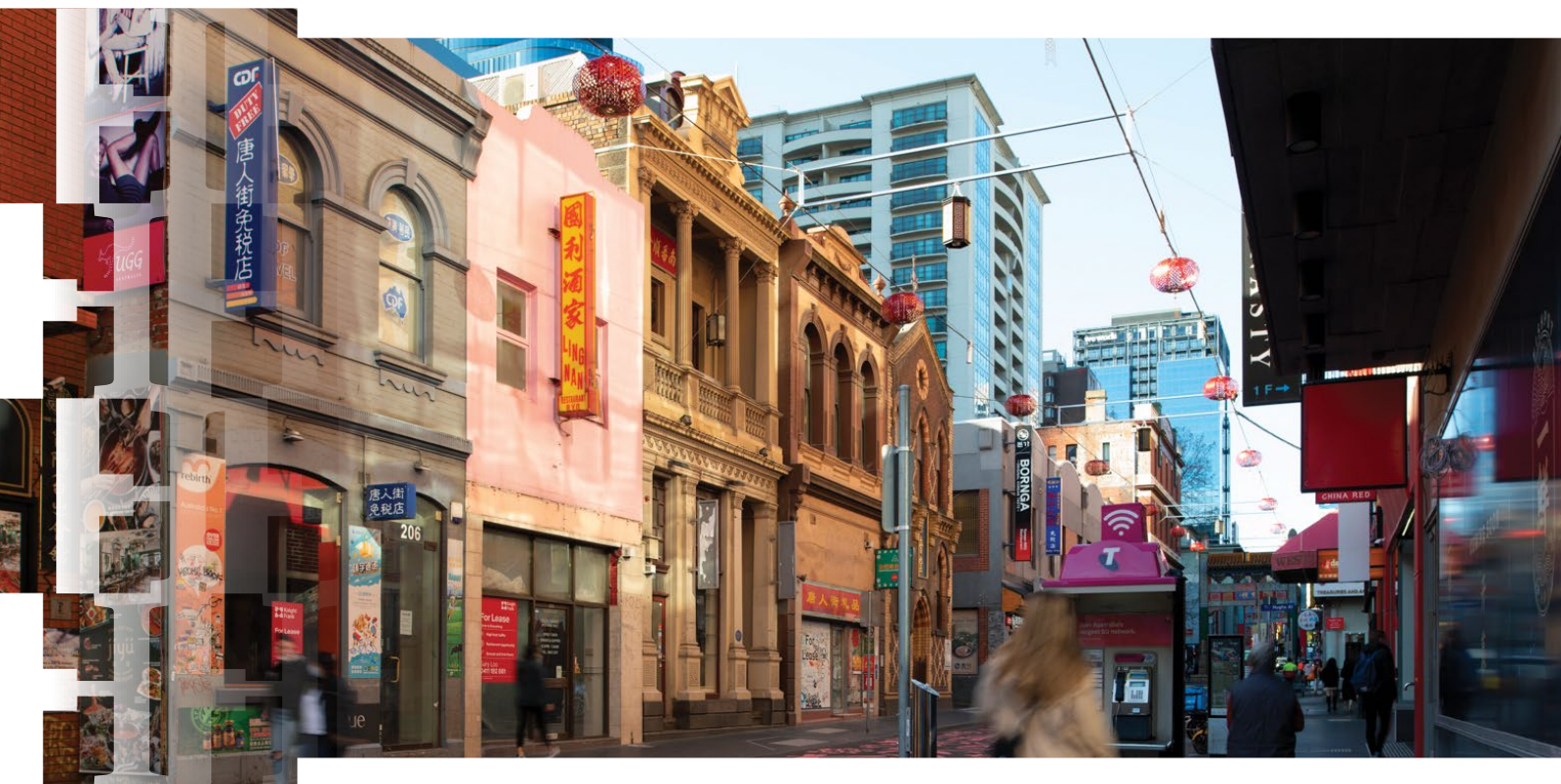
| Hin Lim Photography © 2022

Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you, but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, please telephone the Heritage Council of Victoria on 8572 7949, or email heritage.council@transport.vic.gov.au. This document is also available on the internet at www.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au.



Contents

MINISTER'S MESSAGE	4
CHAIR'S MESSAGE	5
OUR PURPOSE	6
Who we are	6
OUR STRATEGY 2026–30	7
Our mission	7
Our vision	7
Our values	7
Our objectives	8
IMPLEMENTING THIS STRATEGY	17

Minister's message

Victoria is home to some of Australia's oldest and most treasured heritage places and objects, living reminders of the people, stories and traditions that have helped shape our state. Our heritage is not static; it is a shared legacy that continues to grow as new generations contribute to the richness and uniqueness of Victorian life.

Protecting and celebrating our heritage is essential to who we are, where we have come from and who we aspire to be. It fosters a strong sense of belonging, strengthens community identity and supports a more sustainable and inclusive future. Heritage protection and adaptation also plays a vital role in shaping vibrant and liveable cities, suburbs and towns.

The Victorian Government remains committed to the conservation of the state's cultural heritage, recognising our past goes hand in hand with creating opportunities for all Victorians to connect with, contribute to and benefit from it.

The Heritage Council of Victoria is central to this work. Its leadership, expertise and strategic vision are helping to ensure that our heritage remains a source of pride and inspiration.

This Strategic Plan lays out a clear and forward-thinking agenda to guide how we value, protect and share our heritage for today's communities and for generations to come.

