

**H2337 Royal Park
Flemington Road, Parkville
Permit Application P30681**

Why is Royal Park of cultural heritage significance?

Royal Park is included in the Victorian Heritage Register under the provisions of the *Heritage Act 2017* for its historic and aesthetic importance to the State of Victoria.

Royal Park is historically significant:

- as an outstanding and largely intact example of the public parks set aside by Lieutenant-Governor Charles La Trobe from the mid-1840s as part of his vision for the city of Melbourne;
- as the site of scientific institutions important to the development of the colony, including an Experimental Farm (1858) and the Acclimatisation Society of Victoria (1861), part of which later became the Royal Melbourne Zoological Gardens (VHR H1074);
- as the starting point of Burke and Wills' ill-fated expedition to the Gulf of Carpentaria (1860), an event which gained national recognition and was depicted by prominent Australian artists, including William Strutt and Nicholas Chevalier;
- for its use for military purposes since the 1860s; and
- for its long association with sport in Victoria.

Royal Park is aesthetically significant:

- as an outstanding example of a large metropolitan park, particularly notable for its remnant indigenous vegetation and important views to the city. It is the only example of an inner Melbourne park which retains stands of remnant indigenous vegetation and clearly demonstrates an ongoing dedication to planting native and indigenous plants over a period of 150 years.

What was the permit application for?

In August 2020, Heritage Victoria received a permit application to demolish the existing amenities building and construct a new electrical substation, including new driver amenities, new hard surfacing and relocation of poles, bollards, metal fence lines and associated works. The architecturally designed substation will be 5.125 metres high and 28.07 metres long, with a width of 5.54 metres, constructed in brick with a decorative brick pattern and partially covered in creeper. Its length necessitates the relocation of a single Canary Island Date Palm 20 metres north along the tramline.

The substation has been designed to accommodate the equipment as well as internal services such as cable ladders, lighting, pipework etc. and minimum safe electrical clearances between and around the equipment. Furthermore, the footprint of the building is constrained by the available land between the tram line and the VicTrack boundary on the park side, requiring a long narrow building.

The substation is required to upgrade the power system for Melbourne's tram network to ensure there is consistent power to operate new E-class trams on the West Coburg tram route and maintain the operation of the inner north tram network. The spacing of substations is critical to the operation of the tram network with a higher concentration of substations required closer to the CBD to support multiple routes.

Why has the permit been approved?

The *Heritage Act 2017* requires the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria ('the Executive Director') to consider various matters in determining a permit application including the extent that the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the place; the extent that refusal would affect the reasonable or economic use of the place; and any submissions received in response to public notice of the permit application.

On 10 December 2020, the Executive Director approved the permit application for the following reasons:

- The proposal will not obscure or detract from the historical or aesthetic significance of the park.
- The design and location of the building will have a minimal impact the setting and vistas of the park or its aesthetic significance.
- The proposal represents a considered, justified and appropriate balance between the need to accommodate new and larger trams and better support the local tram network and its users and protecting the cultural heritage values of the park.
- The relocation of the palm tree by a small distance will not detrimentally impact the immediate or wider landscape and vegetation values.
- There is demonstrated evidence that to refuse the application would be to affect the reasonable and economic use of this part of the place.