

Heritage Council Determination

Determination date	2 October 2025
Place/Object name	Shipping Control Tower
Location	North Wharf Road, Docklands, Melbourne City, Wurundjeri Country
VHR number	H2467
Category	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 **2 October 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.

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 Shipping Control Tower, located at North Wharf Road, Docklands, Melbourne City, Wurundjeri Country ('the Place') in the Victorian Heritage Register ('VHR'). On **14 July 2025** the Executive Director made the Recommendation to the Heritage Council that the Place be included in the VHR. The Recommendation was advertised publicly for a period of 60 days, beginning on **18 July 2025**.

Section 44 submissions

During the 60-day public advertisement period, **one** submission was received pursuant to section 44 of the *Heritage Act 2017*. No request for a hearing was received. The submission is summarised below:

- **Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network** ('MMHN') made a submission in response to the Executive Director's Recommendation, which:
 - supported the inclusion of the Place in the VHR; and
 - did not support the categories of works/activities able to be carried out without a permit (specific permit exemptions) recommended by the Executive Director; and
 - suggested additional information to be included in the Place 'Description' provided on page 3 of the Executive Director's Recommendation; and
 - queried aspects of the assessment conducted in the Executive Director's Recommendation in relation to the 'Criteria for Registration'; and
 - suggested that the proposed 'Extent of Registration' be reviewed raising concerns that the proposed area 'does not offer adequate protection' for the Place; and
 - requested that 'the small park (ECO)' located at the tip of North Warf be included in the registration and that necessary steps are taken to re-name ECO park.

The Executive Director was provided with a copy of the submissions and responded to the submission made by MMHN. In response to MMHN's submission, the Executive Director advised the Heritage Council that it supported MMHN's view that the Place's role in delivering public benefit as an information service to the community, particularly at a time when shipping news was vital, contributed to the Place's cultural heritage significance. The Executive Director also supported MMHN's view that the Place constitutes evidence of the importance of maritime trade in driving Victoria's prosperity. It was the view of the Executive Director that this information could be integrated into the summary of how the Place satisfied Criterion A at State-level, within the Statement of Significance for the Place. It was also the Executive Director's view that the ECO park did not need to be added to the extent of registration, mindful of the role of that land as a park.

The Executive Director also expressed support for minor changes to the proposed specific permit exemptions for the Place, and supported limiting permit exemption 8 to the maintenance, repair and removal – but not installation – of lighting poles. The Executive Director further agreed to clarifying the language of permit exemption 9. The Executive Director did not express support for making changes to permit exemption 7 relating to ground-level works, advising that the intention of this proposed exemption was to enable the introduction of roadways, landscaping and the like as required.

The Place

Description

Extracted verbatim from page 3 of the Executive Director's Recommendation:

The Shipping Control Tower is located at the far west end of the south arm of Victoria Dock within the Victoria Harbour precinct of Docklands in central Melbourne. The location can be accessed by either North Wharf Road or the Victoria Harbour promenade. The strategic location of the tower at the intersection of the entrance to Victoria Harbour (formerly Victoria Dock) and the Yarra River, enabled direct visual and electronic connection to Melbourne's major ports and shipping routes. The Shipping Control Tower is situated immediately adjacent to the VHR extent of registration for Victoria Dock (VHR H1720). The south arm of Victoria Harbour is being gradually redeveloped, in keeping with long-term plans for Docklands.

The Shipping Control Tower is a 40-metre-tall reinforced concrete tower that comprises a two-level upper structure atop two concrete pylons. The more substantial of the pylons contains a lift well that was used to access the upper levels, which can also be reached by external switchback stairs. The upper structure cantilevers out from the supporting pylons. The uppermost level housed the operations room and features angled metal-framed glazing on all elevations providing uninterrupted views of the port and river. This level is entirely encircled by a continuous external walkway with metal balustrading. The lower level, designed to provide staff accommodation and amenities, also features continuous glazing to all elevations. Equipment and many internal fixtures have been removed.

The larger of the pylons extends through to the roof and provides a rostrum for a variety of communication and signalling equipment on the roof as well as a crow's nest. These have been recently reconditioned. The base of the tower is screened by a recently installed security fence. The tower recently underwent a program of maintenance and repair works to both the interior and exterior.

