

FEDERATION SQUARE FOH TEMPORARY CONTAINER HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT



Federation Square is located on the lands of the Wurundjeri people, who have been custodians of the land for thousands of years. This report was also prepared on Wurundjeri Country.

Federation Square stands on the Yarra Bank where the peoples of the Kulin nation and their visitors have traditionally met and gathered, a connection to Country that is maintained to this day. We acknowledge their stories, connection to land, water and culture which is embedded in Country. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and acknowledge the stories, traditions and cultures of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

1. Introduction

This Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) has been prepared to accompany a heritage permit application for a temporary Front of House AV shipping container at Federation Square. MAP Co was established by the Victorian Government in 2022 to manage the revitalisation of the state-owned cultural precinct spanning the Yarra River at St Kilda Road. Within its portfolio is the operation and management of Federation Square, succeeding the previous Fed Square Pty Ltd.

The proposed works represent the temporary installation of an AV Container to facilitate Spring to Summer programming within Federation Square.

In summary, the proposal is to replicate the previously approved exemption P41420, to temporarily remove part of a handrail around the garden bed for the installation of a shipping container for a multi-year exemption for a maximum total period of 5 years, with a consecutive 6 month installation between the months of September to March within the plaza, at the northern garden bed south of Time Out cafe. The lockable shipping container will be matte dark charcoal grey with an occasional repeat Fed Sq logo. Please find attached specific details of the proposal and photos of the current placement of the container.

1.1. Background

A heritage exemption (P41420) was issued in September 2025 for Installation of a shipping container for a 6 month period between September 9th, 2025 to March 26th, 2026.

MAP Co were advised within this exemption, that we were expected to make an application for a permit for installation of the same or similar works for future years.

1.2. VHR Registration

Federation Square was included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) on 12 September 2019 as Registered Place H2390, and is subject to the provisions of the Heritage Act 2017.

The VHR extent of registration as gazetted is shown in Diagram 2390 (Figure 1) and described as:

“All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 2390 encompassing part of the land shown hatched on Diagram 2390, comprising all of Crown Allotment 2140, City of Melbourne, Parish of North Melbourne and Part of Crown Allotment 2035, City of Melbourne, Parish of North Melbourne and part of Crown Allotment 6, Section 19E, City of Melbourne, Parish of North Melbourne and part of the road reserves Casement No. 218507701 (Flinders Street road reserve) and Casement No.218504542 (Swanston Street road reserve) but excluding all of the following: all land within lot 2 on Title Plan 018290B (which comprises railway assets generally located below the level of the deck); the balustrade along the southern edge of Princes Walk; and all strata below ground level along the alignment of Princes Walk.”

1.3. Structure of this Document

This Heritage Impact Statement has been prepared to:

- review the heritage significance and values of Federation Square and present the rationale for the location of the proposed structure.
- provide a summary description of the proposed works (Section 3.0), and
- assess the potential of the works to impact the heritage significance of Federation Square, as well as other considerations relevant to the determination of the heritage permit (Section 4.0).

