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HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT RELOCATABLE PONTOON
VHR H24-19: LAKE WENDOUREE
PREPARED ON BEHALF OF CITY OF BALLARAT

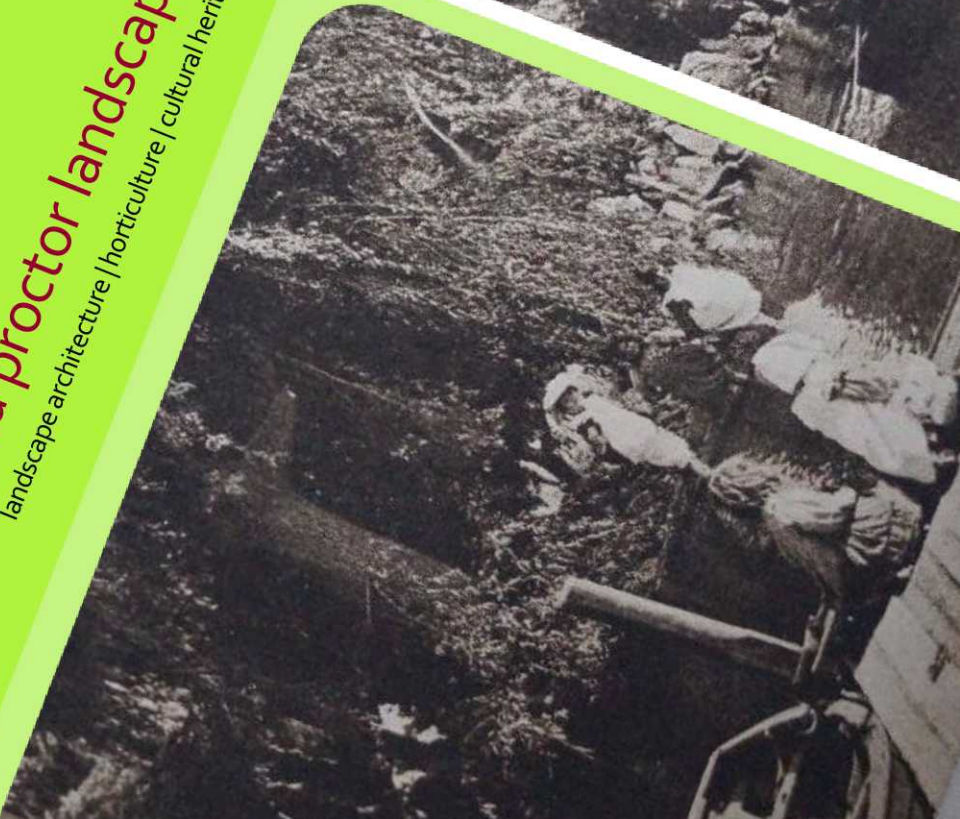


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1. Introduction

This Heritage Impact Statement has been prepared on behalf of the City of Ballarat to support the Heritage Victoria permit application for a relocatable Pontoon to be installed along the edge of Lake Wendouree. It assesses the impact, if any, of the works to the identified cultural heritage values of Lake Wendouree, Ballarat. The permit is to allow the pontoon to be relocated around the lake at suitable intervals to facilitate casual flyfishing and more formal flyfishing events. At all times the pontoon will function as temporary infrastructure with no modification to existing heritage fabric and with all works being completely reversible. The timeline for the installation of the current, not permanently fixed, pontoon is similar to that of the heritage registration of the Lake, and currently sits within the Lake foreshore. Heritage Victoria have confirmed that it can remain in place as unauthorised works. If the pontoon was to be relocated every 21 days then it would fall under category 10.0 of the Heritage Victoria General Permit Exemptions (December 2022) and no further application would be required, however City of Ballarat are seeking a permit to allow more flexible operation. ¹

Lake Wendouree is an urban lake of approximately 238 hectares developed from pre-colonial wetlands lying in the heart of Ballarat. The lake is made up of a, rowing course, surrounding public reserve with mature trees, historic boat sheds, monuments and esplanades and was added to the Heritage Register in September 2022 as H2419. The Ballarat Botanical Gardens on the western bank of Lake Wendouree has been registered since 2010 (H2252).

