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HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE BLUE TREE
VHR H2419: LAKE WENDOUREE
PREPARED ON BEHALF OF CITY OF BALLARAT



Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Registration Summary	3
3. Existing Conditions of Lake Wendouree.....	4
4. Cultural Heritage Values.....	6
5. The Proposed Works	8
6. Impacts of the Proposal.....	11
7. Means of Limiting Impact.....	12
8. Recommendations	12
9. Conclusion	12

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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 the Blue Tree Memorial 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. Blue Trees are located in places across Australia as a mental health awareness initiative remembering people lost to suicide.

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 Blue Tree Memorial project has been reviewed and is considered to be consistent with the identified heritage values of Lake Wendouree, supporting the expected functions of a “notable example of an urban lake in Victoria” including “monuments and statuary”. While Lake Wendouree is not of social significance at a State level, it is expected that it would be of social significance at a local level, with the Blue Tree Memorial

2. Registration Summary

Address:	Lake Wendouree, Ballarat
Name:	Lake Wendouree
Supporting the Permit application for:	The installation of the Blue Tree memorial
Date:	April 2024
VHR Number:	H2419
Prepared by:	Andrea Proctor (PGDipLArch 2008, BHort 2004, <i>University of Melbourne</i>) and Tessa Kum (AssocDegEnvHort 2020, <i>University of Melbourne</i>) andrea proctor landscapes 235 Queens Road Wandin North, 3139 admin@andreaproctor.com.au m: 0411 03 7886
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. Top two photos are the proposed location of the Blue Tree, remainder are around the western shoreline.

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 Blue Tree memorial for suicide awareness. The following description of the works, including background was provided by Bernard Blood, Supervisor Lake Wendouree for the City of Ballarat edited only for consistency.

Description and Purpose of Works

The installation of the Remembrance Tree on the water's edge of Lake Wendouree, in a quiet area of contemplation, is to be a place that remembers local Ballarat lives lost to suicide. The project is a joint initiative of the Ballarat & District Suicide Awareness Network and the Ballarat Cemetery and is an adaptation of the Blue Tree Movement.

The Ballarat community has a higher completed suicide rate than the national average and as such, talking about suicide is necessary to reduce the stigma often felt by families who have lost a loved one to suicide.

Names of persons that have died by suicide will be engraved on the leaves of the Remembrance Tree and the Ballarat Cemetery will take responsibility of that task on an annual basis. The Ballarat & District Suicide Awareness Network is the community group responsible for the collection of names.



Figure 2: Sample blue tree with Wattle Blue leaves. Tree sits at 1800mm high with an approximately 2000mm diameter.

The location of the tree is part of the route taken at the annual Ballarat "Out of the Shadows Walk" which is the day that marks the International Day of Suicide Awareness and will become the focal point of reflection point 4 at each event.

Overview:

The Mulberry Tree is a memorial product, originally designed by The Columbaria Company in the UK. Since then, now under license, Everlon Bronze have been able to take on this memorial, as one of its own. Working in with natural surroundings and waterways, the Mulberry Tree creates a place of reflection for families. The 1.8m (6 ft.) Mulberry Tree is made with a granite trunk and corten steel branches. The tree is produced with approx. 200 place holder leaves, which are eventually replaced with bronze plaques, painted in Wattle Blue (Hexadecimal Colour Code 2937ab), with a personalised inscription. The tree can be seen at Figure 2.



Figure 3: Sample, Wattle Blue

Location of proposed memorial tree:

The tree will be located on the west side of Lake Wendouree, on Yullie Island facing east.



Figure 4: Location of the Blue Tree



Figure 5: Location and scale of the Blue Tree. Location of the Blue Tree in photo on the right with person to demonstrate scale on the left.

Visual Analysis of Works

The location of the Blue Tree has been selected as it is on the route of the "Out of the Shadows Walk" and is less visibly intrusive than other locations on this route. In the selected location the tree will be in a quiet, secluded location providing suitable privacy for those remembering loved ones and an easy walk from parking and refreshments. The island in question is of recent origin, being constructed during the Millennium Drought when Lake Wendouree was dry. In the proposed location the tree is considered to be visually unobtrusive and will sit as a small focal point that is not out of place with the surrounding landscape.

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 Blue Tree is of benefit to the social significance of Lake Wendouree as a place of remembrance, it does not impact the outcome of the assessment to exclude social significance from the broader assessment.

Historical significance

Installation of the Blue Tree is considered to have a neutral impact on the historical significance Lake Wendouree for the following reasons:

- It is located on a recently constructed island
- It is relatively small in stature and located in a quiet, visually unobtrusive location
- It is able to be installed without impact on historic fabric, including significant trees (all trees in the area are of recent origin)
- If necessary, works would be completely reversible
- It is away from any heritage fabric in the adjacent Ballarat Botanical Gardens
- The Blue Tree is consistent with the functions of "a notable example of an urban lake in Victoria", including "monuments and statuary"

Aesthetic

Installation of the Blue Tree is considered to have a neutral impact on the aesthetic significance Lake Wendouree for the following reasons:

- Heritage vistas across the lake have not been recently reviewed but the tree is outside known views of importance (especially to Warrenyeep (Mt Warrenheip), Bonang Youang (Mt Buninyong) and Kareet Bareet (Black Hill). The tree is outside any of the heritage vistas identified as part of the recent Ballarat Botanical Gardens Conservation Management Plan (*note, the island is outside the footprint of the Botanical Gardens but the area immediately adjacent to it was assessed*).
- It is relatively small in stature and located in a quiet, visually unobtrusive location. The tree will act as a minor focal point within the landscape and as such should sit comfortably in the landscape.
- The tree is too small to block significant views across the lake and is on a minor path.

7. 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:

- A site has been chosen that is visually screened (within the confines of being on the route of the “Out of the Shadows” walk)
- The site has suitable access for installation without requiring machinery to work near heritage fabric, including significant trees

8. Recommendations

This report makes the following recommendations:

- That a permit be granted for the works
- That a condition of permit include a heritage protection plan that specifically addresses installation, including the need for all vehicles to remain outside tree protection zones, on existing hardstand or with suitable track matt protection and the making good of any damage at the conclusion of works

9. Conclusion

The installation of the Blue Tree on the Lake Wendouree Foreshore will not have any negative 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.

The island on which the tree will be located is recent in origin and the memorial is relatively small in size, being only 1800mm (around head height). The location is away from all heritage fabric and identified significant views, other than as the minor addition of a small new focal point on the island. The Blue Tree Memorial project is consistent with expected functions of a “notable example of an urban lake in Victoria” including “monuments and statuary”. The memorial is the type that could be typically expected to exist in a city of the size of Ballarat and is particularly relevant to this place. In light of the above it is recommended that a heritage permit be granted.

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