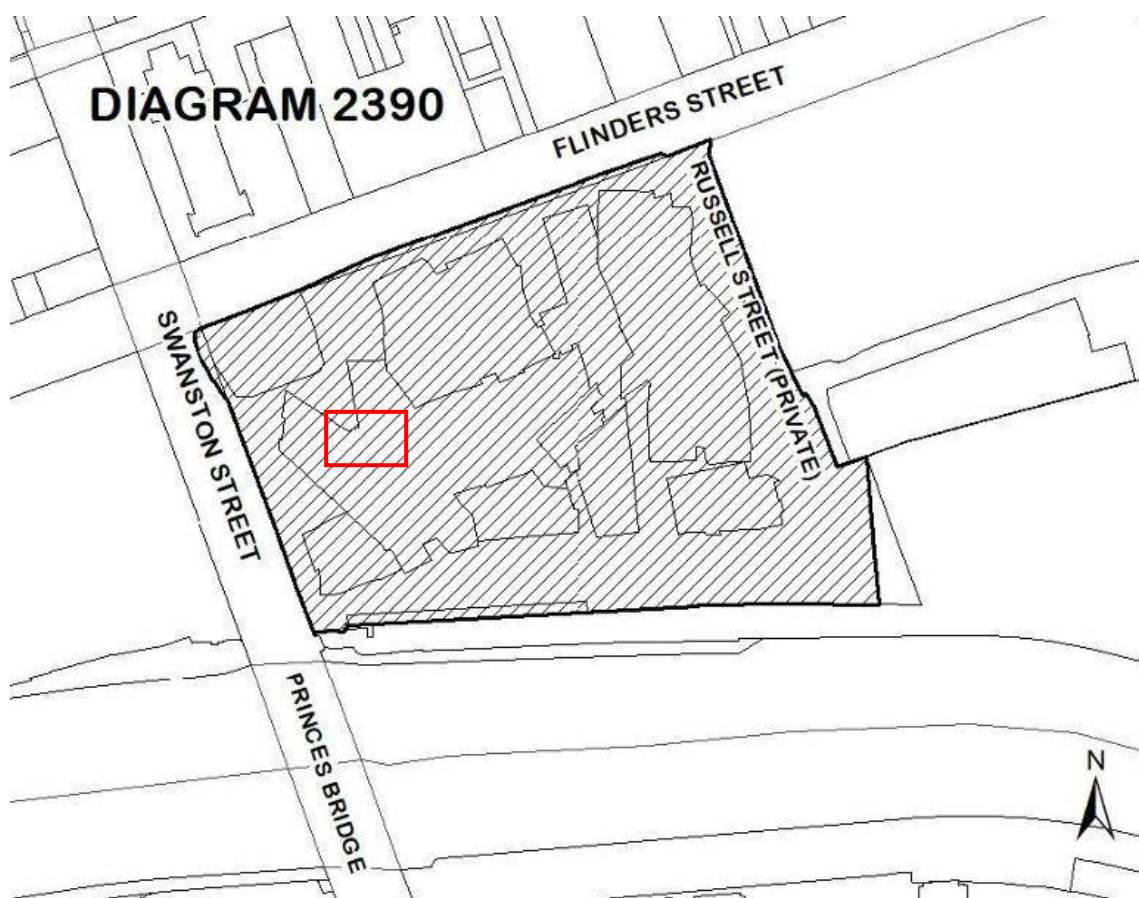


Figure 1 Diagram 2390; the approximate area to be addressed by the temporary structure installation within the proposal area are indicated (red outline)
Source: Victorian Heritage Database

2. What is affected by the Proposal?

2.1. Heritage Significance of Federation Square

The role and purpose of Federation Square is codified in the Civic and Cultural Charter (1996-1997), which articulated the Victorian Government and City of Melbourne's objectives for Federation Square as follows:

The underlying purpose of Federation Square as determined by the Government of Victoria and the City of Melbourne is to achieve specific cultural and civic objectives for Victoria:

- to provide a stimulating, educational, comfortable and entertaining destination venue to Victorians, and to interstate and international visitors.
- to represent Melbourne as a leading city for the arts and for innovation and creativity in all forms of cultural expression.
- to communicate the City's leadership in contemporary ideas and expression.
- to provide a focal point for arts and cultural festivals and activities and important civic commemorations.
- to reflect Melbourne's cultural diversity in its overall operations and programming.
- to attract local, national and international visitors to Federation Square.

All aspects and areas of Federation Square are required to be operated and managed in accordance with the Charter.

In 2019, the Heritage Council of Victoria (HCV) determined that Federation Square should be included in the Victorian Heritage Register. A Statement of Significance was prepared by Heritage Victoria and is published on the Victorian Heritage Database.

What is significant?

Federation Square, designed and constructed between 1996 and 2002, including footings and crash walls between the rail lines; decking over the rail lines; the passive air-conditioning system known as the Labyrinth; the catenary lighting system; landscape elements, including the paved Plaza incorporating the artwork Nearingnew, inscriptions in the bluestone steps and apron facing St Paul's Court, planters and Yellow Gum trees (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon* ssp. *megalocarpa* 'Rosea'); and buildings (exteriors and some interiors, notably the NGVA interiors).

How is it significant?

Federation Square is of historical, architectural, aesthetic, cultural and technical significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

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

Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural place.