The HIS has been prepared following pre application email correspondence with Jessica Hood of Heritage Victoria on January 11th 2024 and is guided by the outcomes of this meeting. The application number for these works is P39197.

The relocatable pontoon project has been reviewed and is considered to be consistent with the identified heritage values of Lake Wendouree, as an identified part of the historic significance of the lake is *"its associations with the development of water-based sports and recreation in Victoria"* with the fly-fishing clubs specifically mentioned in the heritage registration. The lake has long been a focus of recreational fishing, with the Fish Hatchery being located within the adjacent Botanical Gardens since 1873.

2. Registration Summary

Address:	Lake Wendouree, Ballarat
Name:	Lake Wendouree
Supporting the Permit application for:	Installation and regular relocation of the floating Pontoon
Date:	April 2024
VHR Number:	H2419

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On behalf of: City of Ballarat

World Heritage: The site is not in a World Heritage Environs area

Adjacent Sites: Ballarat Botanical Gardens H2252

Additional legislation: None applicable. Works will need to comply with the National Construction Code (NCC) 2022 and any local City of Ballarat requirements where applicable.

World Heritage: Lake Wendouree is not within a designated World Heritage environs area

3. Existing Conditions of Lake Wendouree

History

Prior to European colonisation, the area that would come to be known as Lake Wendouree was comprised of natural wetlands and open grassy plains in the traditional lands of the Wadawurrung people. The Burrumbeet balug clan in particular occupied the lands around Ballarat and Lake Wendouree.

While the area was 'settled' by Yuille and Anderson for sheep runs, it was the 1851 discovery of gold in the hills which led to the establishing of Ballarat as a boom town. The intense growth due to the lure of gold swiftly displaced the Indigenous people from the land, and a pipeline connected the swamp to the town in order to provide drinking water. A parcel of land along the western side of the lake, formally police paddocks, was set aside to be Ballarat's botanical garden in 1857. Further pipes connected the swamp to Kirk's Reservoir, in order to keep the water levels consistent, and this reliable supply of clean water attracted various industries to set up along its edge. By 1862, the water supply was no longer sufficient for the township of Ballarat. Drinking water was piped straight from Kirk's Reservoir, and the lake swiftly became an area for leisure and recreation.

The 1860s saw swift development of Lake Wendouree. The Ballarat Rowing Club, the second oldest rowing club in Australia, was founded, and by the mid-60s the first boat sheds were erected on the lake shores. Paddle steamers traversed the waters from the 1860s to the 1960s, bringing many people from the township to the botanic gardens. By 1869, the swamp became officially known as Lake Wendouree.

Development continued through the rest of the 19th century, with the banks raised and shoreline altered to improve its usage by visitors. The yacht club was established, and the Ballarat Fish Acclimatisation Society were established in the Botanical Gardens from 1873 and have continued to release trout and carp into the lake for fishing. The circumference of the lake was planted with thousands of trees for the enjoyment of those promenading along the shore, and an electric tramline was built likewise around the perimeter of the lake.

Lake Wendouree hosted the rowing, canoeing and kayaking events for the 1956 Olympic games.

Over the course of its history, the lake has dried out several times due to drought. Work has been completed in recent years to secure the water levels of the lake.

For a full history of the natural area and development of Lake Wendouree, refer to the heritage registration H2419.

Existing Conditions

Lake Wendouree is an artificial urban lake of approximately 238 hectares lying within Ballarat, just to the north-west of the city centre. It is bound by Wendouree Parade, which circles the perimeter, and the Ballarat Botanical Gardens (H2252) line the majority of the western shore. The remaining surrounds are residential in nature, the buildings ranging from historic to modern in style and structure.

