Application for exclusion

Before you start

You are logged in with the below email address. Once you submit this form the below email address will be used for all future correspondence: [redacted]

Please call Heritage Victoria to discuss your application prior to its lodgement

Telephone: (03) 7022 6390

Email: heritage.registrations@transport.vic.gov.au

What does exclusion from the Victorian Heritage Register mean?

Exclusion from the Victorian Heritage Register will result in a 5-year period during which Heritage Victoria will be unable to accept nominations for the place or object for the Victorian Heritage Register. For more information refer to the Heritage Victoria website.

Who can apply for an exclusion?

Exclusions can only be applied for by a government asset manager, a government Department Head, a public authority, or an Administrative Office Head when the application is in facilitation of a major development which costs at least $5 million.

If you don't know whether you are able to make this application, please contact us on the above details.

Who can complete this form?

This form must be completed a person with an appropriate level of knowledge and experience in the identification and assessment of places, objects, or land in order to determine heritage significance or value, being a person with a relevant tertiary qualification and/or extensive relevant experience.

What is the fee for applying?

An application for exclusion requires a fee payment. For all fee details visit Heritage Victorias's website

Your details

Please confirm or update your details before proceeding.

First name	Trinity
Last name	Gurich
Business or organisation name	Major Road Projects Victoria

Position title

Contact number [redacted]

Please see the *Privacy collection statement* for information on how the details you provide will be used.

Contact details

Who is the applicant for this Exclusion Determination? The applicant is a government asset manager or public authority

Please provide the contact details for the person acting on behalf of the public authority / government asset manager for this application below.

Details for the government asset manager or public authority

Name of *Minister/*entity /*public authority VIDA Roads

***ABN/*ACN/*ARBN** 69 981 208 782

Position title Program Director

First name Tim

Last name Price

Email [redacted]

Contact number [redacted]

Postal address 180 Lonsdale Street

Suburb Melbourne

State Victoria

Postcode 3000

Country Australia

I am also the owner of this place No

Owner or Government asset manager

First name	Fiona
Last name	Adamson
Business or organisation name	Crown land – Roads Corp (DTP)
ABN	69 981 208 782
Position title	Head, Transport for Victoria
Email	
Contact number	
Postal address	1 Spring Street
Suburb	Melbourne
State	VIC
Postcode	3000
Country	
Do you have other relevant contact details you want to provide us	No
The works involve common property	No

Pre-application details

Have you had a pre-application discussion with Heritage Victoria in relation to this application?	No

Major development

Provide a brief description of the major development to which the application relates	Western Highway Section 2B Upgrade. The represents the upgrade of the 12 kilometres of Western Highway between Buangor and Ararat. This stretch of busy highway is currently 1 lane in each direction, impacting journey reliability and providing fewer opportunities to safely overtake. As the number of vehicles travelling along this section of the highway has significantly increased, so too has the crash rate, with 158 crashes and 22 fatalities on the Western Highway between Ballarat and Stawell in recent years. Upgrading this section of the Western Highway will make it safer for the many road users who rely on this highway, including freight, farming, grain production and tourism. As part of the upgrade between Buangor and Ararat, we will: add an extra lane in each direction to provide safer overtaking opportunities and improve journey reliability add a centre median that will separate carriageways, reducing the likelihood of vehicles accidentally veering into oncoming traffic install barriers to reduce the risk of head-on collisions build a new interchange at Hillside Road to make it easier and safer for vehicles to enter and exit the Western Highway build new bridges over the railway line and the Hopkins River. For more information see: https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/projects/roads/western-highway-upgrade/buangor-to-ararat
Estimated cost of the major development ($)	[redacted]
Impact of major development on place or object	The Western Highway Section 2B upgrade will involve the construction of a new bridge over the Hopkins River. Bridge construction will impact the bluestone and removal of the bluestone must be assumed during the project.

Details of the place or object

Type	Place

Place or object details

Place or object name	Hopkins River blustone surface
Address	Hopkins River, Ararat 2018\PP2964
Responsible Authority	ARARAT RURAL CITY
Victorian Heritage Inventory number (if any)	
National Trust reference number (if known)	

Has the place or object previously been identified in a heritage study? If yes please give details.	
Does this place have a local Heritage Overlay (HO) within a planning scheme?	No
Briefly describe the extent of the place and what it includes	The Hopkins River bluestone surface is located in the riverbed of the Hopkins River, immediately south of the current dual-lane bridge that crosses the river as part of the Western Highway. The surface covers an area of approximately 60m2 and is bounded on the north by the Western Highway, on the east and west by the Hopkins River river terraces and road reserve and the south by the Hopkins River. Please see supporting documents for more information.
If you are including part of a land parcel, identify that part	2018\PP2964
Is the proposed major development to be carried out entirely on Crown land?	No

You will be required to upload the relevant land title(s) issued within 30 days, along with all other supporting documentation at the end of this form.

