



Heritage Impact Statement

Permit Application for works related to the fence
'Armadale House' 117 Kooyong Road, Armadale (VHR H0637)

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1 Introduction

1.1 Place Details

This Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) is for Armadale House, VHR H0637.

1.1.1 Address & location description:

Armadale House VHR H0637 (the heritage place) is located at 117 Kooyong Road, Armadale. Only part of the registered place is relevant to this application; a subdivision as part of broader works was approved by Heritage Victoria under P31815. The subdivision split the registered place into two parcels with one at the rear (west) of the site redeveloped as a childcare facility, while the east portion contains the original house and land up to Kooyong Road. The rear part of the site is accessed via a driveway and tunnel that runs along the north boundary (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Aerial view of the subject site. The registered place is indicated in yellow, while the extent of relevant land for this application is indicated in red. Note the new development at the rear accessed via a tunnel visible at the north of the site. Source: Nearmap, 2024.

1.2 Project Details

This HIS forms part of a permit application for works to construct a new front fence at the heritage place to the Kooyong Road boundary.

1.2.1 Background

This project has been developed out of a need to construct a different fence to the approved fence (endorsed under P35172). The proposed fence seeks to better suit the privacy and security requirements of the owner and residential use of the heritage place.

Designs by The Ellis Group Architects for a new timber picket fence to Kooyong Road were first endorsed by Heritage Victoria in September 2020 under P31815. This first endorsed design featured a 1.5m high fence along the Kooyong Road boundary with 70x20mm pickets and 40mm gaps between pickets, timber posts and lower timber plinth. In December 2022, construction drawings for the front fence were endorsed under Condition 6 of P35172. The design endorsed under P35172 followed the earlier design for a 1.5m high timber picket fence along Kooyong Road. This endorsed design is currently under construction at the heritage place.

A pre application meeting with Heritage Victoria was held on 18 October 2023 to discuss a new permit application to cover alterations to the design and height of the front fence to Kooyong Road. Verbal feedback from Heritage Victoria indicated they were generally unsupportive of a higher front fence. A new permit application was not submitted at that time. However, these conversations have informed the current application.



1.2.2 Client

This HIS has been prepared for Miffany Blythe, owner of the registered place.

1.3 Reference Documents

This HIS refers to the VHR Place Citation, relevant heritage legislation, *The Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 2013* and the following supporting documents:

- *Heritage Impact Statement (HIS)*, prepared by Trethowan Architecture in 2021.
- *Technical Bulletin 8.1: Fences and Gates*, prepared by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) in 1988.
- *Architectural drawings* (endorsed under P31815, 30 September 2020), prepared by The Ellis Group Architects.
- *Architectural drawings* (endorsed under P35172, 1 December 2022), prepared by Trethowan Architecture in November 2022.

This HIS should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Appendix A: Letter, prepared by Miffany Blythe in June 2024.
- *Architectural drawings*, prepared by Trethowan Architecture dated 15 October 2024, as follows:

Drawing No.	Drawing Title
WD-550B	Proposed Front Fence

2 Significance & Description

2.1 The Cultural Heritage Significance

The heritage place is significant at local and state levels. It is included on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0637) and the City of Stonnington Heritage Overlay (HO67). Heritage Victoria is the Responsible Authority.

2.1.1 Victorian Heritage Register (VHR)

The VHR listing Statement of Significance for the heritage place is reproduced as follows:

What is significant?

Armadale House was built in 1876 for Scottish-born businessman and prominent public figure James Munro. Originally located within extensive landscaped gardens but now on a reduced site, the house is a two storey brick and stucco Italianate mansion, traditionally arranged and complete with cast iron balcony verandah.

How is it significant?

Armadale House is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Armadale House is of historical significance for its association with James Munro (1832-1908) who was an outstanding figure in the social, political and economic life of 19th century Victoria. One of the best known of the Land boom generation of developers and politicians, Munro was premier of Victoria prior to the collapse of his personal fortunes and bankruptcy in 1893. His career exhibited the close ties between Temperance organisations, building societies and land speculation that underlay the boom of the 1870s and 1880s. In 1873 Munro began purchasing land on the eastern boundary of Prahran Municipality which became his large Armadale estate, named after the village in Sutherlandshire where he grew up. By 1876 he had initiated an ongoing process of subdivision and building in the area, and had erected his own mansion. The land developments were eventually to form a suburb that took the name of Munro's house. Armadale House thus provides a link with Munro's early career as a developer and stands as an important testament to the process of suburban development of metropolitan Melbourne. Armadale House is of architectural significance as a solid but comparatively modest example of boom-era mansion design which is the focus of an urban conservation area, and for its associations with the important Victorian architect WH. Ellerker. In scale and design the mansion provides a contrast to some of the more extravagant mansions of other prominent boom figures, and as such is illustrative of the early, more humble, phase of Munro's career. Ellerker was chiefly notable as a competition-winning State school designer. Armadale House was built at the time he was most active in school design.