Heritage Council's findings

State-level cultural heritage significance

The Heritage Council's findings accord with the Executive Director's Recommendation, and information provided by the Executive Director in response to the submission received by MMHN in accordance with section 44 of the *Heritage Act 2017*.

The Heritage Council agrees that the Place is historically significant as the centre for control of shipping in and around the Port of Melbourne from the 1960s to the 1990s, and accepts that the Place is symbolic of efforts to expand and modernise the Port in the middle decades of the twentieth century, and demonstrates the demands created by Victoria's busiest cargo docks. The Heritage Council supports the addition of further information relating to the Place's historical significance as submitted by MMHN, as set out above.

The Heritage Council agrees that the Place is significant as a notable example of a control tower in Victoria, and that it is a particularly historically relevant example, dating from a key period in the growth and modernisation of port facilities. The Heritage Council finds that the Place's design, location and prominence enable the class and its function to be well understood.

The Heritage Council determines that the Place meets the following criteria for assessment in the Heritage Council's *Victorian Heritage Register Criteria and Threshold Guidelines (Attachment 1)* at State-level:

- **Criterion A** – Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.
- **Criterion D** – Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

Extent of Registration

The Heritage Council accepts the Executive Director's position with respect to the extent of registration, so as to align with the exhibited Recommendation. It is not within the Heritage Council's scope to amend the name of that land outside the registered extent (for example, the ECO park).

The Extent of Registration is provided as **Attachment 2** and includes all of the Place shown hatched on Diagram 2467 encompassing part of Crown Allotment 24 Section 1B Parish of Doutta Galla. The extent of registration abuts the Victoria Dock registration (VHR H1720) to the north, extends 4m from the widest part of the tower to the east and to the south, and to the land parcel boundary to the west.

Permit exemptions

The Heritage Council determined specific permit exemptions for works or activities which would not harm the cultural heritage significance of the Shipping Control Tower (**Attachment 3**).

Conclusion

The Heritage Council of Victoria determined on **2 October 2025**, in accordance with section 49(1)(a) of the *Heritage Act 2017*, that the Shipping Control Tower is to be included in the Victorian Heritage Register in the category of 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.