Criterion E Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

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

Criterion G Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social,

cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

Why is it significant?

Federation Square is of historical significance as Victoria's preeminent memorial to the Federation of Australia (1901). The principle of federation The precinct was conceived as an ensemble where no single entity or cultural institution was dominant, and where each component part would have its own identity within the ensemble. This aspiration is expressed in the façade treatments which are based on the 'Conway Tessellation', a single triangular element that can be applied in an infinite number of compositional sequences and at multiple scales to achieve variety (or difference) within a coherent whole. Federation is referenced in the Nearing artwork by Paul Carter which forms part of the Plaza, and inscriptions in the bluestone steps and apron facing St Paul's Court. Federation Square is also of historical significance to Victoria as a tangible expression of Melbourne's long and deeply held aspiration for a large public square for ceremonial, civic, and recreational purposes in the city. (Criterion A)

Federation Square is a notable example of a public square. While it is a mixed-use precinct, the primary function of the place (and a defining aspect of its identity) is as a public square. It is a fine example of its class and displays high quality characteristics including a large, hardpaved and centrally located open space connected by laneways and framed by built form. It is distinguished by the distinctive, coherent and finely resolved architectural language of the principal building's secondary skins which variously embody aspects of the design principles that underpin Federation Square; the design principles are also expressed in the interior of NGV Australia. The place is also highly valued by groups within the community, another typological characteristic of public squares. (Criterion D)

Federation Square is of significance to Victoria for its aesthetic and architectural qualities. The precinct is a visually distinctive arrangement of non-orthogonal forms that uses a design grammar of lines and fractal geometries to achieve a complex aesthetic of coherence and difference. It is the outcome of a theoretical approach to architectural production informed by LAB Architecture Studio's intellectual interests, including a rejection of classical (Euclidian) ordering systems and an engagement with the complexities of twenty-first century urban environments. Federation Square is one of the most awarded projects in the history of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) Victoria, and has been critically acclaimed in state, national and international architectural publications. (Criterion E)

Federation Square is significant for its technical and creative achievements. It demonstrates a high degree of creative achievement specifically as related to the innovative architectural language adopted. This language, incorporating non-orthogonal geometries and embedded digital information systems, was innovative and beyond the ordinary for the period (late- 1990s). The processes of design and construction (including computer-assisted drafting and 3D modelling techniques), the sustainability systems employed (notably the Labyrinth) and the structural solutions for the crash walls and decking over the railway lines variously demonstrate a high degree of technical achievement as conceived and delivered in the late- 1990s. (Criterion F)

Federation Square is socially significant and is valued by communities and cultural groups for a range of cultural and experiential reasons. It is Victoria's preeminent civic space for formal and informal public gatherings and is regularly used in times of celebration, grief and protest. Federation Square is used and appreciated by communities of locality (the Victorian and/or Melbourne community); affected communities (including visitors to Melbourne); communities of identity (communities for whom the use of Federation Square is part of an annual cycle of events that enables these

communities to reaffirm their identity in a prominent public setting); communities of interest (including communities that aim to affirm Federation Square’s civic purpose); and communities of practice (including communities who engage with the site’s cultural institutions and sports enthusiasts) (Criterion G)

Following the place’s heritage registration, a Statement of Design Principles (Design Principles) (Lovell Chen, May 2020) and a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) (Lovell Chen, June 2020) were prepared for Federation Square. These documents provide further detail about the place and its values, along with guidance for their management and conservation. The Statement of Design Principles provides a short format review of the theoretical positions and experimentation explored by Lab Architects, and a distillation of key principles that are embodied in Federation Square’s architectural design; the CMP identifies these Design Principles as an important reference in the place’s ongoing management.

2.2. Significant element, areas and attributes

The CMP provides further detail identifying and describing the elements and attributes of the place that are ‘intrinsic’ to the heritage significance of Federation Square. Elements and attributes that are relevant to the proposed works have been excerpted from the document and summarised at [Table 1](#).