2.1.2 Non-statutory listings

The Registered Place is also listed by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) as Building No. B2022. Non-statutory listings have no formal or legal weight in the Planning Scheme.

2.1.3 Analysis of the significance

The heritage place is of historical and architectural significance. This significance is embodied in the built form and fabric of the house as well its landscaped garden setting and deep front setback. Architecturally, the heritage place is significant as a *modest example of a boom-era mansion design* associated with the Victorian architect, WH. Ellerker. This modesty is apparent in the restrained Italianate style, simple symmetrical verandah, lack of ornate detailing and modest use of decoration.

2.2 Policies

2.2.1 General and Place Specific Permit Exemptions



There are no General Permit Exemption¹ policies relevant to this proposal and there is no Place Specific Permit Exemption policy for the heritage place.

2.2.2 Internal Policy / Principles Developed as Part of the Design Development

In 2021, Trethowan Architecture were engaged to assist with new works to adapt the heritage place back to its original use as a single private residence (approved under P35172). To assist in these works and in the absence of a Conservation Management Plan for the heritage place, a set of project-specific policies were developed to guide change and preserve significant fabric. These policies are based on the principles of the Burra Charter and good heritage practice. The period of significance was determined to be that of Munro's residence, the mid to late Victorian period from 1876 to 1892. The policies are intended to manage change and preserve significant fabric, following the cautious approach outlined in Article 3 of the Burra Charter.²

2.3 Historical Summary

Armadale House was built for land-boom speculator, banker and premier James Munro in 1876. In 1873 Munro began purchasing land on the eastern boundary of Prahran Municipality which became his large Armadale estate. By 1876 he had initiated an ongoing process of subdivision and building in the area and had erected his own mansion. Armadale House first appeared in the Prahran rate books in 1877, at which time it is listed as stables and brick house of 12 rooms. Around 1888, a rear ballroom and additional upstairs rooms were constructed. Armadale House was sold during the collapse of Munro's personal fortunes that ended with his bankruptcy in 1893. The next owner was Kate Ellen Murphy. The early layout of the property is shown on the 1900 MMBW plan, with the house and its gardens occupying the whole of the corner at Kooyong Road and Munro Street. At this time the main entrance was to the corner with a secondary service entrance on Kooyong Road. A driveway extended from the south-east corner, terminating at a turning circle in front of the house, forking to provide access to stables at the north-west.

In 1911 the property was sold and by 1915 the land was subdivided and land along Munro Street sold. The new alignment of the driveway dates to this time. By 1944, the property was purchased by the Melbourne Bible Institute (MBI) and its private residential function ceased. The MBI occupied the site until 1977 when it was purchased by the King David School and became known as David Finkel House. Various additions and alterations were undertaken during this period whilst it was used as a school building and later childcare centre.

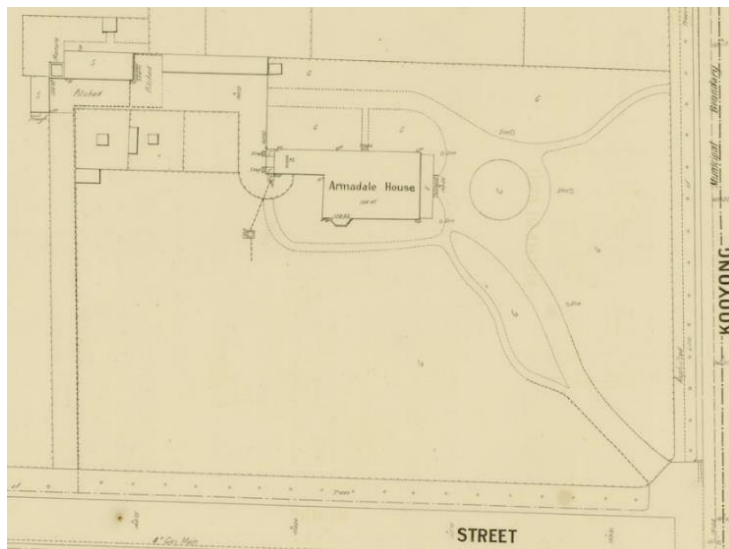


Figure 2: MMBW plan dating to 1900 and showing original entrance to corner of Munro Street and Kooyong Road. Source: State Library of Victoria.