Heritage Council criteria

Assessment of State-level significance

Include reasons why the place or object should not be included in the Heritage Register. These must be reasons based on the assessment criteria published by the Heritage Council. This means you must provide reasons why the place or object does not meet the threshold of State-level cultural heritage significance in relation to each of the criteria selected. For further information on the Heritage Council criteria and thresholds please refer to their guidance.

CRITERION A	The place does not demonstrate importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history. See supporting documents for more information.
CRITERION B	The place is not in possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history. See supporting documents for more information.
CRITERION C	The place does not have potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history. See supporting documents for more information.
CRITERION D	The place does not have importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects. See supporting documents for more information.

CRITERION E	The place does not have importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics. See supporting documents for more information.
CRITERION F	The place does not have importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period. See supporting documents for more information.
CRITERION G	The place does not hold strong or special association with a particular present-day community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. See supporting documents for more information.
CRITERION H	The place does not hold special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history. See supporting documents for more information.

Other Information

Information in this section should provide evidence as to why this place or object has no reasonable prospect of inclusion in the Heritage Register. Information should be based on robust research and analysis. Exclusion determinations can be overturned if significant new information is identified.

Physical description	Please see section 4.2 of the supporting documentation
History of the place or object	Please see Section 3 of the supporting documentation
Comparative analysis	Please see Section 5 of the supporting documentation

You can view recent Heritage Council decisions through Austlii.

Aboriginal cultural heritage values (where known)

Who are the traditional Aboriginal owners of this place or object?	Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
Does this place or object have Aboriginal cultural heritage values in addition to non-Aboriginal cultural heritage values (shared values)?	N/A

Note: If the place or object is of cultural heritage significance only on the grounds of its association with Aboriginal tradition, Aboriginal traditional use, or Aboriginal archaeology, it may be appropriate for registration in the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register. Please contact First Peoples – State Relations

Key sources	Please see supporting documentation

Condition of the place or object

Condition	Fair
Is there any damage to the fabric (the materials from which the place or object is made)?	No

Intactness and integrity

How much of the original form or appearance remains?	The bluestone is likely assoicated with erosion control associated with the Western Highway bridge over the Hopkins River, however, the specific period of bridge construction with which the bluestone is associated cannot be determined. As the precise use and function of the Hopkins River bluestone surface is unknown, it is not possible to determine what percentage of the original form the feature represents.
What alterations are present and why was the place or object altered?	The bluestone is likely assoicated with erosion control associated with the Western Highway bridge over the Hopkins River, however, the specific period of bridge construction with which the bluestone is associated cannot be determined. As the precise use and function of the Hopkins River bluestone surface is unknown, it is not possible to determine what alterations are present or why the place was altered.
Have the changes or alterations affected the heritage value of the place or object?	As the precise use and function of the Hopkins River bluestone surface is unknown, it is not possible to determine if or how the heritage values of the place has been altered.

Supporting documents

You must provide all required documents before submitting your application

Certificate of Title	Western Hwy 2b - VIC Cert - Crown Folio Statement (Title) - Vol 11960 Fol 776.pdf
Cost of works	Appendix B - Funding Announcement.pdf
Photographs	photos_FINAL_20260908 Exclusion determination report-2.pdf
Extent Diagram	Extent plan_FINAL_20260908 Exclusion determination report.pdf
Additional Information	FINAL_20260908 Exclusion determination report.pdf

Fee calculation

Heritage fees are determined in accordance with the Heritage Regulations 2017.

Details of fees are listed on the Heritage Victoria website.

Fee to be paid:	$8,289.60
Details of the fee calculation	Application for Exclusion from the Victorian Heritage Register Fee for lodging an application for Exclusion from the Victorian Heritage Register. Regulation: 6D

Fee payment

Payment method	EFT
Total amount to pay	$8,289.60
Attention to details	
BSB	[redacted]
Account and reference number	[redacted]
EFT confirmation	I confirm that the fee has been paid via EFT
Proof of payment	[redacted]

Declarations & privacy

Declarations

I state that the information I have given on this form is correct to the best of my knowledge.

I declare that the application has been made to facilitate the development or delivery of a project where the cost of the project is no less than $5 million.

Privacy statement

Heritage Victoria is a branch of the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP). Heritage Victoria is committed to protecting personal information provided by you in accordance with the principles of the Victorian privacy laws. The information you provide, and anything provided in relation to this process or any subsequent decision pertaining to the site card, will be used for the following purposes:

- correspond with you about your application
- to inform Heritage Victoria in making a recommendation or a decision as to the matter.
- the material may be made available to the public through a public notice process as required under the Heritage Act 2017, to the Heritage Council of Victoria for use in a public hearing, or to the Minister for Planning in making a determination.

- to provide information about the site card, including the initial application and subsequent regulation of that site card, where requested by successive owners of the property or consultants engaged in relation to the property

Your contact details may be used by DTP or its contracted service providers under confidentiality agreements to survey you about your experience with DTP.

