

Rialto Building, 487-495 Collins Street Melbourne, (VHR H0040)
Winfield Building, 497-503 Collins Street Melbourne, (VHR H0041)
Q&As
April 2024

What are the Rialto and Winfield Buildings?

The Rialto Building and Winfield Building are located adjacent to each other in Collins Street, Melbourne and are separately included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0040 and VHR H0041 respectively). Both buildings are integral parts of an exceptional group of late Victorian commercial buildings and are significant as representations of the building boom in Melbourne during the early 1890s.

The Rialto Building was constructed in 1891 and demonstrates a new approach to office accommodation, being specifically planned for a range of commercial tenants and with shops on the ground floor. It is architecturally significant as one of the finest examples of the commercial Gothic style by prominent architect William Pitt and for its innovative fire-prevention measures.

The Winfield Building, formerly the Wool Exchange building, was constructed in 1891. It is one of architect Charles D'Ebro's finest buildings and is architecturally significant as one of the best examples of the Queen Anne style in Victoria. It also is historically significant as a focal point for the wool industry from the early 1890s.

What has happened?

On 8 July 2023, Heritage Victoria received two permit applications for works across both the Rialto Building and Winfield Building consisting of demolition of the 1980s development at the rear of the Winfield Building and construction of a 32 level tower. The tower is only partially on registered land to the extent of the cantilever and part of the basement. The proposal also includes demolition, internal refurbishment, and conservation and adaptation works to both heritage buildings.

On 23 April 2024, the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria approved the applications on the grounds that:

- Most of the proposed tower is not on registered land. Approval under the *Heritage Act 2017* is not required for this part of the development.
- Any tower built on the non-registered land would impact the current setting of the Rialto and Winfield Buildings, regardless of whether it cantilevered over the heritage places or not.
- The design and materiality of the tower is contemporary in presentation and will be read in the context of the neighbouring tower developments. The proposed tower will not substantially impact the setting of the place any more than the existing towers do.
- Conservation and adaptation works to the Rialto Building and Winfield Building ensures their ongoing use and interpretation.
- The development will result in an improved internal appreciation of the heritage places.
- Permit conditions including financial security will secure conservation works.
- The development contributes to the reasonable and economic use of the Rialto and Winfield Buildings.

What happens next?

The applicant or the owner may make a request to the Heritage Council to review the Executive Director's determination to impose a condition on the permit. A request for a review must be made to the Heritage Council of Victoria within 60 days of the refusal of the application.