Table 1 Significant elements, areas and attributes related to the current proposal (Source: adapted from the CMP Table 3, p. 55)

Heritage Council Criteria	Buildings, areas, elements and attributes	Applicable Design Principles
Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria’s cultural history	A civic square for Melbourne	N/A
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.	Spaces for public gathering: the Plaza, Atrium and Deakin Edge	Non-traditional site planning. A framework for control that accommodates variety. Integration and interaction
Strong or special association with a particular present-day community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons	Places/spaces valued by community/cultural groups for whom Federation Square is a place of communal sentiment/ connection include the Swanston Street steps (as a place to meet), Deakin Edge, the Atrium and the Plaza.	N/A
Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.	Hard landscape: the Plaza surface, including sandstone paving, ‘Nearamnew’ artwork and six integrated beds planted with Red Flowering Yellow Gums (Eucalyptus leucoxylon megalocarpa ‘Rosea’)	Non-traditional site Planning. A framework for control that accommodates variety. Integration and interaction

Figure 17 Levels of significance: level 1



Levels of significance: level 1 (Source: CMP page 62)

2.3. Managing Significance

Development of the proposal has been guided by management policies in the CMP.4

Approach to conservation

In order to maintain the currency, relevance and vitality of Federation Square as a place of social value, the CMP establishes an approach to heritage conservation that accommodates change. The overarching approach is described in:

Policy 10: The managers of Federation Square should promote the purpose of the place, as a means of stimulating use of and engagement with it. The approach to conservation of Federation Square should give emphasis to:

- Retaining and enhancing the meanings and associations of the place;
- Accommodating the potential for adaptation, recognising that the process of adaption should result in minimal or no impact on the cultural significance of the place, consistent with Article 21 of the Burra Charter; and
- Enhancing understanding of and engagement with Federation Square through promoting the meanings and cultural heritage significance of the place.

Policy 37: The Plaza should be maintained as an exposed and hard-surfaced public square:

- There is limited potential for major physical change to the Plaza. It is the signature public space at the site and embodies, physically and symbolically, principles that are central to an understanding of Federation Square.
- Initiatives to ‘soften’ the external spaces at Federation Square, through the introduction of grassed areas, additional trees and enclosures, might reasonably form part of a future brief for the reactivation of the River Terrace.

Policy 38: Alterations to the Plaza to provide universal access should be the subject of comprehensive analysis by a specialist consultant.

- When the opportunity arises – for instance, when there is a requirement to replace the membrane (see also Section 6.4.4) – it is recommended that an access audit be commissioned to explore all available options for the delivery of improved, and compliant, arrangements for equitable access at Federation Square.
- It is noted that the delivery of universal access to the Plaza will, to some degree, result in physical impacts to the space. A key consideration will be managing the nature and extent of the impacts.

Policy 39: The Nearamnew artwork should be maintained and conserved.

- In the event that repair or replacement (partial or wholesale) of Nearamnew is required the works should be undertaken in consultation with the artist (Paul Carter).
- Copies of the original digital files (updated, as required, for compliance with current systems) should be held by FSPL and form part of the Federation Square archive (see Section 7.6 ‘Collections and record keeping’).

Policy 45: The Plaza planters should be maintained such that they continue to support the stands of Yellow Gum trees and contribute to the presentation of the Plaza

- The Plaza and its western interfaces include a number of ‘patios’, or terraces, adjacent to tenancies. These flat areas, paved with dimensioned sandstone, are populated with seating, tables and shade umbrellas. They make an important contribution to the animation of the

Plaza in all seasons

Policy 64: The managers of Federation Square should continue to ensure that Federation Square is accessible to all communities, groups and individuals

- This can be achieved by maintaining current operations and applying the Civic and Cultural Charter.

Policy 68: The combination of civic, cultural and commercial activities at Federation Square is part of its identity and should be maintained.

- Federation Square should: not become a cultural enclave; commercial activity should not be allowed to dominate; and the use of Federation Square as a place of congregation for all should remain pre-eminent
- Future programming of the site should maintain the integration of commercial, cultural and civic activities at the site, and the unexpected relationships that this creates. While certain paces lend themselves to particular activities (for instance, active edges to the key public spaces), it is not a place where 'rules' regarding zoning apply.

Policy 68: The managers of Federation Square should continue to ensure that impacts on physical fabric relating to the management of events are minimised/avoided

- The Fed Square Venue and Events Manual should continue to provide the basis for the management of events at Federation Square.