Hon Sonya Kilkenney MP
MINISTER FOR PLANNING

BELOW
ANZ Bank (VHR H0034)
| Hin Lim Photography
© 2024



Chair's message

As a peak heritage body, we acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Country that we call Victoria, as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, and acknowledge the importance and significance of Aboriginal cultural heritage across the state.

We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of Aboriginal culture and traditional practices.

Victoria's heritage is rich and increasingly celebrated for its importance at National and World Heritage levels. Cultural heritage plays a significant role in the amenity and enjoyment of places across the state, and Victorians recognise heritage as an important element in their lives.

The Heritage Council has a pivotal role in recognising, protecting and promoting the places and objects that are of cultural heritage significance to the State of Victoria. These places and objects, included in the Victorian Heritage Register, are vital for creating a sense of identity, belonging and inclusion for the state's many communities.

This Strategic Plan describes the Heritage Council's priorities for the next five years. It will be implemented during a period of great change for the state.

We will see major population growth and development under the Victorian Government's 30-year Plan for Victoria. At the same time, the negotiation of the Statewide Treaty Agreement represents a historic milestone in truth-telling and Treaty. Every year the community also faces the increasing environmental, social and economic impacts of severe climate events.

However, where there is change there are also opportunities to have an impact. In delivering the objectives and actions in this Plan, the Council will respond to these opportunities and see that cultural heritage remains an integral part of creating thriving, liveable and sustainable communities, towns and cities for all Victorians.

Professor Philip Goad

CHAIR, HERITAGE COUNCIL OF VICTORIA

BELOW
"Aqua Profonda" Sign,
Fitzroy Pool (VHR H1687)
| Hin Lim Photography
© 2021



Our purpose

To recognise and protect places and objects of cultural heritage significance to the State of Victoria.

WHO WE ARE

The Heritage Council of Victoria is an independent statutory authority established under the *Heritage Act 2017*.

The Heritage Council is the Victorian Government's primary decision-making body for the identification of places and objects of State-level cultural heritage significance.

Our key functions and powers include:

- advising the Minister for Planning, government departments and agencies, municipal councils and other bodies on the protection and conservation of Victoria's cultural heritage
- including and amending places and objects of State-level cultural heritage significance in the Victorian Heritage Register
- conducting reviews of decisions made by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria
- promoting public understanding of Victoria's cultural heritage

- conducting research and publishing guidelines in relation to the conservation of cultural heritage
- adopting and forwarding to the Minister draft World Heritage Strategy Plans, and amendments to those Plans
- advising the Minister on proposed amendments to planning schemes which may affect the protection or conservation of cultural heritage
- managing the Heritage Fund.

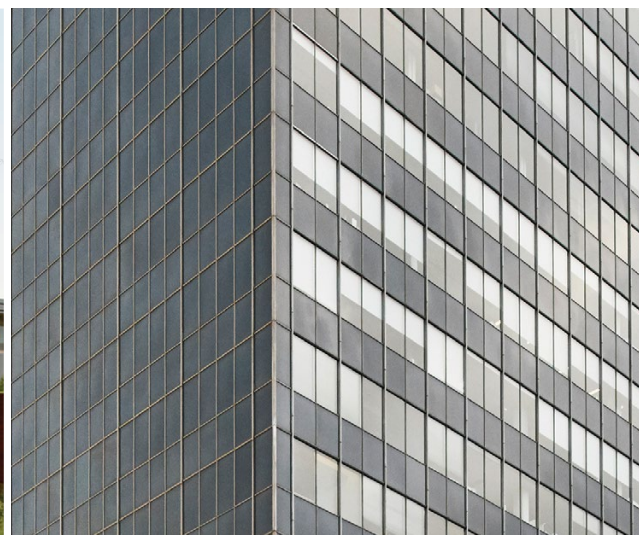
See section 11 of the Heritage Act for a complete list of the Council's functions and powers.

The Heritage Council is made up of 10 members and 10 alternate members who represent a broad cross-section of heritage specialists and the community. Membership categories are set out in section 10 of the Heritage Act.

Members are appointed by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister for Planning.

LEFT
**Brighton Municipal
Offices (VHR H1292)**
| Hin Lim Photography
© 2018

RIGHT
ICI House (VHR H0786)
| Hin Lim Photography
© 2018



Our Strategy 2026–30

OUR MISSION

To lead in the recognition and conservation of Victoria's cultural heritage, promoting its value and diversity so that current and future communities can connect with and understand our shared history.

OUR VISION

Victoria's diverse cultural heritage is valued and protected, enriches the lives of current and future generations and inspires ongoing use and sustainable adaptation.

OUR VALUES

Everything we do is guided by the Victorian Public Sector values. The table below shows how some of these are applied alongside our unique values.

VALUE

WHAT THIS MEANS TO US

RESPECT

Respecting the views and differences of Victoria's communities so that our shared heritage assets can be valued and enjoyed as expressions of the traditions, identities and achievements of our many cultures.

INTEGRITY

Being impartial, fair and objective when making decisions or providing expert advice. Respecting the responsibilities conferred upon us and fulfilling our obligations efficiently and effectively.