The shoreline is planted with mature trees exotic and native, evergreen and deciduous, which provide shade and picturesque character to the Steve Moneghetti walking track which likewise circles the lake. Several man-made islands constructed early in the lake's development sit along the western shore, featuring mature and semi-mature plantings which add to the picturesque nature of the area, and provide excellent habitat for wetlands birds and wildlife. At the northern end these form part of Fairyland; a sequence of paths and bridges between islands which has been designed and planted an enchanting, pseudo-natural corridor set apart from the Steven Moneghetti walking track.

The Ballarat Botanical Gardens adds to the character of the western shore. Views from within the garden looking out to the lake are framed by mature trees, and likewise views from the lake looking toward the gardens are green and picturesque. The remaining portions of the lake are a mix of open parkland and buildings such as historic boat sheds and the Yacht club.

The lake has dried out several times in recorded history due to drought, which severely impacted its usage as a place for recreation, leisure and water sports. An initiative to harvest stormwater has been put in place and is considered sufficient to maintain the lake's water levels at a useable level until 2040 and beyond.



Figure 1: Indicative photo essay around Lake Wendouree.

4. Cultural Heritage Values

1994 Lake Wendouree Heritage Conservation Analysis and Landscape Master Plan

The 1994 Heritage Conservation Analysis and Landscape Master Plan for Lake Wendouree was the first of its kind for any park or reserve in Ballarat, recognising the Lake's importance as a recreational and cultural asset. Many of the recommendations made in this plan have been implemented and are still relevant, however the document is now 30 years old and an updated Conservation Management Plan is required.

2017 Lake Wendouree Master Plan

The 2017 Master Plan follows on from the 1994, taking many of the original recommendations and updating them to reflect the increase in the city's population and the community's desires and expectations for the lake. This is a comprehensive plan, providing policies lake health and water quality, environment and biodiversity, social usage for recreation, events and activities, and water sports, the installation, maintenance and use of buildings such as the boatsheds, facilities and amenities, and preservation of cultural heritage where understood.

This plan precedes Lake Wendouree's listing on the Victorian Heritage Register, and so does not account for the requirements of heritage conservation. In addition, it treats the Ballarat Botanical Gardens (H2252) as being part of the Lake Wendouree precinct. A review of the Ballarat Botanical Gardens portions is currently underway and a new Conservation Management Plan for the Ballarat Botanical Gardens is nearing completion. In lieu of an updated assessment of Lake Wendouree, the Heritage Victoria registration and findings of the Botanical Gardens CMP are being used to establish the values of the place.

Lake Wendouree Statement of Significance (Victorian Heritage Register Report H2419)

For completeness, a copy of the Heritage Victoria Statement of Significance is reproduced here. This document was last updated on September 1, 2022.

What is significant?

Lake Wendouree is a substantial urban lake of approximately 238 hectares, which was developed from existing wetlands from the 1850s. The place comprises the lake, its rowing course, surrounding public reserve with numerous mature trees, and significant built features including historic boat sheds, monuments and esplanades.

How is it significant?

Lake Wendouree is of historical and aesthetic significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

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

Criterion E Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

Why is it significant?

Lake Wendouree is historically significant for its associations with the development of water-based sports and recreation in Victoria. Initially known as 'Yuille's Swamp', it has been a popular rowing and boating site since the 1860s. Subsequent improvements to the lake and its surrounding reserve facilitated the development of recreational groups, including rowing and yachting clubs, fly fishing clubs and commercial paddle steamers, as well as the construction of their associated boat sheds. Lake Wendouree has retained an array of boat sheds and other features which enable the popularity of water-based sports and recreation during key periods the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to be fully appreciated. These historic uses, many of them ongoing, are complemented by the picturesque landscape surrounds of the lake which, along with the adjacent Ballarat Botanical Gardens (VHR H2252), has been a popular destination for leisure activities since the mid-nineteenth century. [Criterion A]