The information you provide may be made available to:

- any person who may wish to inspect your proposal until the process is concluded. In this instance, the 'process' includes not only the current site card application but also any further aspects of Heritage Victoria regulation under this site card process.
- relevant officers in DTP, other Government agencies or Ministers directly involved in the heritage process.

If all requested information is not received, DTP is unable to process your request.

You may access the information you have provided to DTP by contacting heritage.victoria@transport.vic.gov.au

Exclusion Determination

Hopkins River Bluestone surface

Prepared for VIDA Roads

September 2026 Final 02

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Document information

Extent Heritage Project No.:	0326118
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Document control

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Historical sources and reference materials used in the preparation of this report are acknowledged and referenced in figure captions or in text citations.

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1. Introduction

This report assesses the bluestone surface in the Hopkins River at Dobie, located near the Western Highway crossing south-east of Ararat. The place includes a substantial bluestone surface within the riverbed and remnant elements associated with earlier bridge structures at the crossing (**Figure 1**). The following report has been prepared to support an exclusion determination application to Heritage Victoria. An exclusion determination is a process used to establish whether a place has a reasonable prospect of inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). In this case, the assessment considers whether the Hopkins River bluestone surface has a reasonable prospect of being included in the VHR as a place of State level heritage significance.

The feature has previously been described as a possible historic ford. However, earlier investigations, including a 2021 significance assessment prepared by Extent Heritage, found that the available evidence does not support the interpretation that the feature was constructed as a ford of any type. The bluestone surface is more likely to relate to later bridge works and measures used to manage flooding, scour or erosion around the river crossing.

This report references the following documents:

- *Hopkins River Ford, Dobie, Victoria Historical Archaeology Assessment*, Vincent Clark and Associates report of 2018
- *Hopkins River 'Ford' Significance Assessment* Report (Extent Heritage, 2021),
- Historic images provided by VIDA Roads

These documents and images have been used to establish the historical context, physical characteristics, comparative context and prior significance assessment of the place. No further site inspections have been undertaken by Extent Heritage, nor has any community consultation been undertaken in the preparation of this report.

This assessment reviews the historical development of the crossing, considers the likely origin and function of the bluestone surface, and assesses the place against the Heritage Council of Victoria's Criteria and Threshold Guidelines (Heritage Council Victoria, 2022) in order to establish that there is no reasonable prospect of the place being considered of State level significance to warrant inclusion in the VHR.