PARTNERSHIP

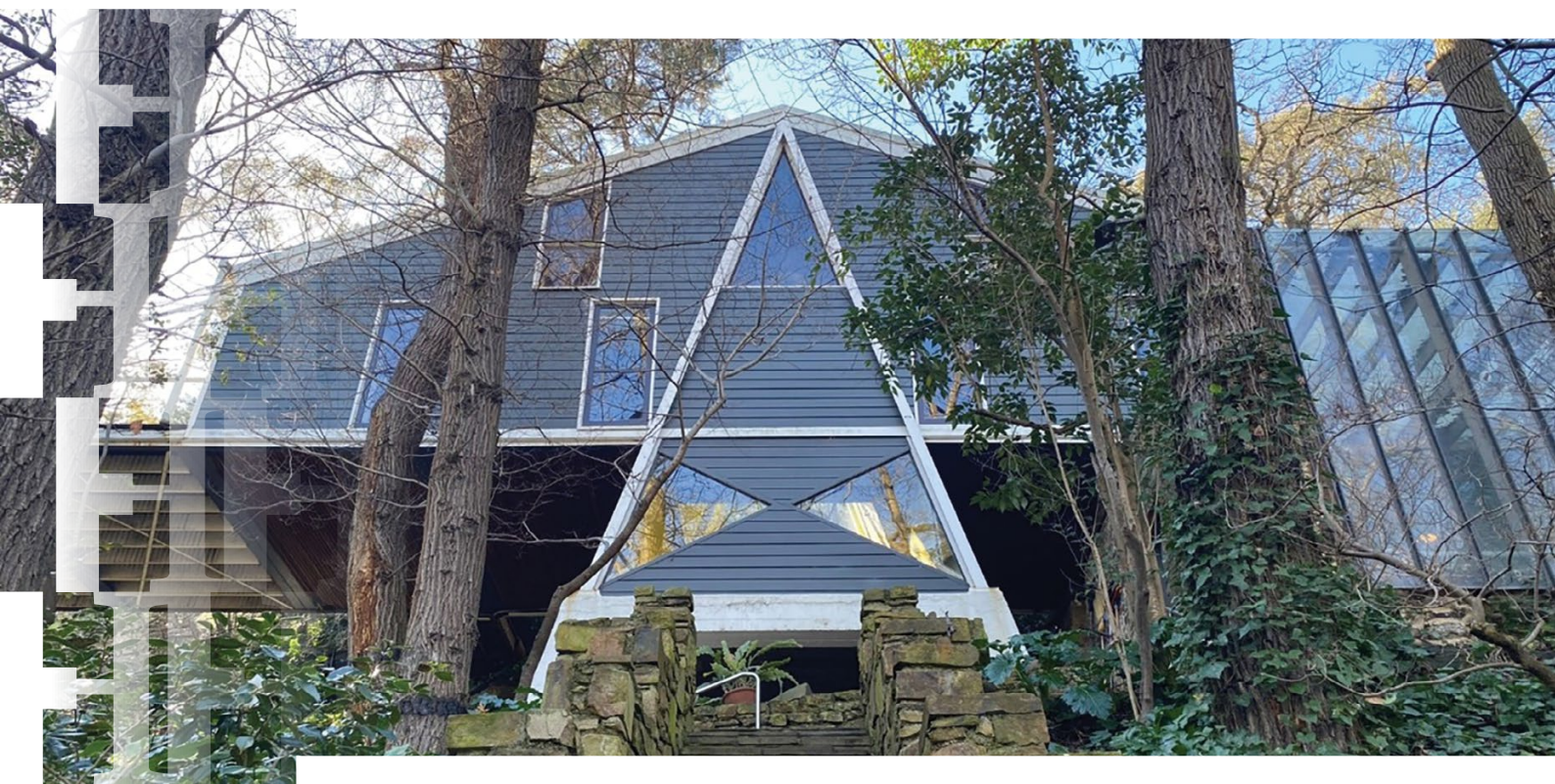
Working with organisations and the community to share knowledge and experience, develop resources, and provide greater opportunities for people to engage with and celebrate Victoria's heritage.

INNOVATION

Exploring new approaches and opportunities to ensure a sustainable future for Victoria's rich cultural heritage.

SKILLED PRACTICE

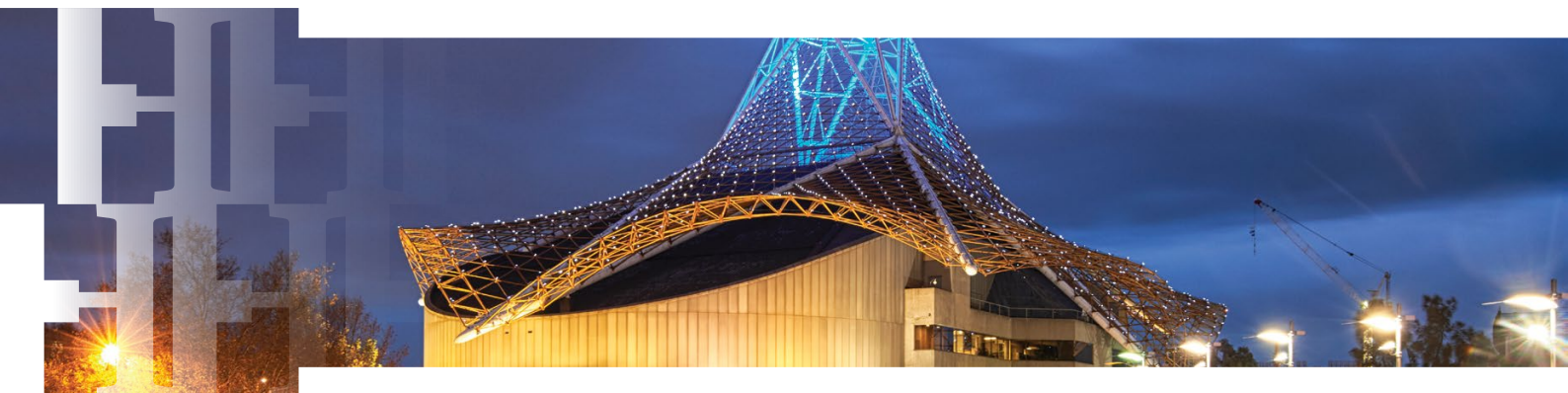
Cultivating continual improvement of our skills and resources, and supporting best practice heritage management to enable effective conservation of our valued heritage resources.