Fed Sq's ability to program and manage live events and cultural festivals within the Square is reliant on the existing technology and infrastructure, and until recently, the installation of temporary marquees to act as an AV/production control room. The changing expectations that attach to major public landmarks and destinations, and the functional limitations and inadequacies of the current stage AV control infrastructure to manage live events, has highlighted the need for a functional, non-temporary solution to ensure Fed Sq can continue to program live events on the main stage.

2.4. Background

MAP Co is progressing toward an architecturally designed semi-permanent solution to house Front of House AV requirements long-term. The semi-permanent in-built structure is intended for the same location as recently approved temporary shipping container within the northern garden bed. This CAPEX project is in its initial design stages and is estimated to be completed within three to five years. Given this timeline, we are seeking a consecutive multi-year permit to install the temporary shipping container annually, consistent with the approach approved under Permit Exemption No. P41420.

In recent years, Fed Square has transitioned from one-off public art installations (often presented in isolation from precinct partners) to delivering - in collaboration with many organisations - a vibrant free music and film program alongside significant sporting and community cultural festivals. These programs have a stronger community impact, attract larger and more diverse audiences, support artists and partner organisations, and generate substantial benefit for tenants and the city. This work directly supports our Civic and Cultural Charter.

Our peak programming season runs from late September to March and attracts millions of visitors. These events require a Front of House structure capable of safely accommodating at least four crew members and extensive AV infrastructure. Historically, this has been delivered via a large temporary white canvas marquee

placed directly in front of the stage (Figure 1 & 2). These marquees are unsecured, require daily bump in/out of technical equipment, and deliver poor working conditions on hot days. They remain in-situ at least four days per week, with long periods where large parts of the Square must be taped off as forklifts move equipment in and out. This has had a cumulative negative impact on public access and amenity throughout the six-month season. The marquee also blocks sightlines to the main stage for approximately 25% of the audience during concerts (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – The white marquee location in central position that blocks sightlines