Lake Wendouree is also historically significant for its close association with the 1956 Olympic Games, which were predominantly held in metropolitan Melbourne. Lake Wendouree was the only Olympic venue in regional Victoria, selected for its substantial scale which enabled up to ten rowing or canoeing crews to race abreast. Its role in the 1956 Olympics is evident in the location and alignment of the existing rowing course, which was dredged specifically for the rowing and canoeing competitions for that event. Lake Wendouree's central role in the 1956 Olympic Games can also be appreciated in the associated monument on the south-western shore. [Criterion A]

Lake Wendouree is significant as a notable example of an urban lake in Victoria. It is a substantial example that exhibits fine landscape characteristics, particular in its array of mature trees. Its early boat sheds, tram and picnic shelters, park furniture, monuments and statuary are of a higher degree of historical relevance than those found at other urban lakes. [Criterion D]

Lake Wendouree is aesthetically significant as a landscape that has been carefully designed and developed from the mid-nineteenth century to provide a distinctive and highly appealing sensory experience. This is characterised by uninterrupted vistas across the lake surface and a sense of enclosure from the surrounding city by numerous mature exotic trees. Winding pathways and historic boatsheds contribute to the scenic visual qualities of the place and it is complemented by the adjacent Ballarat Botanical Gardens (VHR H2252). It has inspired numerous artworks since at least the 1870s, particularly photography and painting. Artistic renderings of Lake Wendouree typically depict the picturesque qualities of activities carried out at the lake, such as sailing, rowing, fishing and walking. [Criterion E]

5. The Proposed Works

The permit application is for the installation of a relocatable floating Pontoon for fly fishing on Lake Wendouree. The following description of the works, including background was provided by Bernard Blood, Supervisor Lake Wendouree for the City of Ballarat and edited for consistency and based on site observations.

Description and Purpose of Works

The pontoon is funded by Fishiers Victoria and came about through a request from fly fishers for a pontoon to fly fish off on the north side of the Lake and hold training sessions. The reason for the north side of the Lake is that it offers excellent fly-fishing opportunities and is a very utilised location. This side of the lake has the path close to waterline and causes a major hazard to people using the path with the flicking of the line over the walking path. Installing a floating pontoon eliminates this risk as it allows fly fishers to fish away from the path and perpendicular to the shore line (see Figure 2).

The use of float bricks to form the ponton were chosen as they offer the advantage of not need permanent infrastructure, are easily moved to support other events, configuration can be changed, modules have been used for rowing for several years not new to Lake. This structure can be easily removed from the Lake meaning works are completely reversable.



Figure 2: Relocatable pontoon on Lake Wendouree

Location of proposed pontoon:

The Pontoon will be relocated around Lake Wendouree at various locations along the shoreline, and possibly floated off shore from time to time. Location will be in accordance with Section 8.

Description of the Works

- Floating pontoon of two (maximum three) 17.5 x 4.3m grey float bricks (see Figure 2 and Figure 4).
- Configuration generally to be in a T shape (Figure 4) but occasionally reconfigured to support specific uses, including with the temporary (maximum 2 months) addition of a third float brick
- Two metal walkways pegged to shore (Figure 3) in accordance with the requirements outlined in Section 8
- Pontoon to be routinely relocated in line with the requirements outlined in Section 8, including floating offshore where needed



Figure 3: Example of the fixing mechanism for the walkways. The relocatable Pontoon will use a double walkway, pinned as shown and in accordance with the specifications provided in section 8.



Figure 4: Dimension and configuration of the Pontoon. This may be reconfigured as required, including floating off shore with an additional 17.5 x 4.3m float brick

Visual Analysis of Works

The Pontoon is light grey in colour and low profile, not interfering with views across the lake. The colour is unobtrusive, and as a whole the structure is as visually sympathetic as such a structure can be. The benefits to supporting the historic significance of the place (with *its associations with the development of water-based sports and recreation in Victoria*) offset any minor visual issues with the structure. Infrastructure of this nature is not uncommon along the Lake Wendouree Foreshore.