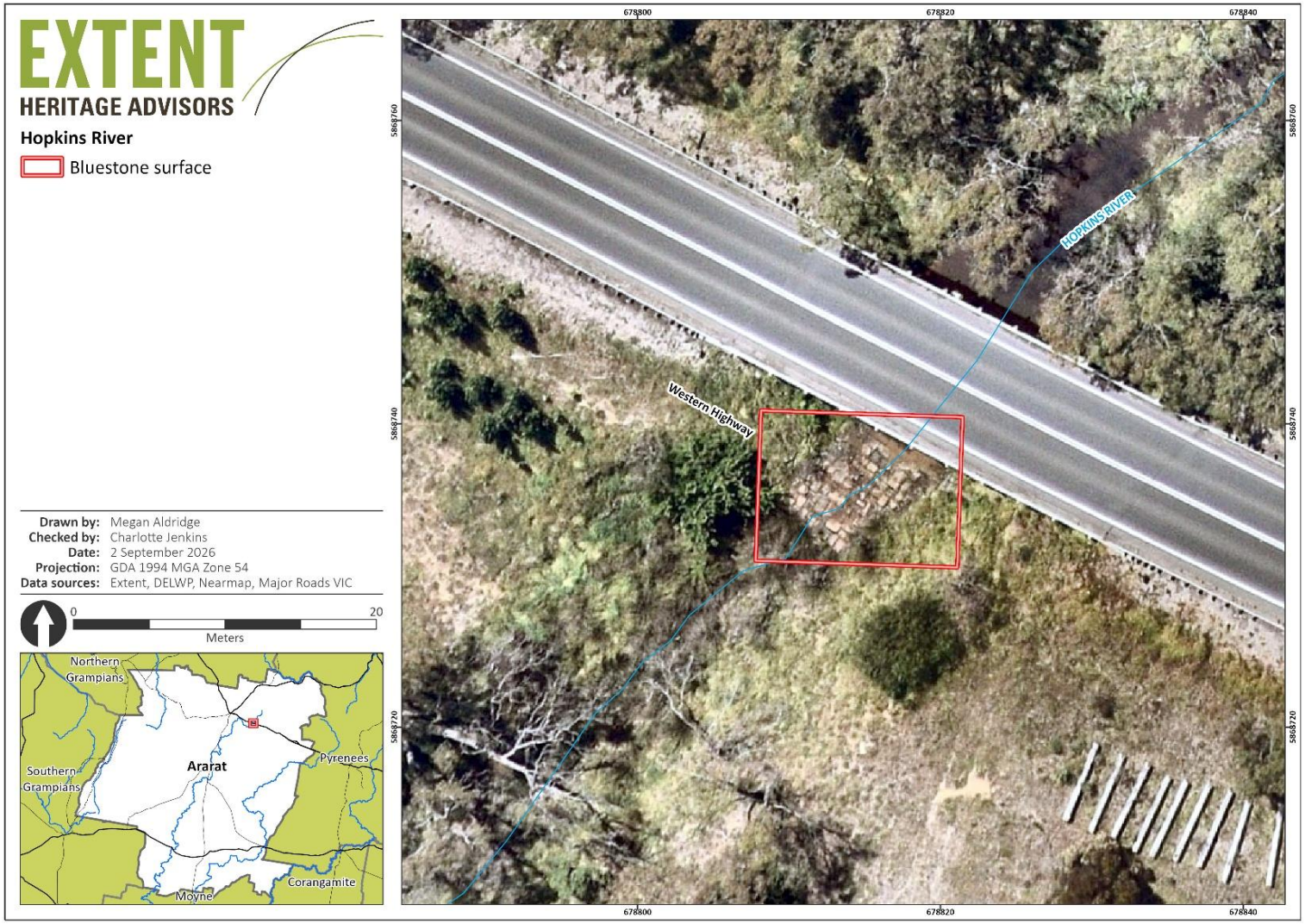


Figure 1. Plan showing the location of the bluestone surface on the Hopkins River, east of Dobie, indicated in red. Source: Extent Heritage, 2026.

2. Previous nominations and current controls

The Hopkins River bluestone surface was first recognised by the public in 2018. The bluestone fabric in the riverbed near the Western Highway crossing at Dobie was identified as a potential early historic ford or other remnant infrastructure associated with the former bridge crossing.

A nomination was made to Heritage Victoria, to include the bluestone surface on the Victorian Heritage Register in 2018. It is understood that this nomination has not been determined.

A nomination was also submitted to Heritage Victoria to include the place on the Victorian Heritage Inventory for its archaeological significance. This nomination was unsuccessful, as it did not meet the threshold for inclusion as the bluestone surface was not considered to have sufficient archaeological potential or archaeological significance to warrant registration as an archaeological site.

The bluestone surface is not currently included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Ararat Planning Scheme and is not subject to any other form of statutory heritage control.

3. History

The following section provides the historical background of the bluestone surface across the Hopkins River at Dobie, and is largely based on the history previously prepared by Extent Heritage in 2021. A broader contextual history is provided regarding the development of Dobie as a township and more specifically the history details the changes and developments at the river crossing itself.

3.1 Historical overview of the area

Situated approximately 10km south-east of Ararat, the town of Dobie, also known as Dobie Bridge, is on the traditional lands of the Djab Wurrung people. The area was rapidly transformed following the arrival of Major Thomas L. Mitchell's exploratory party in 1836, and the subsequent colonisation of land in the 1840s.

Before European settlement, the Hopkins River formed part of a much older cultural landscape associated with Eastern Marr Country. For Aboriginal people, waterways were not simply physical barriers to movement; they were part of broader systems of living, travel, resource use and cultural connection. The later construction of roads, bridges and river crossings at Dobie therefore represents a colonial layer within a landscape with a much deeper history.

The growth of the Ararat population following the Gold Rush in the 1850s resulted in Dobie's founding. By 1857, the town was officially given the name Dobie, after J.S. (Jack) Dobie who managed the nearby Langi Ghiran Station (VHD 2012). In 1859, a bridge was constructed over Hopkins River at Dobie, making the site the official crossing of the waterway on the Ballarat-Ararat Road (now Western Highway). From this period onwards, the town commonly

became known as “Dobie Bridge” (Vincent Clarke and Associates, 2018, 6). The township continued to grow into the late nineteenth century. Dobie School was established in 1874, and a dedicated railway station operated between 1885-1890. The chief livelihoods of Dobie locals during this era were similar to those of the immediate surrounds – primarily the grazing of sheep and cattle. Dobie’s growth as a regional township was ultimately halted by the decline of these industries during the first half of the twentieth century.

In the nineteenth century, reliable river crossings were essential to movement between pastoral districts, goldfields and regional towns. The Ballarat–Ararat Road became an important transport route for coaches, wagons, stock movement and local traffic. The crossing of the Hopkins River at Dobie provided a fixed point of passage on a route that otherwise had to negotiate flood-prone river flats and changing river conditions.

3.2 Historical overview of the subject site

The history of the bluestone surface appears to be closely tied to the succession of bridges constructed across the Hopkins River at Dobie from 1859 onwards. Although the surface has previously been described as a possible ford, the documentary record is much stronger for the feature to be related to the long history of bridge construction, repair and modification than it is for a formal nineteenth-century ford. For this reason, the history below focuses primarily on the development of the bridge crossing and the ways in which later works may explain the surviving bluestone surface.