OUR OBJECTIVES

Our strategy has four key objectives that will be used to prioritise our work and achieve our vision over the next five years:

- 01** Wider understanding of the value and diversity of cultural heritage in Victoria
- 02** An accessible Victorian Heritage Register that recognises and protects state-significant cultural heritage in all its diversity
- 03** Partnerships and practices enabling inclusive, innovative and sustainable heritage conservation and management
- 04** A dynamic and respected Heritage Council, with the resources and tools to maintain its independence and effectively fulfil its statutory responsibilities



O1

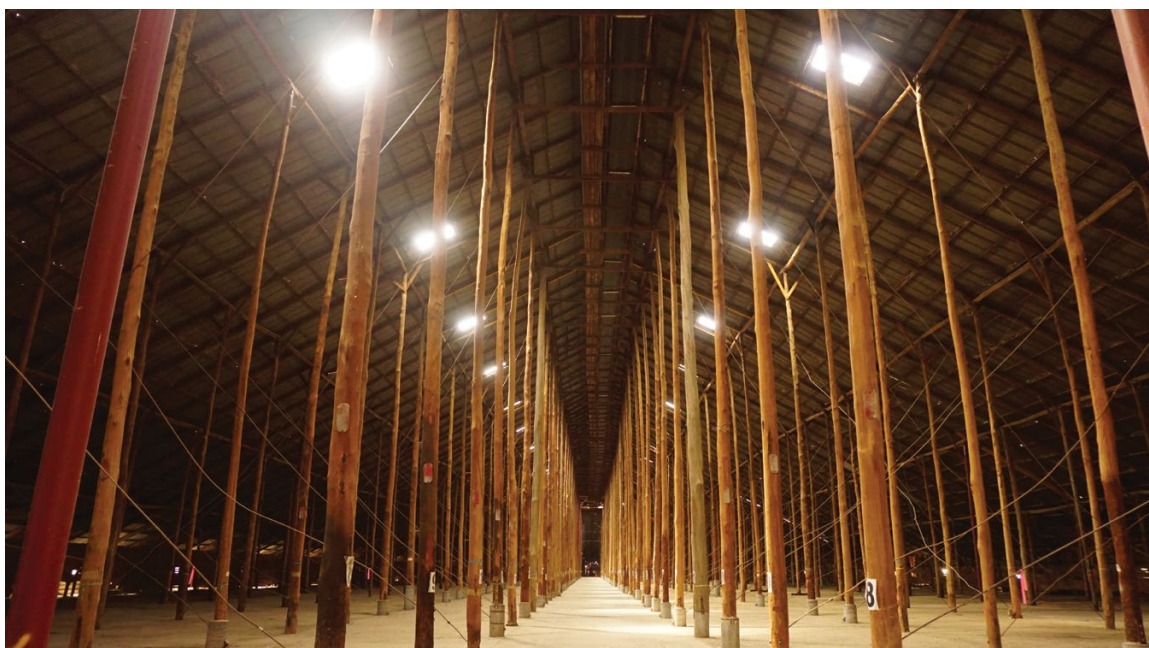
Wider understanding of the value and diversity of cultural heritage in Victoria

Victoria's heritage is rich and culturally diverse. Its significance is increasingly being recognised at National and World Heritage levels. From the fragile pearl and flame regalia of Loong the Chinese Dragon to the rustic craftsmanship of the Murtoa Stick Shed, the extensive mining landscapes of the Victorian goldfields to the living collection of the Australian Queer Archives, our heritage provides tangible links between our past, our present and our future.

Through our communications, partnerships, programs and events, we will help people connect with and share the many stories embedded in our significant heritage places and objects. This may include the stories of those places which have difficult histories. We will engage with the community, government and industry to celebrate and support innovative conservation practices and to foster greater understanding of the difference that caring for our heritage can make to people, the economy and the environment.

TOP
Victorian Arts Centre
(VHR H1500)
 | Hin Lim Photography
 © 2018

RIGHT
Marmalake/Murtoa Grain
Store (VHR H0791)
 | Heritage Victoria



ACTIONS

Actions that the Heritage Council will take in the next five years to deliver this objective are to:

- engage with government and development industry bodies to develop a shared understanding of how conservation of cultural heritage can contribute positively to the state's growth, planning and urban design strategies, climate mitigation response and housing initiatives.
- highlight the diversity and complex histories of the places and objects in the Victorian Heritage Register via the Heritage Council's website, social media channels and partnerships.
- review existing communication partnerships, sponsorships, awards and programs to evaluate their effectiveness and reach.
- conduct new, and promote existing, communication and education initiatives that recognise and improve community understanding, connection to cultural heritage and the value of heritage protection for both current and future generations.
- support initiatives to promote understanding of cultural heritage places in Victoria that are nominated for and recognised on the World Heritage List.
- promote stories of good design, innovative adaptation, reuse and conservation of heritage places through our website, social media, awards and annual events program.