¹ *General Permit Exemptions*, prepared by DELWP, 2022

² *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*, 2013



Figure 3: Image of Armadale House included in the Sydney Arnold & Co public auction notice, c.1921. Source: University of Melbourne Archives.



Figure 4: MMBW surveyor notes (undated). The date is unclear but the subdivision and development of Munro St has occurred, the portico and porticoed gate are evident, placing it around the mid twentieth century.



Figure 5: View c.1940s, showing the approach to the house from Kooyong Road. Note former pergola structure over front gate. Source: Melbourne Bible Institute.



Figure 6: View of the house at the time of its occupation by the Melbourne Bible Institute (c.1950s) showing interwar style piers and gate, in-go entry with piered gateway and timber picket fence. Source: Melbourne Bible Institute Archive.

2.4 Existing Condition of the Place

The heritage place has undergone works related to P31815 and P35172. The registered land has been subdivided, childcare centre constructed to the rear lot and tunnel constructed along the north boundary of the site as approved under P31815. Works related to P35172 including demolition, alterations and additions to the main dwelling have largely been undertaken. However, some external works remain outstanding. Landscaping works, approved under P35172, are ongoing, and the site remains a partial construction site (Figure 7). A temporary construction hoarding was installed to the Kooyong Road boundary, but this has since been removed as the endorsed front fence (approved under P35172) is under construction (Figure 9).



Figure 7: Front setback of the house, note scaffolding remains in place and landscaping works are ongoing. Source: Trethowan Architecture, 2024.



Figure 8: Image of Kooyong Road boundary before removal of construction hoarding. Source: Trethowan Architecture, 2024.



Figure 9: View from the verandah, note temporary construction hoarding has been removed (indicated in red) whilst endorsed fence design is under construction. Source: Courtesy of client, 2024.

3 Proposal

The proposed works relate to the construction of a new front fence to Kooyong Road.

3.1 The Proposed Works

The proposed fence will extend along the Kooyong Road boundary, with double vehicular gates and single pedestrian gate located within an ingo to the south end. A mail/parcel box will be incorporated into the fence beside the pedestrian gate and an enclosed bin store will be located to the south end behind the fence line. The north end will be chamfered with rendered blockwork wall to match the existing north boundary wall and planter box in front. The proposed fence will be 1.8m high and constructed of timber framing with infill panels of mini orb corrugated metal sheeting. The timber posts will have chamfered edges with plain chamfered heads. The top rail will feature bevelled edge detailing. The proposed fence is based on a typical detail for a fence of this period, as described in the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) *Technical Bulletin 8.1: Fences and Gates* (1988) and as seen at other state-listed heritage places, for example Como House VHR H0205.

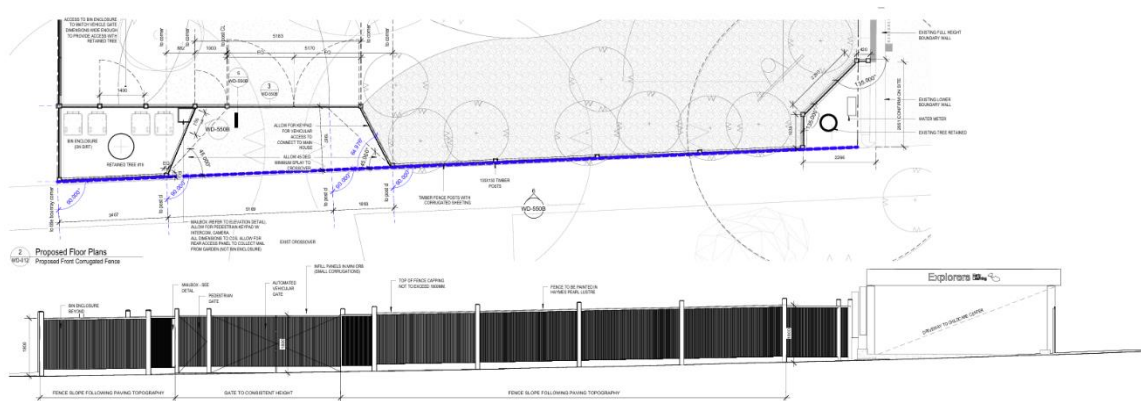


Figure 10: Excerpt from WD550B indicating location of proposed fence with ingo to the existing crossover location. Source: Trethowan Architecture, 2024.

