

**HERITAGE ACT 2017
EXCLUSION DETERMINATION
Under Section 36C**

PLACE NAME: BEHLEN SHED

LOCATION: 2-98 STAUGHTON STREET, MELTON SOUTH

Behlen Shed, Melton South has been excluded from the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) for five years. It has no reasonable prospect of inclusion as it does not meet the test for State-level cultural heritage significance.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST THRESHOLD CRITERIA:

For a place to be included in the VHR, there must be evidence that it passes at least one of the State-level tests in the Heritage Council of Victoria's [The Victorian Heritage Register Criteria and Threshold Guidelines](#) (the **Guidelines**). It is my view that the place does not meet the Step 2 threshold tests in the Criteria and Threshold Guidelines at a State-level.

Criterion A – Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history

The application submits that there is no reasonable prospect of the inclusion of the Behlen Shed in the VHR under Criterion A. I agree with this assessment, for the reasons discussed below.

The Behlen Shed played a role in supporting local agricultural activity in the Melton area following its erection by the Victorian Grain Elevators Board in the early 1960s. During this period, Melton South was recognised as an agricultural centre for the receiving and processing of locally grown grain, hay and chaff. Despite its adaption for use as an agricultural supply store in the 1980s, the Behlen Shed still clearly presents as an industrial structure that was used to store bulk grain.

Although the grain, chaff and hay industry once supported several mills in the area located immediately north of the Behlen Shed along Brooklyn Road, almost all evidence of these agricultural activities (including a series of railway sidings) have been removed and the land redeveloped for other purposes. An exception is the nearby Melton Railway Station on the southern side of the rail corridor. However, there is little if any evidence in the fabric from the surviving station buildings demonstrating that the wider railway complex once handled large quantities of hay, wheat, or chaff. Similarly little, if any, structures or built forms associated with once prominent local firms – such as Butler & Trethowan, Barrie Bros, Dixon Bros, Schut & Barrie – now remain.

The bulk storage and handling of grain is represented by a number of notable examples in the VHR, and includes sheds, stores and silos, as well as railway station complexes. The

Behlen Shed does not allow for the historical association with the bulk storage and handling of grain to be understood better than most other places or objects in Victoria with substantially the same association.

Criterion B – Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria’s cultural history

The application submits that there is no reasonable prospect of the inclusion of the Behlen Shed in the VHR under Criterion B. I agree with this assessment, for the reasons discussed below. While the survival of the prefabricated structure of the Behlen Shed is of interest there are numerous sheds, stores, and silos in Victoria, which better illustrate the establishment and development of bulk grain storage and handling in the State. Of the places associated with grain storage and handling in Victoria in the VHR, most are uncommon in their form because they tend to be singular and purpose-built for a particular place and function.

Examples include the Former Wimmera Flour Mill and Silo Complex (VHR H1011) at Rupanyup which is a rare example of an integrated complex for the storage and processing of grain and includes a flour mill and several concrete silos. Both the Former Melvilles Grain Store (VHR H0705) and the Marmalake/Murtoa Grain Store (VHR H0791) are places of individual value and uniqueness associated with grain storage. Within the class of grain handling and storage facilities, there is nothing that elevates the Behlen Shed to a level of rarity at a State level.

Criterion C – Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria’s cultural history

The application submits that there is no reasonable prospect of the inclusion of the Behlen Shed in the VHR under Criterion B. I agree with this assessment, as there is limited potential to obtain further information from archaeological or other exploratory investigations at the place which would contribute to an understanding of Victoria’s cultural history.

Criterion D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects

The exclusion application submits that there is no reasonable prospect of the inclusion of the Behlen Shed in the VHR under Criterion D. I agree with this assessment, for the reasons discussed below.

The Behlen Shed was constructed by the Victorian Grain Elevators Board as part of a larger program to standardise, expand and modernise the bulk grain handling and storage network across the State. The place exhibits many of the principal characteristics associated with the class of bulk grain handling and storage. Its economical design and lightweight construction clearly presents as an industrial structure that was used to store bulk grain. The Behlen Shed

maintains a direct connection to the railway network which was an integral part of the transport of grain from Melton to other locations across Victoria.