6. Impacts of the Proposal

The following assesses the impact against the criteria identified for Lake Wendouree (A, D, and E). It is likely that any revised Conservation Management Plan would also find the area to have social significance to the people of Ballarat. As the Pontoon supports the social significance of the play (especially recreation and

performance), it does not impact the outcome of the assessment to exclude social significance from the broader assessment.

Historical significance

Installation and regular relocation of the floating Pontoon is considered to have a *positive* impact on the historical significance Lake Wendouree for the following reasons:

- It supports the continuation of water-based sports, with Lake Wendouree being “*historically significant for its associations with the development of water-based sports and recreation in Victoria*”
- The heritage registration specifically cites “*subsequent improvements to the lake and its surrounding reserve facilitated the development of recreational groups, including...**fly fishing clubs***” and “*Lake Wendouree has retained an array of... features which enable the popularity of water-based sports and recreation during key periods the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to be fully appreciated*”. It also notes that many of these historic uses are “*ongoing*” and the lake “*has been a popular destination for leisure activities since the mid-nineteenth century*”
- It is supportive of the ongoing work of the Ballarat Fish Acclimatisation Society construct who have been active around the lake since the early 1870s and continue to work with fisheries Victoria to manage trout stocks in the lake and across Victoria.
- Alternative options to support these uses have been explored and found to be unsuitable (see Section 7)
- It is able to be installed without impact on historic fabric, including significant trees (all trees in the area are of recent origin)
- Works are non-permanent, relocatable and, if appropriate, completely reversible
- It is away from any heritage fabric in the adjacent Ballarat Botanical Gardens

Aesthetic

Installation and regular relocation of the floating Pontoon is considered to have a minor *negative* impact on the aesthetic significance Lake Wendouree, but not one that is enough of a concern to offset the positive historic associations. Any negative impact has been offset to the greatest degree possible in the selection of materials and structure, allowing for other requirements to be met. This is for the following reasons:

- Heritage vistas across the lake have not been recently reviewed, however the pontoon is outside known views of importance (especially to Warrenyeep (Mt Warrenheip), Bonang Youang (Mt Buninyong) and Kareet Bareet (Black Hill) and would remain outside any of the heritage vistas identified as part of the recent Ballarat Botanical Gardens Conservation Management Plan (adjacent site).
- The pontoon sits at water level in unobtrusive colours that do not interfere with the “*uninterrupted vistas across the lake surface and a sense of enclosure from the surrounding city by numerous mature exotic trees*”. While somewhat industrial in nature, such infrastructure is part of the fabric and use of Lake Wendouree due to “*the popularity of water-based sports*”.
- The location and visual impact of the pontoon can be appropriately managed through the implementation of a Heritage Protection Plan as outlined in Section 8.
- Works are completely reversible.
- Infrastructure of this nature is not uncommon along the Lake Wendouree Foreshore as is required as part of the recreational use of the place.
- The works are easily identified as additions in accordance with Article 22.2 of the Burra Charter

7. Alternative Options

The following alternative options were explored and found to be unsuitable:

- Installation of a permanent pontoon (does not allow the flexibility to support events in multiple locations, cannot be reconfigured to support different event types and greater permanent impact)
- Alternative options to the grey float bricks were explored and found to be unsuitable for the following reasons:
 - To meet safety requirements the pontoon needs to have a weight loading
 - The previous structure was timber topped over a polystyrene base, but the base is now known to be an unacceptable environmental risk in waterways and this type does not have a weight loading

In addition to the above, Float bricks have been used for rowing for several years on the Lake and have been found to be suitable in this location. Similar structures can be found in other heritage landscapes, including Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria.

8. Means of Limiting Impact

The following modifications have been put in place to mitigate the impact of the tree on the heritage values of Lake Wendouree:

- Method of installation has no impact on heritage fabric and is completely reversible.
- Location and installation will be in accordance with a Heritage Protection Plan.
- A visually unobtrusive material has been chosen within the confines of what meets other safety and environmental requirements.