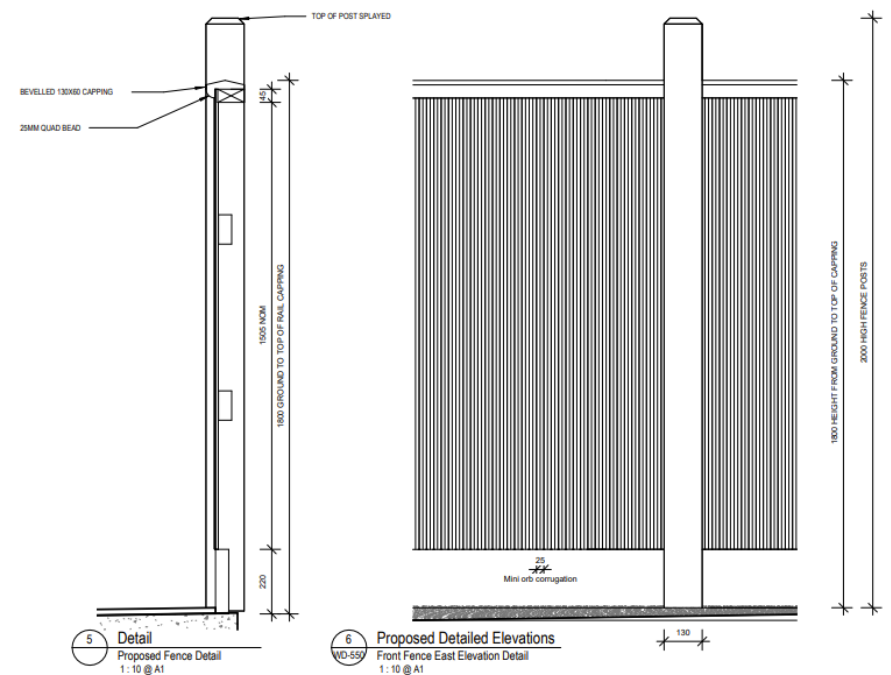


Figure 11: Excerpt from WD550B indicating proposed fence design with timber posts/rails and Mini Orb corrugated sheeting. Source: Trethowan Architecture, 2024.



3.2 Options Considered

Several options have been considered for the design of the fence including retaining the endorsed fence design. However the endorsed fence design presents a safety and privacy risk to the residents. The endorsed height of 1.5m allows those passing by to easily see over the fence into the main area of private open space for the residence. As such, a fence height of 1.8m was considered a more appropriate option with regard to privacy and security (this matter is discussed further in Section 4.2). In addition, the option to extend the height of the picket fence to 1.8m and reduce the size of gaps to 30mm was considered. However, due to safety and privacy concerns picket fencing was considered inappropriate. The use of landscaping as screening behind this style of fence was likewise considered however the time required for vegetation to grow to the required size and still present security risk rendered this approach inappropriate. This matter is discussed further under Section 4.2.

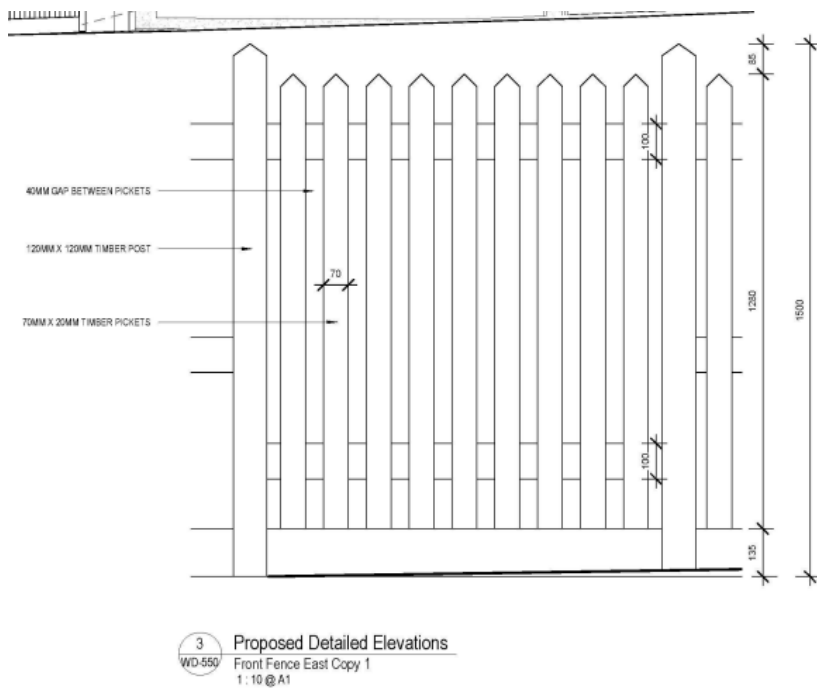


Figure 12: Proposed fence design detail (endorsed in December 2022 under P35172). Source: Trethowan Architecture, 2022.