The lack of roads connecting Ararat to Ballarat from the time of early colonisation and throughout the first decade of the Gold Rush meant that travellers frequently journeyed through marshy flats to bypass waterways. Despite this being the case, there is little evidence to support the theory that there was a substantially built ford at Dobie – it having been suggested that the bluestone surface at the site represents a ford of this date. There is little evidence of a formal crossing at this point on the Hopkins River prior to the construction of the first bridge in 1859 (Banfield 1974, 83). Early works on the first timber bridge commenced in 1857 and was completed in 1859. Early references to the bridge relate to local attempts to bypass the tollhouse that was constructed at the bridge in the following year (Geelong Advertiser, 3). From this period onwards until around 1863, accounts record that coach drivers and wagoners diverged to an unmade side track on the river plain to avoid paying the toll (Leader, 1864). It is possible that this side track was the route used prior to construction of the bridge, although there is no evidence that a formal ford was constructed at this crossing point either.

By 1864, constant flooding in the area had culminated in damage that necessitated the rebuilding of parts of Dobie’s bridge. During this period, one of the submerged bluestone abutments was removed and replaced (Leader 1864, 17), and there is reference to the driving of piles for the bridge at Dobie in 1874 (Hamilton Spectator 1874, 4) suggesting substantial amendments and that the bridge was still a timber example at that time. At some point the timber bridge was replaced with a bluestone superstructure (the deck still being of timber), perhaps partly in response to the flooding issue. This likely occurred in the late nineteenth century, with documentary evidence (Figure 2) confirming that the bridge was stone by 1915.

Despite these efforts, flooding in 1931 resulted in damage to the bluestone bridge and adjacent fencing, as well as the drowning of a number of sheep in the surrounding region (Argus 1931, 9). This, in conjunction with a series of traffic accidents attributed to the steepness of the bridge, saw the bluestone bridge altered in 1938 to a wider, lower bridge (Argus 1937, 12, PROV) (Figure 3).

As shown in the design plans for the modified bridge (see Figure 4 and Figure 5), the works involved the removal of some of the masonry from the late nineteenth century bridge superstructure and its reuse, including to create a new wingwall at the bridge's northeast corner (on the Beaufort side of the river). A note on the plan reads 'This level to be fixed by the Engineer to be made safe from scour', the implication being that the narrowing of the river channel through the creation of the bridges meant that the riverbed here was susceptible to scouring (owing to a more concentrated current), hence the prescription for works to 'fix' the level. It may be the case that this refers only to new work on the abutments, but it is possible that these works also included the creation of the bluestone surface at that date (1938). As demonstrated in the comparative analysis below, there are links between the construction of a bluestone bridge and the introduction of bluestone lining the river bed beneath the bridge to prevent erosion and scouring (refer to Section 5.0).

In 1966, the amended bluestone bridge was replaced with the current concrete structure on an alignment just to the north of the previous bluestone bridge - it is assumed that this enabled continued use of the old bridge whilst the new version was under construction. However, ultimately, these works resulted in the removal of much of the bluestone structure, and the burial of parts of it within the embankments around the new bridge. It is likely that any remnants of the original timber bridge that may have been in that position were also removed at this time.

Taken together, the historical evidence indicates that the surviving bluestone surface is more likely to be associated with the bridge history of the site than with an independently constructed mid-nineteenth-century ford. Newspaper accounts, historical plans and photographs consistently point to repeated bridge construction, repair, flood damage, lowering, widening and eventual replacement. The 1938 bridge drawings are particularly important because they show that scour and riverbed stability were matters to be addressed as part of the bridge works. While the precise date of the bluestone surface cannot be confirmed from the available evidence, its location, form and relationship to the bridge remnants are more consistent with bridge-related scour protection, flood management or later road authority works than with a heavily used early ford for which there is no evidence in the historic record.



Figure 2: 1915 image of the bluestone bridge over Hopkins River in its original c. 1890s form. It is not known from which direction this photograph was taken. Source: Public Record Office Victoria



Figure 3: Bridge over Hopkins River following reconstruction and lowering in 1938. This image would appear to be from the north looking downstream. Note that timber posts can be seen immediately beyond the bridge on each side of the river. Source: Public Record Office Victoria