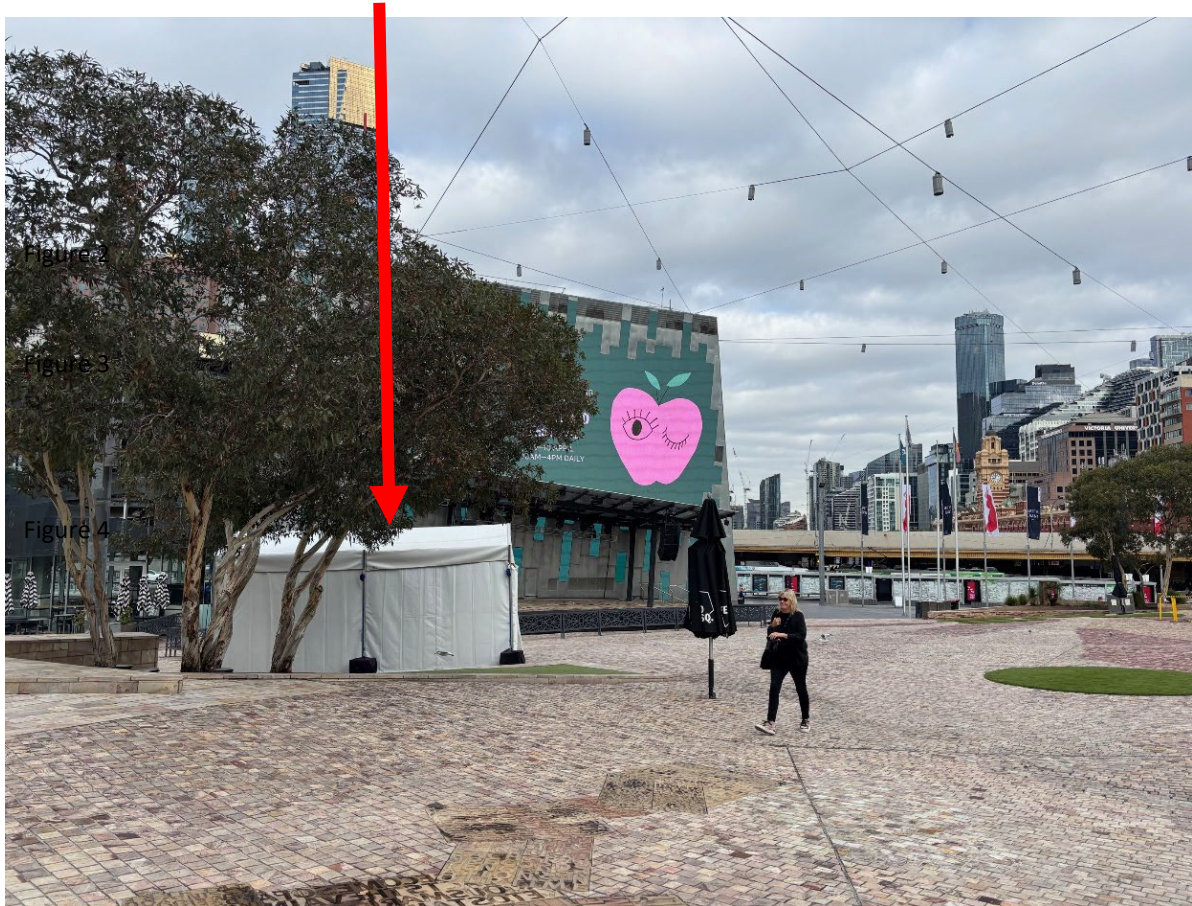


Figure 2 – The white marquee in front of the stage



3. What is proposed?

Annual Installation of a shipping container for a 6 month period (excluding bump in/out within the plaza, at the northern garden bed south of Time Out cafe.

The container will be installed on 9.5 x 4m stage riser constructed partially over the stepped hard landscaping around the garden bed, necessitating the temporary removal of a portion of handrail at the garden bed.

In comparison to previously frequent use of temporary marquees, the proposed temporary shipping container is a noted improvement to both public amenity and the visual presentation of the plaza. It provides a consistent, safe and low-impact solution for our seasonal events program, replacing the need for multiple temporary marquees to be bumped in and out throughout the season. This change reduces risks to safety, improves visitor experience, and lessens impacts on the heritage fabric of the site.

Our approach - approved as part of Permit Exemption No. P41420 - applied a common-sense solution. We installed a shipping container to the side of the Square rather than in front of the stage, reducing sightline impacts (Figure 3 and 4) and limiting vehicle and equipment movements to a single bump in/out. This significantly improved the visitor experience, preserved open public space, and reduced visual clutter. The container is secure, allowing all technical equipment to remain on site, further reducing operational movement. With high-quality cladding, the container delivers a more discreet and visually coherent outcome than the former marquee.

The reduction in bump in/out activity decreases truck and forklift movements, eliminates ongoing safety

bollards and temporary fencing, and ensures the Square remains open and welcoming while still enabling the delivery of a rich cultural program.

Our broader objective is to balance daily public use with major event activation while preserving the integrity, openness and accessibility of this heritage place.

Until the semi-permanent in-built solution is installed, we propose to install the temporary shipping container annually for a period of six months (excluding bump in/out), and to temporarily remove the handrail to accommodate the structure. The handrail will be reinstated each year upon the container's removal.

Method of placement and protection of the hard and soft landscaping.

MAP Co operational teams continue to deliver all event activities with due heritage consideration. The details of placement method and protection of hard and soft landscaping are below.

A crane truck (as opposed to a standalone mobile crane) will be used for its compact footprint and integrated lifting capability, reducing the need for multiple vehicle movements on sensitive ground.

The ground bearing pressure exerted by the crane truck is manageable when distributed via bog mats. Bog mats selected based on load rating and ground conditions will also be used beneath the shipping container.