It is recommended that a Heritage Protection Plan or similar set of installation documentation be developed to guide the placement, installation and movement of the pontoon. These should address the following items, many of which are based on the category 10.0 of the Heritage Victoria *General Permit Exemptions* (December 2022).

Placement

1. The Pontoon should not be located within the "Central Lake Wendouree Foreshore" footprint of the Ballarat Botanical Gardens as identified in the Ballarat Botanical Gardens Conservation Management Plan (andrea proctor landscapes 2024).
2. On the development of the Conservation Management Plan for Lake Wendouree the pontoon shall not be located within any views identified in that document as not being suitable for placement of the pontoon.
3. The Pontoon shall not be placed within the "Fairyland" portion of the Ballarat Botanical Gardens within the significant views to Bonang Yoang (Mt Buninyong).
4. The Pontoon shall be regularly inspected by the Supervisor Lake Wendouree or their approved delegate. If a wear path (desire line) starts to develop the pontoon is to be relocated or foot traffic otherwise subtly redirected to prevent excessive damage to the turf.

Installation

5. Works or activities must be entirely reversible, and not damage, remove or disturb early or original fabric, including landscape features such as historical planting schemes, paths and ground-surface

masonry, built structures (including interiors and exterior elements), or historical archaeological remains.

6. Temporary structures and associated elements must be freestanding and not involve new penetrations into or fixings to early or original fabric. The use of pegs within turf and outside TPZs (see Figure 3) is appropriate and permitted as it reduces the need for more bulky infrastructure.
7. There must be no subsurface/excavation works or activities.
8. Outdoor temporary structures must not be positioned within a structural root zone, or within two metres of garden beds.
9. Works or activities within tree protection zones must be in accordance with a Tree Protection Management Plan prepared by a qualified arborist.
10. In tree protection zones the method of fixing temporary outdoor structures to the ground must be in accordance with advice provided by the Tree Protection Management Plan as required at item 9 above.
11. Plant and equipment access must use existing paths and access routes where possible. Existing paths and access routes must not be damaged, widened or extended.
12. Tree canopy and fragile surfaces such as turf, soft landscaping, timber flooring and ground-surface masonry (excluding concrete or asphalt), must be protected from temporary structures and associated installation activities (for example, foot traffic only, the use of sleepers, boards, track matting or other ground protection, no when soil is wet). Vehicles must not use access routes through floorboarded, decked or tiled locations.
13. All works or activities must comply with the internal and external engineering and loading requirements of the registered place.
14. Any area(s) impacted by works or activities must be fully remediated to its previous condition within 28 calendar days of removal of temporary structures.

9. Recommendations

This report makes the following recommendations:

- That a permit or permit exemption be granted for the works
- That a condition of permit include a heritage protection plan that specifically addresses installation and requires works to adhere with the specification provided in Section 8.

10. Conclusion

The installation and regular relocation of the floating pontoon on the Lake Wendouree is consistent with the identified heritage values of Lake Wendouree and the functioning of the Victorian Heritage Register and Heritage Act 2023. It is considered to have a net *positive* impact on the heritage values of the place, which primarily relate to its use for water sports, its association with the Olympics and views across the lake. In particular, the pontoon supports the ongoing identified historic significance of the place as it relates to the “*development of water-based sports and recreation in Victoria*” including Fly Fishing.

While it is acknowledged that there is a minor negative impact on the aesthetic values of the place, this is low level due to the unobtrusive colour and form of the pontoon, and is considered to be more than offset by the positive impact on the historic significance. Moreover, the installation and regular relocation of the pontoon would normally be permitted under category 10.0 of the Heritage Victoria *General Permit*

Exemptions (December 2022). The restrictions that come with permission under category 10.0 could be complied with, but this permit application will formalise the arrangement and support more flexible use of the structure.

In light of the above it is recommended that a heritage permit be granted.

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