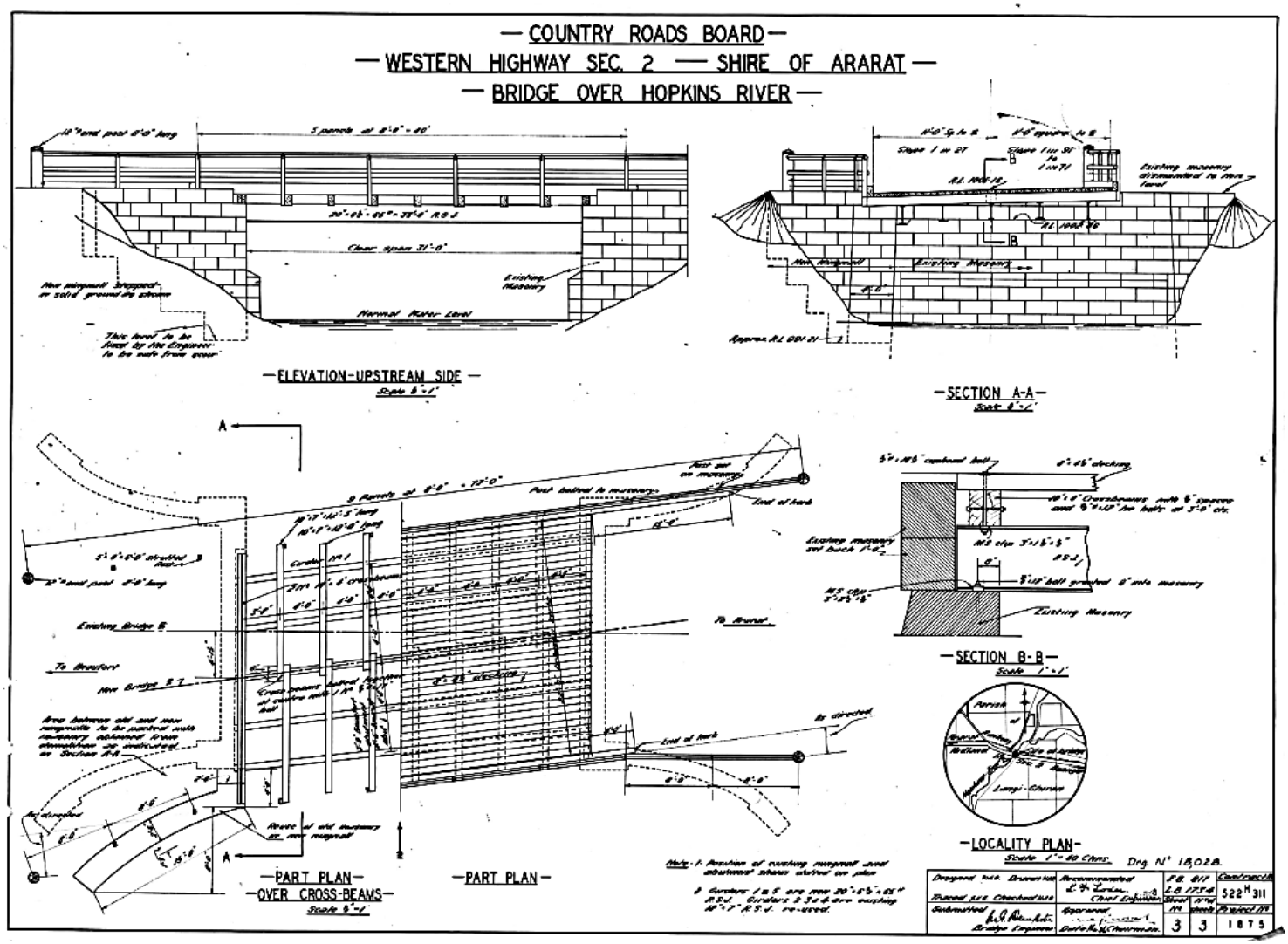


Figure 4: Original drawings detailing the lowering and widening of the bridge over the Hopkins in 1938. Source: Major Road Projects Victoria.