Detail and finish

The shipping container to be wrapped in matte dark charcoal grey with an occasional repeat 'FedSq' logo (Figure 5 and 6)

Figure 3 - Aerial view showing proposed location of container (green) to white marquee (red)

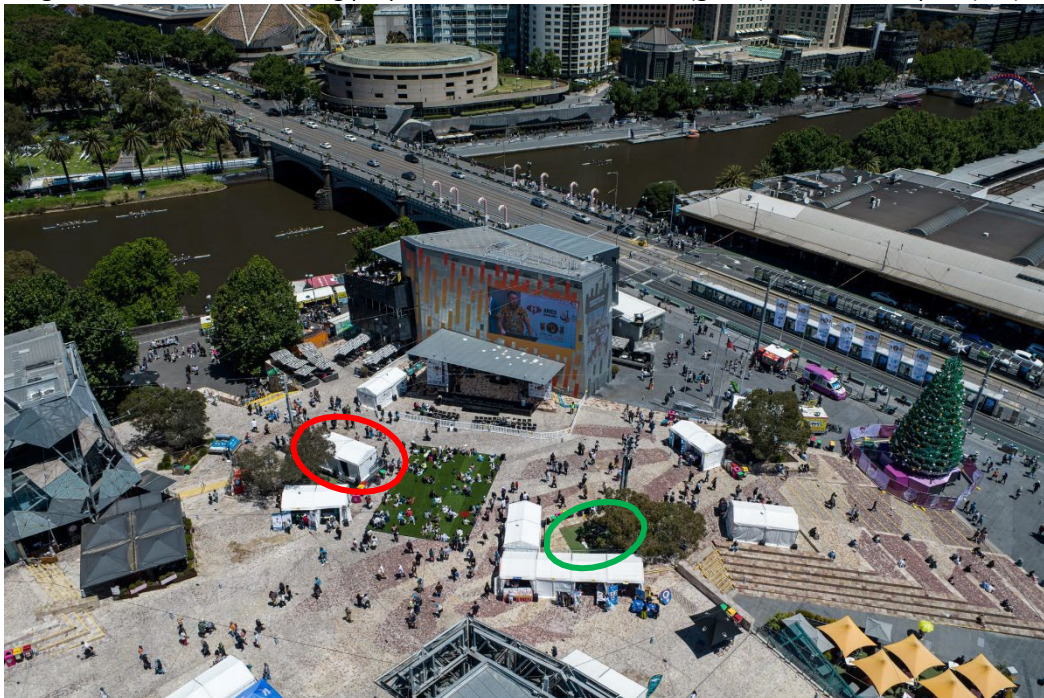


Figure 4 – Proposed location to the Nth edge of square, within the garden bed, improving sightlines



Figure 5 - Proposed Lockable and clad container to the left of Main Square entry – demonstrating improved visual clutter and preserving open public space



Figure 6 - Proposed Lockable and clad container front view



Figure 7 - Proposed Lockable and clad container from behind (far right) - demonstrating improved visual clutter and preserving open public space



Figure 8 - Proposed Lockable and clad container from behind



4.0 What are the impacts of the proposal?

Section 101 of the *Heritage Act* requires and allows the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria to consider a number of factors in making a determination to approve or refuse an application for a heritage permit. The following considerations are relevant to the current application and the assessment provided in this HIS:

The extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place or registered object [s. 101(2)(a)]

The extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or registered object [s. 101(2)(b)]

The following assessment is addressed to these considerations.

4.1 Physical impacts [s. 101(2)(a)]

The temporary shipping container proposed poses little to no physical impact to significant features and fabric at Federation Square. As outlined above, the proposed installation and bump out will adopt strategies and methods that have already been demonstrated to reduce the impact to the cobblestones and garden bed.

Crane Truck placement method

A crane truck (as opposed to a standalone mobile crane) is used for its compact footprint and integrated lifting capability, reducing the need for multiple vehicle movements on sensitive ground.

The crane truck selected will be assessed by qualified engineers, to confirmed that:

- Load capacities for both the crane and the truck chassis are within acceptable limits for the container weight and lift radius.
- The ground bearing pressure exerted by the crane truck is manageable when distributed via bog mats.
- The lift plan complies with relevant Australian Standards (e.g., AS 2550 series).

Ground Protection of synthetic grass and cobblestone

To protect hard and soft surfaces:

Bog mats (engineered timber or composite) will be placed under:

- All crane truck stabilisers and outriggers.
- The container's final resting location if required.

Mats will be selected based on load rating and ground conditions, ensuring:

- Even weight distribution.
- Prevention of rutting, compaction, or surface damage.

