

Heritage Impact Statement
For
Netball Court Redevelopment .
Central Park, 10-18 Main Street, Stawell
VHR No. 2284



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Prepared for the Shire of Northern Grampians

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This Heritage Impact Statement forms part of a permit application for:

Replacement and realignment of non-significant netball court, demolition of part of non-significant garden shed, construction of shelters for players and spectators and light poles.

A pre-application meeting has not been held based on advice from Heritage Victoria for an earlier application this year that a permit was not required for the removal of non-significant buildings but would be required for the construction of the new work as these are deemed as new works in a heritage place.

Address and location description:

Central Park is located at 10-18 Main Street Stawell and has frontages to Victoria Street, Napier Street and Haits Lane. The entire site is included within the Registered Place but netball court and garden shed are not included as significant components. The Netball Court is on the south east corner of the site as shown in the aerial photograph below.



Location of Netball Court and sheds circled in red.

Significance of the place

Central Park at Stawell is located near the centre of Stawell and comprises a sports oval, a timber grandstand and other buildings and a number of memorials, set amidst ornamental gardens and lawns. The site was used from the 1860s by the local gold miners as a cricket ground and later as a football ground but is best known as the site of the Stawell Gift, Australia's oldest, richest and most prestigious short-distance footrace. The Stawell Athletics Club was formed in 1877 and held its first meeting on Easter Saturday 1878 at the botanical reserve.

By 1884 the Gift had become an international event, with runners from around Australia.

competing against those from Europe and America. In 1898 the Easter meeting was held for the first time at Central Park, where a new timber grandstand was built, designed by the Melbourne architects Kempson & Conolly. The Memorial Gates, made by the local foundry of Kay & Company, were added in 1903, in memory of the fifty-seven Stawell men who volunteered to serve in the Boer War. The Stawell Gift meeting has been held at Central Park every Easter since 1899, apart from the war years of 1942-5. It has grown to a three-day event, culminating in the Stawell Gift race, a handicap race now (since 1973) of 120 metres, with a first prize in 2011 of \$40,000.

Central Park is a reserve of about 7 hectares with views south towards the Grampians. It comprises a grassed sports ground, elaborate cast iron memorial entrance gates supported by masonry pillars, two brick ticket offices, an old timber grandstand and two other newer brick stands, several memorials to past runners and large open areas, including ornamental gardens and lawns. The central feature is the sports oval, around which is a diverse range of mature and semi-mature trees, including both native and exotic species. Between the grandstand and Main Street is a small ornamental rose garden, enclosed by a thick hedge and with a memorial sundial and stone seat.

How is it significant?

Central Park at Stawell is of historical, architectural and social significance to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Central Park is historically significant for its long association with the Stawell Gift, Australia's oldest, richest and most prestigious short-distance footrace, which has been held at Stawell every Easter since 1878 (apart from the war years of 1942-45), and at Central Park since 1898. The Gift reflects the importance of athletics events as a recreational activity in the nineteenth century, and the continuing popularity of foot racing as a professional sporting event since then. Central Park is associated with the gold mining origins of the town of Stawell, having been used by the miners as a cricket ground as early as the 1860s, and the origin of the Gift lies in the running races held by the Stawell Miners' Association from 1873. Central Park is of social significance as the site of the running of the Stawell Gift, one of Australia's greatest sporting events.

The significance of the place is embodied in the continuing use as the home of the Stawell Gift foot race and in the oval, trees, early grandstand, memorial gates and Main Street ticket boxes.

Why are the Works Required?

The existing Netball Court is not on the preferred north south orientation for playing and lacks supporting structures. The works are to provide an up to date sporting venues for female participation in sport.

Existing condition of the place.

The existing netball court has been constructed on a small part of Central Park in the south east corner between the external fence and garden sheds and behind the modern Hank Neil Stand that screens the area from view from the main oval area.

The existing netball court and garden shed are not included in the Heritage Victoria registered plan of significant buildings and are not referred to in the statement of significance.

The netball court is marked on the playing surface and has chain wire fencing on the two street boundary sides. Relocatable stands have been placed for spectators. There is small coaches' box and existing light towers. The garden shed has an open gable roofed section and then a Colourbond glad gabled shed behind.

Current use of the place.

The place is used as a public sports ground hosting cricket, football and netball matches and the annual Stawell Gift Foot race. The netball court is an integral part of the use of the place.

The current netball court does not have the preferred north south orientation nor adequate player shelter and amenities.

Constraints and opportunities resulting from the significance of the place.

Central Park is constrained by the limited areas for development due to the significant buildings and trees within the place. The opportunity is to upgrade the existing netball court in the same area and limiting the impact on the heritage significance of the place physically and visually. The proposed demolition of part of the introduced, non-significant 20th century shedding allows the opportunity to re-orient the court while minimising the impact on the significance of the place.

Proposal

The proposal is to remove the existing netball court, demolish part of the introduced garden shed and shelter, reface the garden shed and construct a new upgraded netball court with the preferred north -south orientation, provide simple low level player and spectator shelters alongside the playing area and new fencing is to match the existing retained galvanised steel chain wire fencing. Replacement light poles are proposed to allow for play at night. The new shelters are to be clad in Manor House red Colorbond roofing to match other works in the area.

Conclusion

It is my opinion that the proposed works will have little physical or visual impact on the significance of Central Park. The works to the non-significant garden shed are a simple parapet. The netball court, shelters and fencing are screened by the Hank Neil Stand from views from the Central Park oval. The light poles would have a very minimal additional visual impact from the existing and would be mainly screened by the stand. The garden shed, shelters and netball court are all visible from Napier and Victoria Street but will have no greater impact than the existing shed and netball court.

The upgrading of the netball court to modern standards and requirements will support the ongoing use of Central Park as a local and regional sporting ground.

Wendy Jacobs
1 October 2024