

H2377 Morwell Power Station and Briquette Factory, 412 Commercial Road MORWELL

Permit Application P28546

Why is the Morwell Power Station and Briquette Factory of heritage significance?

The Morwell Power Station and Briquette Factory is included in the Victorian Heritage Register under the provisions of the *Heritage Act 2017* for its historical, rarity, representative and associative significance.

The Morwell Power Station and Briquette Factory was the second of Victoria's large-scale power stations, and was constructed by the State Electricity Commission of Victoria between 1949 and 1959. The site has remained largely intact since the 1950s and demonstrates the processes of brown coal electricity generation and briquette production.

In March 2017 following an application to the Heritage Council, an Interim Protection Order was issued for the Morwell Power Station and Briquette Factory. The place was subsequently included in the Victorian Heritage Register on 1 March 2018. The place was registered as it met a threshold for cultural heritage significance.

What was the permit application for?

In March 2018 the liquidator acting on behalf of the owner, Energy Brix Australia Corporation Pty Ltd applied for a permit under the *Heritage Act 2017* for the demolition of the Morwell Power Station, but not including the Briquette Factories.

The proposed works to Morwell Power Station included in the permit application are as follows:

- Demolition of the Morwell Power Station including
 - Four chimneys and ancillary structures including the control room and transmission yard,
 - Machinery and plant including boilers, burners and turbines,
 - Amenities buildings, chemicals laboratory and sites of the former cooling towers and offices.

Morwell Power Station ceased operation in 2014. The condition of the Power Station is deteriorating, and contaminated with asbestos. The Power Station is no longer used for generating electricity and it is considered by the applicant that no economic and reasonable use of the place is feasible unless the Power Station is demolished and the site remediated.

How were public submissions considered in the decision-making process?

The permit application was advertised on 29 March 2018 in the *Herald Sun* and through the placement of advertising signs at the power station site. Application documents were also available on the Heritage Victoria website during this period. The advertising period concluded on 13 April 2018. Thirteen written submissions were received during the advertising period. Objections to the proposal generally related to a desire to adaptively reuse the power station building. Supporting submissions cited the health risks of asbestos if the power station was retained or adaptively reused. Heritage Victoria were only able to consider the content of submissions which related to the application under assessment.

Several issues raised by submitters have been considered in formulating the conditions associated with the permit. These include the preparation of a detailed demolition methodology; the retention of technical information and other archival records associated with the use of the site for future

research; the preparation of detailed records of the place prior to demolition; the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan for the retained Briquette Factories; and interpretation of the site including stories of workers.

Why has the permit application been approved?

The *Heritage Act 2017* requires 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. Clearly, the demolition of Morwell Power Station is a negative impact on the heritage values of the place, and on that basis alone, a permit would normally be refused. However, the *Heritage Act 2017* also stipulates that the Executive Director must consider the impact that a permit refusal would have on the reasonable economic use of the place.

On 6 June 2018, the Executive Director, after considering all submissions, approved the permit application as it was considered that the refusal of the proposed demolition of the Morwell Power Station as described above would affect the reasonable economic use of the site.

Heritage Victoria acknowledges the negative impact of demolition of the power station.

What are the conditions of the permit?

In mitigating the negative impacts of the demolition of the Morwell Power Station, the permit requires:

- Detailed archival recording of the buildings and elements that will be demolished.
- Heritage interpretation of the history and operation of the power station and briquette factories. This will include the recording of oral histories with former workers, and 3D recording and modelling of the entire site including the briquette factories and associated buildings.
- Identification of opportunities to relocate significant equipment from the power station to museums and/or other organisations in the local area which may have an interest in these items.
- The retention of technical and administrative records for research and archival purposes.
- The preparation of a Conservation Management Plan, and schedule of urgent repairs and conservation works to the Briquette Factories which must be undertaken in accordance with a future permit.
- A security to ensure satisfactory completion of the urgent repair works to the Briquette Factories.

Can I appeal the decision?

The applicant can make a written submission to the Heritage Council to review the decision of Heritage Victoria or the conditions imposed in the permit.

What is the future for the site?

The land associated with Morwell Power Station and Briquette Factories continues to be included in the Victorian Heritage Register. Any future works on the site would require an approved permit or permit exemption from Heritage Victoria.