TOP
Castlemaine Market
(VHR H0130)
 | Hin Lim Photography
 © 2022

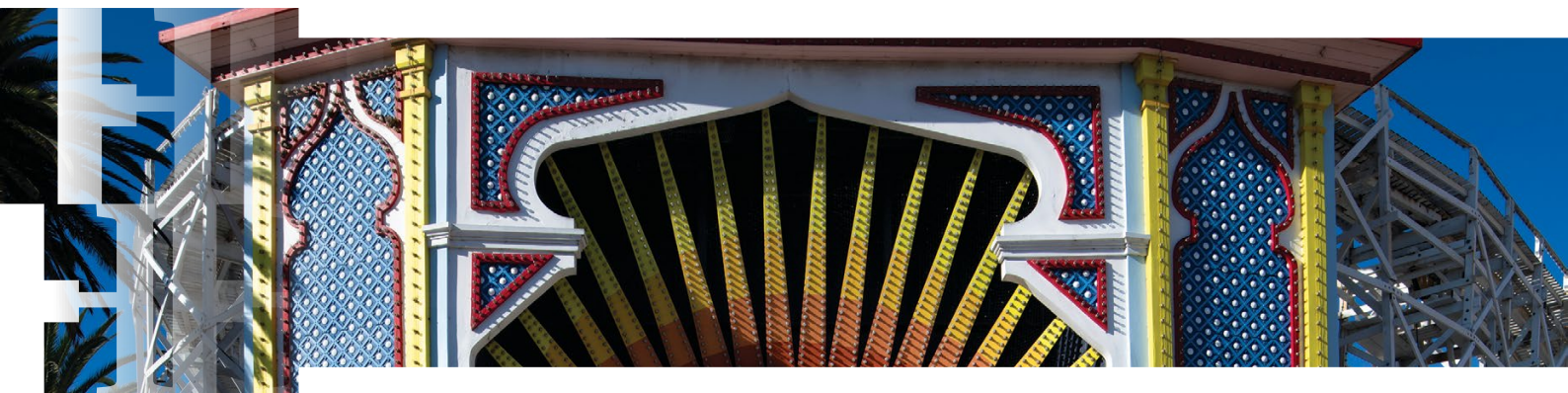


LEFT
Loong, Chinese Dragon
(VHR H2120)
 | Hin Lim Photography
 © 2022



RIGHT
Discovery of Gold
Monument (VHR H1337)
 | Hin Lim Photography
 © 2022





02

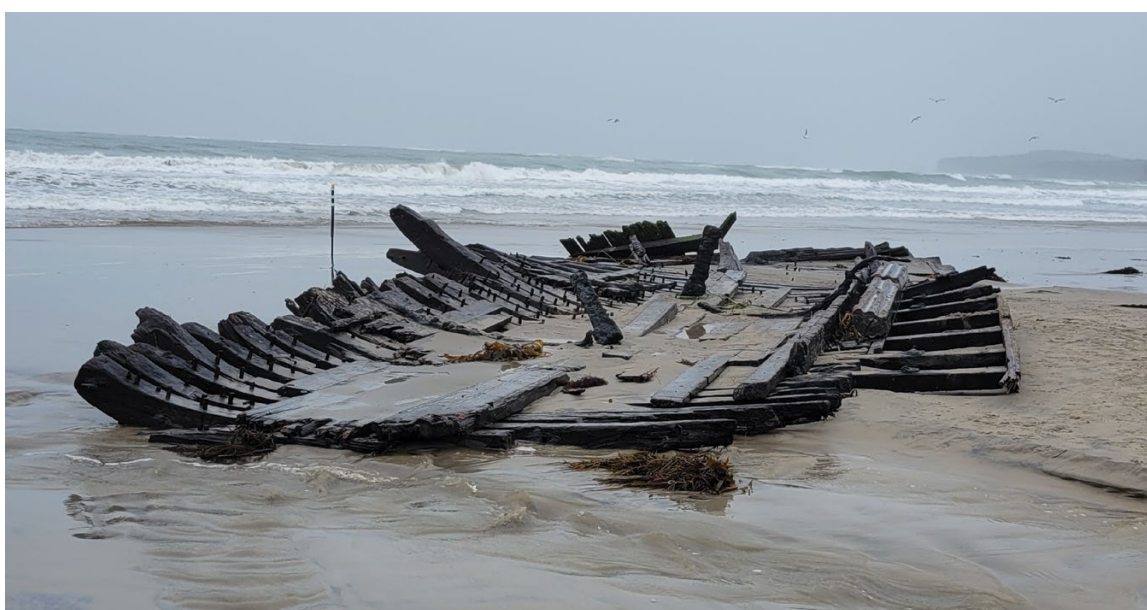
An accessible Victorian Heritage Register that recognises and protects state-significant cultural heritage in all of its diversity

The Victorian Heritage Register (the Register) provides legal protection for more than 3000 heritage places, objects and shipwrecks that are significant to the history and development of the State of Victoria. Since its establishment in 1974, the Register has evolved to reflect the many types of heritage valued by the Victorian community today.

We will ensure the Register continues to be made available online as a resource that protects Victoria's diverse state-significant cultural heritage. We will review our processes, resources and guidance to better support truth-telling in the content of the Register. In partnership with Heritage Victoria, we will develop an understanding of the condition of registered places and objects and their resilience to current and future risks, and develop the necessary processes and policies to manage and address these.