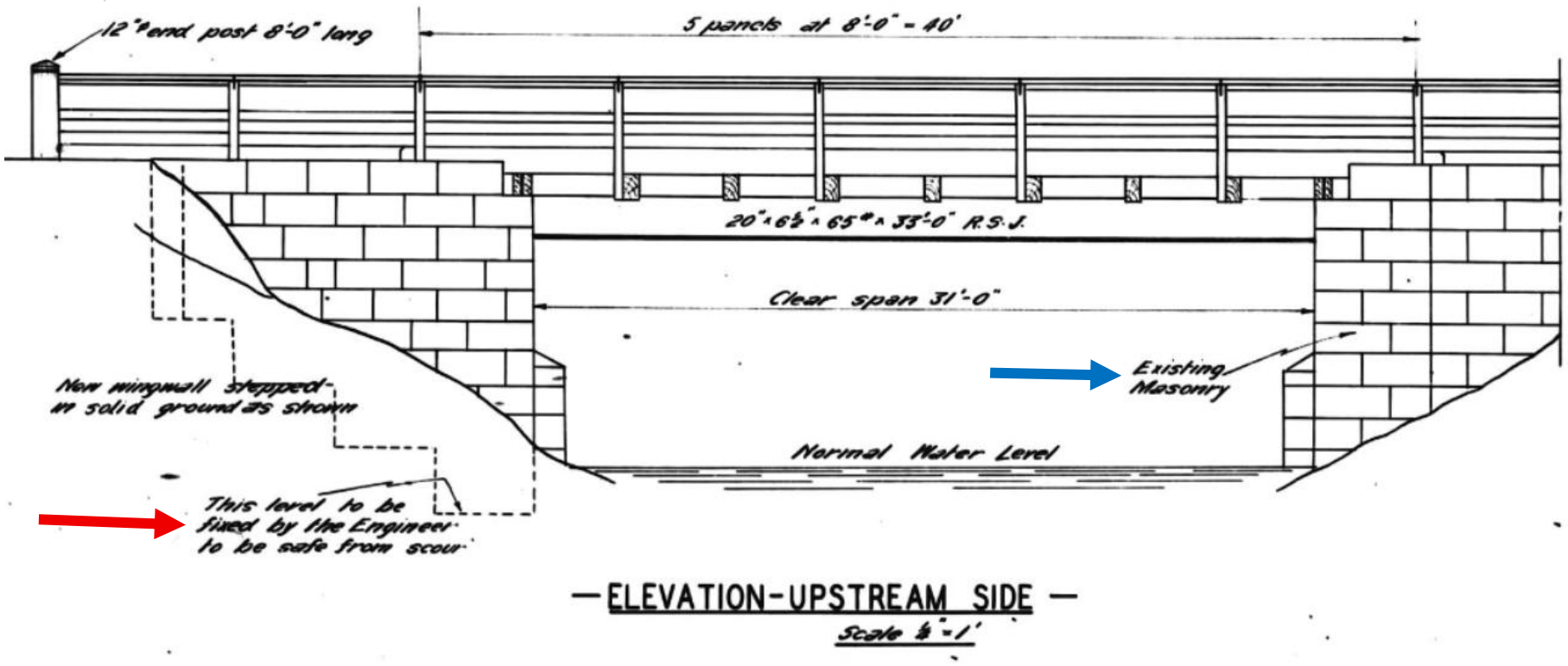


Figure 5: Detail of the original drawings detailing the lowering and widening of the bridge over the Hopkins in 1938. A note identifying issues of scouring is indicated by the red arrow, while the reuse of old masonry is indicated by the blue arrow. Source: Major Road Projects Victoria.

4. Description

The historical components identified at the site include the bluestone surface, the visible remaining bluestone piers from the original bridge, four timber posts south of the bluestone surface, as well as the present concrete bridge over the river.

4.1 Bluestone bridge components

Elements of the bluestone bridge, dating to both its original c. 1890s and 1938 iterations (see Figure 6 to Figure 8), remain visible at the site, and it is likely that further sections of the bluestone remains are buried in the embankment for the current bridge. Indication of this is evident in the images that were submitted with the August 2018 VHR nomination show the extent of remains that had been uncovered by excavation at that time (see for example Figure 9).

On the west side of the river, the western abutment of the bluestone bridge can be seen, exposed at the foot of the embankment. In addition, what appear to be stones of the southwest wingwall of the bridge can be seen exposed in the face of the embankment further to the south. The somewhat fragmented arrangement of the stones of this feature may indicate that it is in fact simply later reinforcement of the embankment. But, as stated below, it does align with what would have been the location of a wingwall.

On the east side of the river, remnants of a bluestone wingwall survive relatively intact. The blocks are similar to the blocks that comprise the bluestone surface, being roughly 40cm x 80cm in size and of the same finish. The extant portion of the wingwall itself measures around 1.4m x 0.85m and survives to a height of around 1.0m above the adjacent bluestone surface. It is not clear whether this feature is the original northeast wingwall or that constructed in 1938 from reused masonry (see Figure 4). But at its southern edge a small part of the eastern abutment of the bridge can be seen exposed in the river embankment, and this would suggest that it is the former.

The survival of the wingwall enables the reasonably accurate overlay of the plan shown in Figure 4 onto a recent aerial image (Figure 10). The plan neatly overlies the north-eastern wingwall and the apparent remnants of the southwest wall (see above). This would seem to confirm that the extant wingwall is in fact the original example from the c.1890s – and that the latter 1938 addition has been removed or buried in the embankment for the current bridge.

4.2 Bluestone surface

The bluestone surface extends across the river to the immediate south of the current bridge over the Hopkins River. It comprises a large area (recorded in the VHR nomination as being approximately 6.7m east west by 8.5m north south) of medium to large rectangular cut bluestone blocks that have been methodically arranged as setts (Figure 11 and Figure 12). The blocks vary in size, in the range 0.8-1.0m x 0.4-0.6m. Mortar does not appear to be present, although the presence of silt between the blocks made this difficult to confirm and,

due to vegetation at the south of the surface, only the southern and northern edges of the surface were visible at the time of the previous site inspection by Extent Heritage in 2021. The southern edge is straight and still lined with wooden batons, both of which imply that this edge is intact, whilst the northern edge is somewhat frayed, some of the blocks having subsided slightly towards a hollow beneath the current bridge that has been scoured out by the river.

At the time of the 2021 site inspection, a small, exposed area at the eastern edge of the surface showed that the surface abuts the north eastern wingwall. The western edge has become buried and overgrown, and clearance of overburden in a small test location suggested that the surface does not extend as far as the western bluestone abutment at that location. However, as Figure 9 shows, the surface does in fact appear to extend to the bluestone bridge abutments at each side, except where other bluestone floaters are present.