4 Assessment

4.1 Impact of the Proposal

The proposed fence design will visually impact the heritage place by affecting potential views to the house from the public domain along Kooyong Road. There are no physical impacts to original fabric. The garden setting will not be impacted as the footprint of the proposed fence will remain largely the same as the endorsed fence. The fence design is also in line with the internal policy developed for the heritage place, which indicates that where no original detail is available or where a space has been substantially altered (as is the case when considering the front boundary treatment to Kooyong Road) a simplified interpretation of original details is appropriate.

4.1.1 Mitigation

The visual impacts of the proposed fence are mitigated by the simple sympathetic design that is appropriate to the period (late Victorian period) and the modest Italianate style of the heritage place. Historically, opaque timber framed fences with infill panels of corrugated galvanised iron sheeting (often with small corrugation profiles similar to mini orb sheeting) were used for side and rear boundaries.³ At nearby, Como House VHR H0205 this style of visually opaque corrugated fencing extends across the north, east and west boundaries providing security and privacy to the heritage place. Whilst not traditionally used as front fencing, this style of fencing, sympathetic to the style and period of the heritage place, will mitigate the minor visual impacts related to the height and opaque materiality of the proposed fence.



Figure 13: Corrugated metal sheeting fence at Como House VHR H0205. Source: Google Maps, 2021

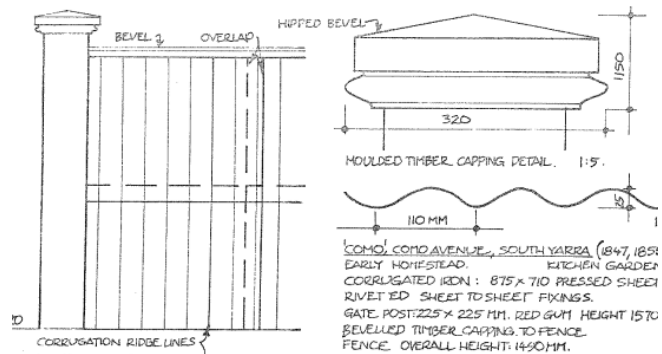


Figure 14: Excerpt from National Trust Technical Bulletin 8.1, indicating detail of fencing with 110mm corrugated sheeting (not Mini Orb) to Como House VHR H0205. Note proposed fence is a simple interpretation of this style of fence. Source: National Trust of Australia (Victoria), 1988.

4.2 Why the Proposal Should Be Supported

Previously, subdivision of the heritage place was approved by Heritage Victoria under P31815. The subdivision resulted in a significant reduction of the rear garden, causing the main area of private open space to be located to the front setback of the place bounding Kooyong Road. Consequently, the main area of private open space for the residence is currently inadequately screened by the approved 1.5m high timber picket fence (endorsed under P35172). The height and visual permeability of the endorsed fence design creating a privacy and security risk. Further, when considering the location of the heritage place along Kooyong Road, a busy arterial road, and nature of the mansion house (easily viewed from the public realm) the low picket fence is easily climbable and presents a security risk to the residents. Traffic along this route has increased exponentially since the construction of the heritage place and therefore the need for additional privacy and security must be commensurate with the current context not the original context. As such, the proposal for a 1.8m visually opaque fence to Kooyong Road is appropriate to the current context and necessary to provide adequate privacy and security to the main area of private open space.

³ National Trust of Australia (Victoria), *Technical Bulletin 8.1: Fences and Gates*, 1988, pp.25.



The proposed fence is reversible and will result in only a minor visual impact to the heritage place which is further mitigated by the sympathetic design. Given this, the proposed fence should be supported.

Furthermore, the works endorsed under previous permits to return the heritage place to its original use as a single family residence and associated conservation works have resulted in a cumulative positive impact on the heritage place. The owner/residents have invested substantially in the heritage place and should be able to use the residence in a reasonable manner. The sum of these works has been overwhelmingly positive, and the minor visual impact of this proposal should be considered acceptable on balance.