TOP
Luna Park (VHR H0938)
 | Hin Lim Photography
 © 2021

RIGHT
Amazon shipwreck site (VHR S23)
 | Heritage Victoria

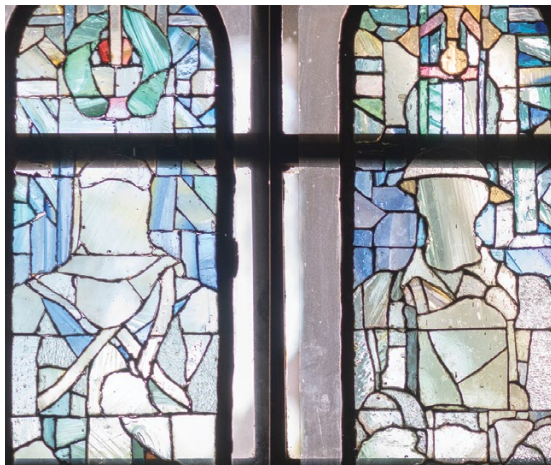


ACTIONS

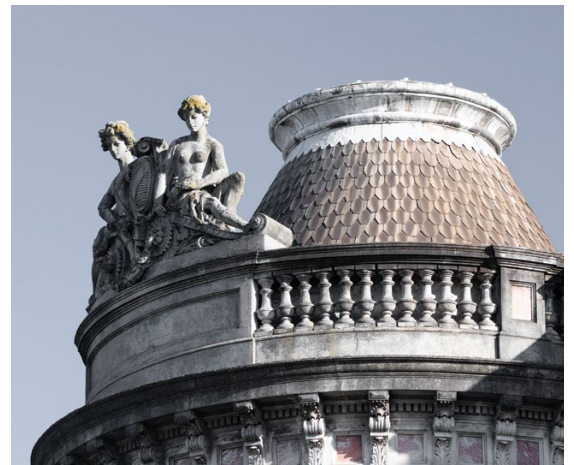
Actions that the Heritage Council will take in the next five years to deliver this objective are to:

- improve the quality of the Register's online presence by reviewing the role and functionality of the Victorian Heritage Database and its effectiveness in displaying the Register's content.
- develop a consistent and coordinated approach to truth-telling and Aboriginal cultural heritage in the processes and guidance material that support new and amended listings in the Register.
- support initiatives to increase the diversity of state-significant heritage places and objects in the Register and to improve the quality and consistency of information in listings.
- develop an evidence-based picture of state-significant government heritage assets, including their condition, climate risk and proximity to priority areas identified for development in government policies.
- work with Heritage Victoria to review options for integrating climate awareness, adaptation and mitigation in shared regulatory processes relating to places and objects in the Register, identify gaps in related conservation guidelines and agree on a timeframe and approach for addressing the priority areas.

LEFT
Waller House &
Collection (VHR Ho617)
| Hin Lim Photography
© 2024



RIGHT
Labassa (VHR Ho135)
| Hin Lim Photography
© 2024

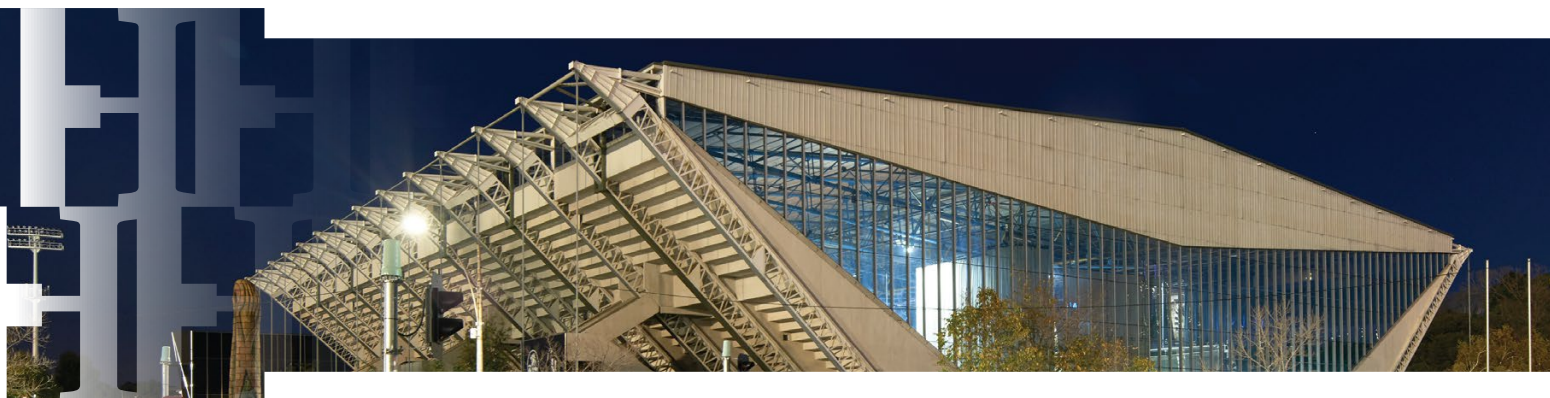


Under section 8 of the *Heritage Act 2017*, the Victorian Heritage Register does not include a place or object 'of cultural heritage significance only on the ground of its association with Aboriginal tradition', such as Aboriginal archaeological sites, scarred trees and rock art. These places and objects are protected under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and included in the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register.

The Victorian Heritage Register does include places and objects of cultural heritage significance to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, for example the Harry Johns Boxing Troupe Collection (VHR H2435), Tyntynder Homestead near Swan Hill (VHR H2353) and the Wombeetch Puyuun Grave Monument and Dawson Family Grave in Camperdown (VHR H2423).

