

KELLEHERS AUSTRALIA

In-House Memorandum

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Heritage: Finding the Significance

Kellehers Australia was recently involved in an important case concerning the nomination of a place on the Victorian Heritage Register. The case concerned the significance of a temporary landmark in the formative years of one of Victoria's many gold rush towns. The site evoked thoughts of expectant prospectors travelling *en masse* in carts along primitive mud bogged roads and dirt tracks in search of their fortune.

Significant assessment criteria had to be satisfied before the site could be registered. Romantic thoughts alone were not enough to secure the site's place on the Victorian Heritage Register.

The Victorian Heritage Register

Heritage Victoria is tasked with ensuring that diverse cultural heritage of state significance is enjoyed, managed and protected for current and future generations. Its primary line of defence is registration on the Victorian Heritage Register.

The Register was established in 1995 pursuant to the *Victorian Heritage Act*. It keeps records of places of historical, archaeological and heritage significance, including protected zones and places included on the World Heritage List¹.

Under the *Heritage Act*, a "place" can include a building, garden, a tree, archaeological or other site of historic significance. But it can also include the remains of a ship or part of a ship or a wider precinct.

The Executive Director of Heritage Victoria, by provisions of the *Heritage Act*, is required to conduct an assessment. Threshold criteria assist in this task and include a site's:

1. *Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history;*
2. *Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history;*
3. *Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history;*
4. *Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects;*
5. *Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics;*
6. *Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period;*
7. *Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons; and*
8. *Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history².*

Using these criteria, the Executive Director recommends whether a place or object should be registered, with referral to the Heritage Council as prescribed by the *Heritage Act*.

Given key legislative objectives to ensure that Victoria's diverse cultural heritage is enjoyed, managed and protected for current and future generations, the Heritage Register and the criteria for State assessment are a key step in achieving this.

Cameron Algie and Michael Griffiths
31 March 2015

1 s20(1), Heritage Act 1995 (Vic).

2 <http://heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/heritage-protection/criteria-and-thresholds-for-inclusion/>.

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