4.2.1 Matters which the Executive Director is to consider under s101(2)

As outlined in the letter from the owner (included at Appendix A), a 1.8m high fence is required to ensure the privacy and safety of the owner/residents of the heritage place and is reasonable considering the layout and residential use of the place.

As previously outlined, the subdivision of the heritage place has resulted in a reduction of the rear garden and caused the main area of private open space for the residence to be located within the front setback of the house, bounding Kooyong Road and creating a privacy and security risk to the owner/residents and their young family.

It is reasonable to expect that contemporary standards of privacy and safety be applied to the heritage place given its current residential use and its approved adaption into a substantial family home. Generally, contemporary standards necessitate the needs of a young family, including that children should be able to safely play and spend time outdoors in a private and secure environment. Presently, the main area of private open space to the residence does not allow for this. The timber picket fence approved under P35172 is visually transparent, climbable and at 1.5m high allows for pedestrians to reach/see over into the front garden. The proposed fence design at 1.8m high and visually impermeable, allows the residents to enjoy contemporary standards of privacy and security, a reasonable expectation considering the residential use of the heritage place. The proposal is reversible and will have no physical impacts on original or significant fabric, it is a minor visual impact. Given the above, the proposed fence should be supported as it is required to provide an appropriate level of privacy and security to the heritage place, enabling the reasonable use of the main area of private open space to the residence. Furthermore, the creation of a comfortable, private and secure open space for contemporary living will ensure the heritage place can meet the needs of families today and ensure the place will remain an attractive and useable residence. This supports the long-term occupation of the heritage place in its original function.

5 Summary of Impacts and Conclusion

Overall, the proposed fence design will have a minor visual impact by reducing the visibility of the place from the public domain along Kooyong Road. However, the visual impacts are mitigated by the sympathetic design of the fence, appropriate to the style and period of the heritage place. Further, the proposed fence design is required to provide an appropriate level of privacy and security to the heritage place and enable the residents and their young family to comfortably and safely use the main area of private open space within the front setback of the place. It is reasonable to expect that contemporary standards of privacy and safety be applied to the heritage place given its current residential use and its approved adaptation into a substantial family home. The proposed fence will enable the reasonable use of the main area of private open space and ensure the heritage place meets the contemporary needs of families today, ensuring its long term occupation and viability of the original function into the future.

In summary, the proposed fence will not result in any detrimental impacts to the cultural heritage significance of the heritage place. The proposed fence design will visually impact the place by reducing visibility of the heritage place from the public domain. However this is mitigated by the sympathetic design of the fence and is required in order to enable the reasonable use of the place, ensuring the long-term occupation and viability of the original use of the heritage place as a substantial single family residence. On balance, the impacts of the proposed work are minor and considered with the positive impacts of works under P31815 and P35172, the cumulative impact is a good heritage outcome for the place.





Appendix A Letter

The following letter was prepared by the client, Miffany Blythe, to accompany the heritage permit application for the proposed fence at the heritage place, Armadale House VHR H0637.

Dear Claire,

I would like to apply for a higher fence to 117 Kooyong Road for the purposes of security and privacy.

Unusually, this property has the garden at the front of the property.

The existing low picket fence means that the public can interact with my young children unobserved. It is challenging to supervise our primary school aged children when the kitchen and casual living are at the back of the property.

I have lived in a home previously which had a low transparent fence. However, this property had its' garden at the back of the property, and we were able to secure the sides of the property through fencing. However, 117 Kooyong Road does not have this and therefore is not fit for purpose for a young family.

We need our children to be able to safely play in their garden independently without extensive interaction from members of the public.

Already since the hoarding has been brought down, it has been very concerning the level of interaction with the public that has occurred with our older teenagers.

It is not safe, nor appropriate.

We require a higher more secure fence to make the property fit for use in today's world and for the high road and foot traffic that exists along Kooyong Road. Over 80% of fences on Kooyong road have fences that are opaque and are higher than 1.8m. The majority of the lower fences are flats or unrenovated. I believe the rights of our children being able to play safely outweighs the historical benefit of anyone being able to watch and interact with my family as they use and play in the garden.

When this house was built the number of people moving past the house would have been negligible, unlike today!

Lastly, there is precedent that a number of historical homes, on busy roads have high opaque fences, the closest of which is Como House, Como Avenue South Yarra.

Thank you for your consideration.

Miffany Blythe