RIGHT
Wombeetch Puyuun
Grave Monument &
Dawson Family Grave
(VHR H2423)
| Heritage Victoria





03

Partnerships and practices enabling inclusive, innovative and sustainable heritage conservation and management

Our cultural heritage contributes to our identity, our sense of place and our economy. Its conservation and management is a shared responsibility in which the community, government, industry, the education and training sector, and peak heritage organisations such as the National Trust and Australia ICOMOS, all have a part to play.

To improve the connections between Victorians and their heritage, we will embrace a forward-looking perspective and collaborative partnerships to respond to changing community needs and values, and increasing environmental challenges. We will advocate proactive approaches to heritage management and adaptive reuse, and support policies and practices that will ensure our shared heritage resources remain as a sustainable and dynamic part of our future.

TOP
Olympic Swimming Stadium (VHR H1977)
 | Hin Lim Photography
 © 2018

RIGHT
Eastern Park & Geelong Botanic Gardens (VHR H2095)
 | Hin Lim Photography
 © 2020



ACTIONS

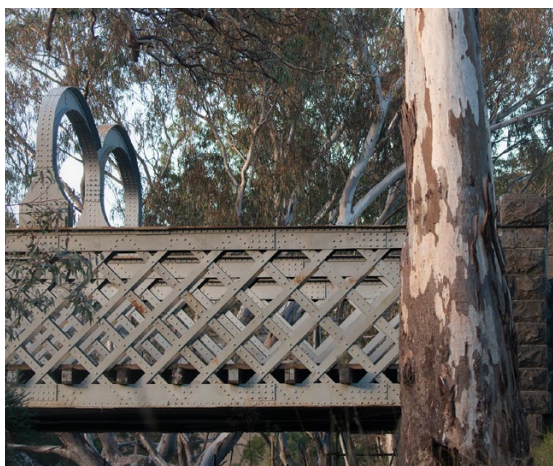
Actions that the Heritage Council will take in the next five years to deliver this objective are to:

- collaborate with the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council, Heritage Victoria and First Peoples – State Relations to ensure that our heritage systems reflect a holistic view of Victoria’s history and facilitate a common approach that enables appropriate management of places where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal histories coincide or co-exist.
- deliver the commitments endorsed in our 2024 Climate Action Plan.
- facilitate best-practice local heritage management and knowledge-sharing through the annual Local Government Heritage Forum and the work of the Local Government Specialist Committee.
- support Heritage Victoria in encouraging Victorian Government agencies to become exemplary heritage stewards and to make conservation of their heritage assets an integral part of their core business.
- build relationships and collaborative partnerships with relevant organisations to encourage best-practice cultural heritage research, guidance and skills development, especially in the areas of sustainable design, climate resilience, adaptive reuse and traditional trades.
- engage with heritage councils and state agencies across Australia to develop a consistent message regarding the value of heritage and how cultural heritage conservation is an integral part of enabling the nation’s housing and development growth aspirations, and in achieving climate adaptation goals.

TOP
Rockbank Inn
(VHR H1933)
| Heritage Victoria

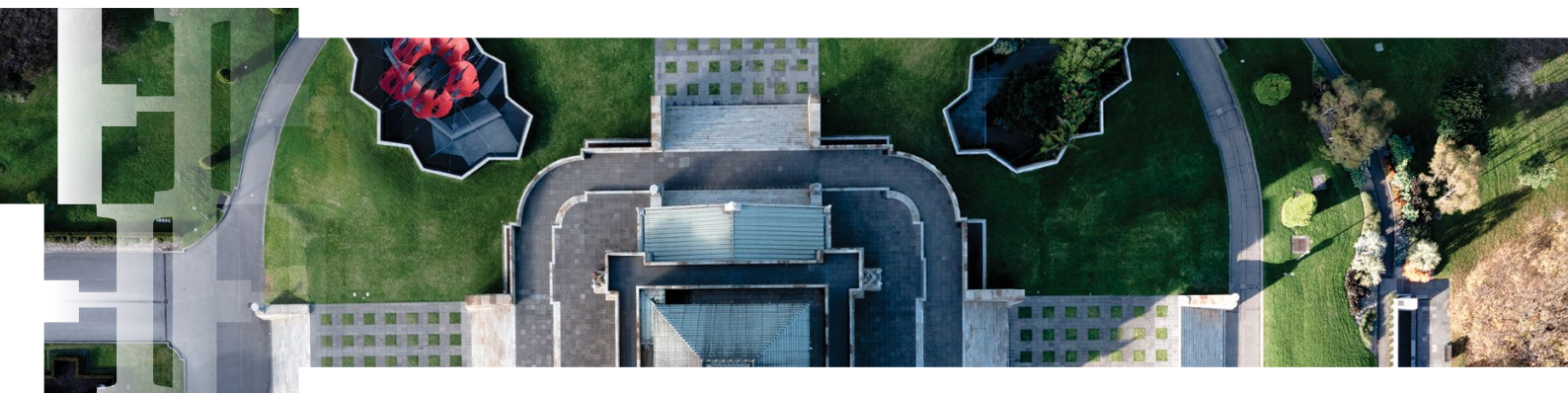


LEFT
Redesdale Bridge
(VHR H1419)
| Hin Lim Photography
© 2022



RIGHT
Rippon Lea (VHR Ho614)
| Hin Lim Photography
© 2024





04

A dynamic and respected Heritage Council, with the resources and tools to maintain its independence and effectively fulfil its statutory responsibilities

By leading in the recognition and protection of Victoria's state-significant cultural heritage, we aim to inspire others to recognise our shared cultural heritage as a source of community identity and enrichment.