There are several places from the same class in the VHR that exhibit the same principal characteristics as the Behlen Shed, with greater integrity, technical innovation, or aesthetic interest. Notably, the Former Wimmera Flour Mill and Silo Complex (VHR H1011) at Rupanyup is an integrated complex for the storage and milling of grain that includes a range of structures performing a variety of functions. Other places associated with grain storage and handling include the Former Melvilles Grain Store (VHR H0705) and Exhibition Goods Shed (VHR H0930), and the Marmalake/Murtoa Grain Store (VHR H0791) which is particularly impressive in terms of its scale and the ingenious methods used in its construction.

The Behlen Shed does not represent a notable example of this class that is a fine, influential, or pivotal example when compared to places included in the VHR. Recent alterations to the form and fabric of the Behlen Shed, such as the removal of external machinery and the creation of new openings, have also impacted the integrity of the place.

Criterion E – Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics

The application submits that there is no reasonable prospect of the inclusion of the Behlen Shed in the VHR under Criterion E. I agree with this assessment for the reasons discussed below.

The undulating profile of the wide gauge corrugated metal panels used in the construction of the Behlen Shed demonstrates particular aesthetic characteristics unexpected for a prefabricated structure. However, none of these aesthetic characteristics can be considered beyond the ordinary or outstanding.

While the aesthetic characteristics of the Behlen Shed may be valued at a local level, it does not appear that evidence of these aesthetic values exist within the disciplines of architecture, art or design, or that the Behlen Shed has received wide public acknowledgement for its aesthetic qualities in print, digital media, painting, sculpture, songs, poetry, literature or other media.

Criterion F – Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period

The Exclusion Determination application submits that there is no reasonable prospect of the inclusion of the Behlen Shed, Melton South in the Register under Criterion F.

I agree with this assessment for the reasons discussed below. As a prefabricated structure manufactured in the USA, the Behlen Shed is an interesting example of a structure relying on proprietary technology developed by a private manufacturing company. However, no significant adaptations to this technology were made once the shed was imported into Victoria and erected under the guidance of the Behlen Manufacturing Company.

The Behlen Shed is not recognised as a breakthrough in terms of design, fabrication, or construction technique, as it relied on long-established approaches to prefabrication and the use of lightweight design to address the needs of the industrial and agricultural sectors.

Criterion G – Strong or special association with a particular present-day community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

The application submits that there is no reasonable prospect of the inclusion of the Behlen Shed in the VHR under Criterion G. I agree with this assessment for the reasons discussed below.

The Behlen Shed is most likely valued in the present day to the Melton community as part of the wider railway precinct and for its association with the former grain, hay, and chaff industries that were once a recognisable part of the local economy. However, the story of the Behlen Shed while perhaps important at a community level, is not part of a story that contributes to Victoria's identity. There is no evidence to suggest that the social value of the Behlen Shed resonates beyond Melton across the broader Victorian community.

Criterion H – Special association with the life or works of a person, or group or persons, of importance in Victoria's history

The Exclusion Determination application submits that there is no reasonable prospect of the inclusion of the Behlen Shed in the VHR under Criterion H. I agree with this assessment for the reasons outlined below.

Research has not uncovered evidence of a direct association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history at the Behlen Shed. The Behlen Shed was erected by the Grain Elevators Board of Victoria, a body that played a central role in the development and expansion of bulk grain storage facilities in the State. However, the Behlen Shed does not allow the association between the Board and its importance in Victoria's history to be readily appreciated better than most other places or objects in Victoria. The construction of Behlen Sheds was a small part of a much larger program undertaken by the Board from the 1950s through to the 1980s to standardise, expand and modernise the bulk handling and storage of network across the State.

CONCLUSION:

I am of the view that while the Behlen Shed is recognised to be of heritage significance at a local level - as demonstrated by its inclusion in the Heritage Overlay of the Melton Planning Scheme - it has no reasonable prospect of being included in the VHR as it does not meet any of the Step 2 tests for State level significance in the Guidelines.

On 28 June 2024, the LXP and the City of Melton were advised on the making of an Exclusion Determination. The Exclusion Determination will also be advertised in a newspaper circulating in the local area and be available via Heritage Victoria's website.

If a review of the decision is not requested the place will be excluded from the VHR. The Executive Director cannot accept a new nomination of the place for a period of five years under section 28(1A) of the Act unless new information of significance is received.

If you have any queries about the process to review an exclusion determination, please contact the Heritage Council on 03 8508 1656 or email heritage.council@delwp.vic.gov.au.

DATE OF DECISION:

28 June 2024

SIGNED:



Steven Avery
Executive Director,
Heritage Victoria