4.2 Impacts to visual presentation [s. 101(2)(a)]

As described above, the proposed temporary shipping container improves both public amenity and the visual presentation of the square. From the recent installation, we have seen first-hand that it provides a consistent, safe and low-impact solution for our seasonal events program, replacing the need for temporary marquees to be bumped in and out multiple times a week throughout the six-month season.

The location and approach – in line with the approved Permit Exemption No. P41420 - has proven to improve sightlines for visitors experiencing the square, by replacing the need to install these white marquees centrally located in the square. Importantly, by sitting off to one side within the footprint of the northern garden bed, it preserves the open public space and lessens the impacts on the architectural presentation of significant buildings and areas of the site. The external presentation of the shipping container adopts the principles in the approved Permit Exemption No. P41420 and have been designed to improve Federation Square’s presentation.

The proposed temporary shipping container supports Federation Square’s social values, its key uses and meanings, and its public perception as a safe and inviting gathering place in the context of nearby landmarks and comparative gathering places.

The effect of this approach is to continue reinvestment in the visual presentation, public perception and cultural value of Federation Square, all aspects of its heritage significance as recognised in its VHR registration.

4.3 Reasonable economic use [s. 101(2)(b)]

The reasonable use of the place historically and currently is as a civic place of formal and informal public gathering, both during the day and at night. As outlined above, the current white marquee approach across a busy events and activations calendar at Federation Square creates visual and sightline impacts to event attendees, negatively impacting how the place should be experienced, from a safety, way finding and visual perspective. Installing a temporary shipping container during our busiest season of events will not only promote the ongoing reasonable use of the place but also bring operational safety in line with contemporary standards.

A number of cultural institutions and commercial vendors are located within the registered extent of Federation Square. The proposed temporary shipping container approach promotes visitor experience, safety and the visual appeal of the site and its institutions, ensuring the ongoing economic use of Federation Square which was inherent to its mixed development model. A refusal of key event infrastructure and presentation improvements proposed here may ultimately impact public perception and visitation of both the Square itself and its resident institutions and vendors, and compromise the site’s ongoing viability for its institutional and commercial tenants.

4.4 Duties of a public authority [s. 101(2)(d)]

MAP Co has been tasked by the Victorian Government with managing the renewal of the Melbourne Arts Precinct, including the ongoing operation and stewardship of Federation Square. As part of this responsibility, MAP Co is required to maintain Federation Square’s social value and relevance as a place for public visitation, gathering, recreation, and cultural events.

This proposal represents an investment in improving the public realm, supporting safe and accessible public use of the site while continuing to uphold the commitments outlined in the Federation Square Civic and Cultural Charter.

MAP Co’s relevant purposes and functions are established under the State Owned Enterprises Act 1992, with MAP Co gazetted in 2022 to improve the commercial efficiency, performance, and accountability of state-owned bodies. Under this framework, MAP Co has a responsibility to ensure that Federation Square operates efficiently, remains financially sustainable, and contributes positively to the Victorian economy while maintaining its civic and cultural role.

5. Assessment Summary

The proposed temporary Front of House AV shipping container at Federation Square has been carefully assessed against the heritage significance of the site and the requirements of the Heritage Act 2017. The proposal will have minimal physical and visual impact on the cultural heritage significance of Federation Square, as it is a temporary installation located within the northern garden bed and designed to preserve the open civic character of the plaza.

The shipping container replaces the previously used white marquee system, which created greater visual clutter, blocked sightlines, and required frequent vehicle and equipment movements that impacted public access and amenity. By consolidating Front of House operations into a secure, discreet structure positioned to the side of the square, the proposal improves visitor experience, reduces operational risks, protects heritage fabric, and maintains the openness and functionality of the plaza.

The proposal aligns with the Conservation Management Plan and Civic and Cultural Charter by supporting Federation Square's role as Victoria's primary civic and cultural gathering space. It enables ongoing delivery of large-scale public programming, enhances safety and accessibility, reduces physical and visual impacts associated with event infrastructure, and supports the reasonable and ongoing economic and social use of the site.

Given the temporary nature of the works, minimal impact on significant heritage elements, demonstrated operational benefits, and strong alignment with conservation policies and civic objectives, the proposal represents an appropriate and balanced approach to managing change at Federation Square.