We will keep informed of issues arising in the cultural heritage and planning sectors so that we can proactively provide independent advice to all levels of government. We will continue to review and improve our processes, our training and our supporting technologies so that our work remains transparent, efficient and effective, to fulfil our statutory functions under the *Heritage Act 2017*.

TOP
**Shrine of Remembrance
(VHR Ho848)**
| Hin Lim Photography
© 2024

LEFT
**Police Headquarters
Complex (VHR Ho913)**
| Hin Lim Photography
© 2018

RIGHT
**Former Mining Exchange
(VHR Ho391)**
| Hin Lim Photography
© 2022

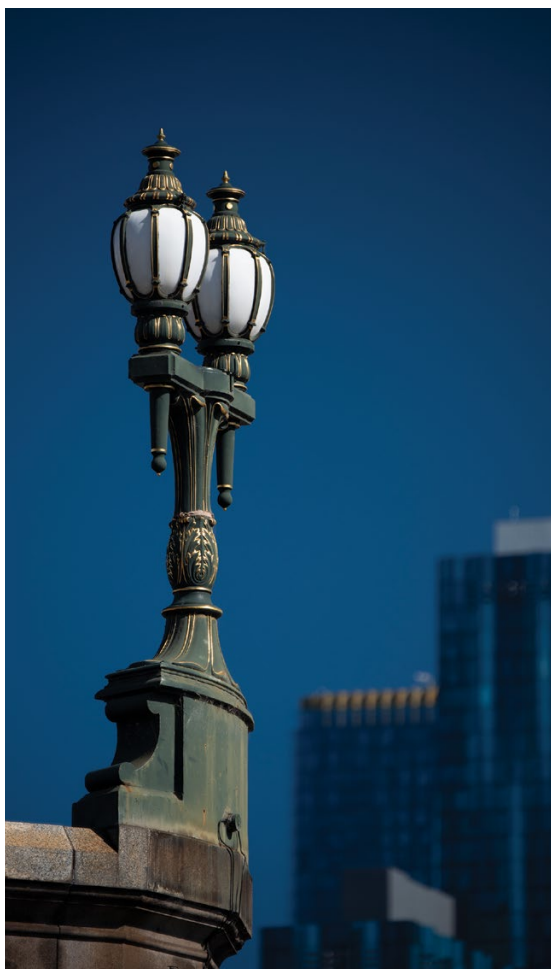


ACTIONS

Actions that the Heritage Council will take in the next five years to deliver this objective are to:

- proactively contribute and respond to government programs, policies and priorities that have implications for the funding and conservation of the state's cultural heritage, including for places of potential World Heritage significance, providing robust and effective expert advice to the Minister and government.
- fulfil our statutory obligations in making determinations in relation to the Victorian Heritage Register and in conducting reviews of Heritage Victoria Executive Director's decisions, in accordance with the *Heritage Act 2017*.
- conduct a training needs analysis to improve the induction of new members and identify priority areas of focus for more experienced members.
- monitor the impact of the 2024 Heritage Act amendments and, where necessary, revise procedures, guidelines and protocols to improve their clarity and effectiveness, and advocate for appropriate future changes.
- conduct a user review of Heritage Council regulatory systems and processes to identify improvements for stakeholders and Heritage Council operations.
- continue to review Heritage Council policies, guidance, templates and governance materials so that the Heritage Council maintains timely and efficient decision making.
- investigate options for an effective electronic resource for members to access Heritage Council material necessary for internal business.

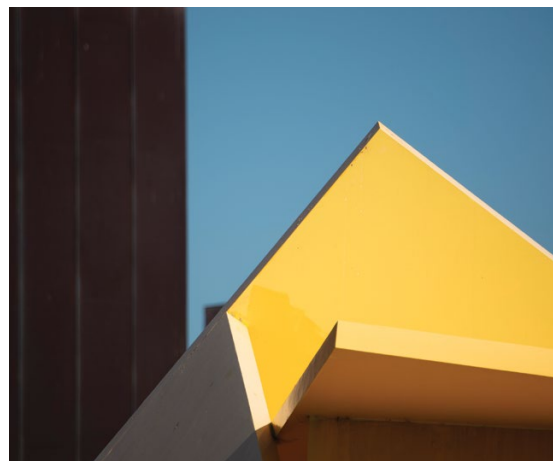
LEFT
Princes Bridge
(VHR H1447)
| Hin Lim Photography
© 2021



TOP RIGHT
Sailors' Rest Electric
Sign (VHR H2338)
| Hin Lim Photography
© 2020



BOTTOM RIGHT
Vault (VHR H2450)
| Hin Lim Photography
© 2025



Implementing this strategy

The Heritage Council will implement this strategic plan progressively over the next five years (2026 to 2030).

RIGHT
Flinders Street Railway Station Complex
(VHR H1083)

| Hin Lim Photography
© 2023

BELOW
Brighton Bathing Boxes and Dendy Street Beach
(VHR H2369)

| Hin Lim Photography
© 2018

The implementation program will be determined each year as part of the development of the Heritage Council's annual corporate plan. It will have regard to available resources, the constraints of the Heritage Council's statutory workload, relevant government priorities, and other opportunities that arise. This will provide flexibility and allow the Heritage Council to necessarily adapt to changing circumstances.

The Heritage Council will report its progress in achieving the objectives and actions as part of its published annual report.