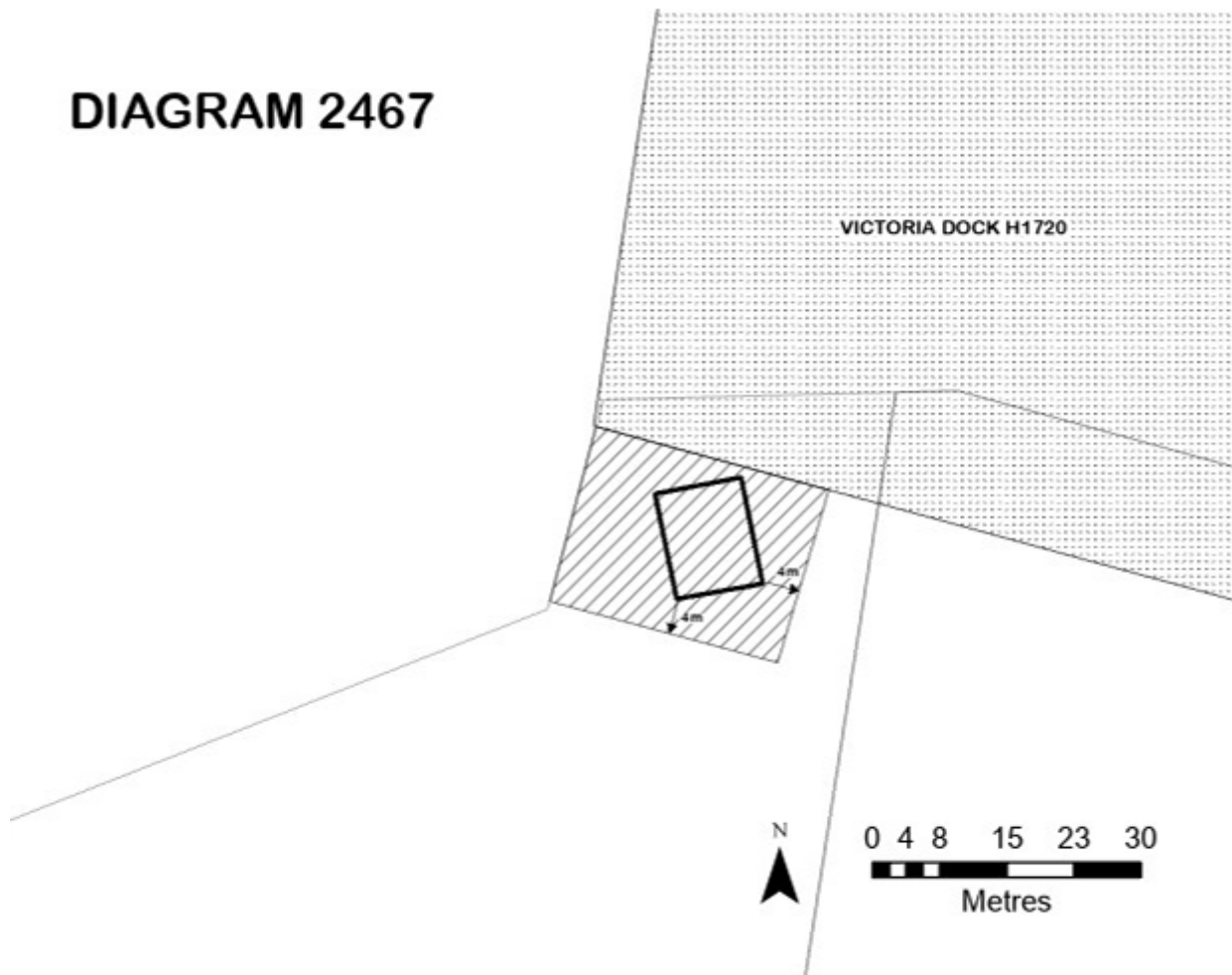
These were adopted by the Heritage Council at its meeting on 1 December 2022, and replace the previous criteria adopted by the Heritage Council on 6 December 2012.

Attachment 2

Extent of Registration

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 2467 encompassing part of Crown Allotment 24 Section 1B Parish of Dootta Galla. The extent of registration abuts the Victoria Dock registration (VHR H1720) to the north, extends 4m from the widest part of the tower to the east and to the south, and to the land parcel boundary to the west.

DIAGRAM 2467



Attachment 3

Categories of Works or Activities which may be undertaken without a Permit (Permit exemptions)

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*.

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 [insert place / object name] 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

Shipping Control Tower

1. Repairs, maintenance and replacement of glazing, window frames and doors, provided the appearance of the control tower is not permanently altered and the retention of early or original physical fabric is maximised.
2. Replacement of lift and mechanisms within existing lift shaft.

Security and safety

3. Installation of lighting, alarms, surveillance systems and other security devices required to secure the site and prevent unauthorised access.
4. Installation of fire detection and prevention systems.
5. Maintenance, repair, removal, and installation of security hoarding and fencing surrounding the base of the tower to secure the site and prevent unauthorised access, provided it is no more than four metres high.

Area surrounding the Shipping Control Tower

6. All sub-surface works, provided that the surface treatment is reinstated on the completion of works.

7. All ground-level works and activities (including hard and soft landscaping, and construction of roadways/laneways and the like) provided they do not:
 - involve the construction of new buildings
 - introduce new features greater than two metres above ground level
 - cause harm to the physical fabric of the Shipping Control Tower (for example, by introducing poor drainage).
8. Maintenance, repair and removal of light poles.
9. Maintenance, repair, removal and installation of signage (not including interpretive and advertising signage) provided it is not attached to the Shipping Control Tower. The installation of any temporary or permanent interpretive and advertising signage, including electronic signage, will require separate approval under Part 5 of the *Heritage Act 2017*.
10. All works to wharves, including removal, remediation and replacement.

Other buildings and structures

11. Demolition and removal of buildings and structures other than the Shipping Control Tower within the extent of registration.

Events and activation activities

12. Art installations and activation activities, provided they:
 - are temporary (in place for no more than three months annually)
 - do not alter the physical fabric of the Shipping Control Tower.