A close inspection of the blocks of the bluestone surface did not show evidence of wear from traffic (e.g. wheel ruts), and this absence is also noted in the Vincent Clark and Associates report of 2018 (Vincent Clark & Associates, 2018)



Figure 6: Bluestone visible in the edge of the western embankment. This appears to represent the southwestern wingwall of the c.1890s/1938 bluestone bridge. Source: Extent Heritage 2021.



Figure 7: Remains of northeast wingwall and the bluestone surface from above. From its curvature it can be determined that this wingwall is either the original c.1890s structure at the northeast corner of the bridge, or the new wingwall added in 1938 (see Figure 10, noting that the plan is inverted)



Figure 8: Northeast wingwall (that shown in Figure 7) and part of eastern abutment exposed in the embankment



Figure 9: Photograph from VHR nomination documents showing full extent of bluestone surface (after some excavation). Note that the surface appears to extend to the bluestone bridge abutments at each side, except where other bluestone floaters are present. Source: VHR nomination documents, August 2018

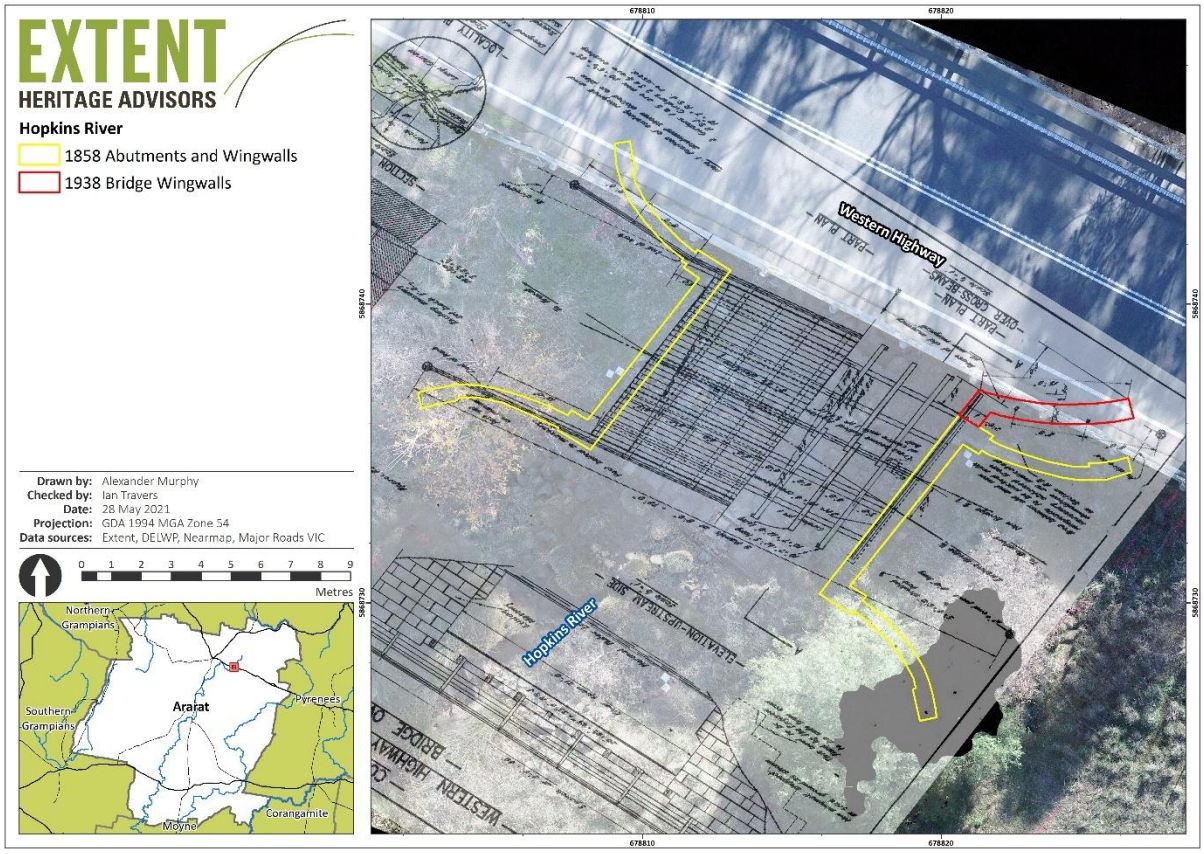


Figure 10. Plan overlaid on a recent aerial photograph showing the location of previous wingwalls and abutments likely concealed within the abutments for the existing bridge. Source: Nearmap with Major Road Projects Victoria map overlaid.



Figure 11: The bluestone surface across the Hopkins River riverbed. Source: Extent Heritage, April 2021.



Figure 12: Close up of the blocks that make up the bluestone surface. Source: Extent Heritage, April 2021

5. Comparative analysis

The following comparative analysis focuses on examples of fords, bluestone bridges and water management systems including weirs across Victoria. The comparative analysis has had consideration for the construction method of the existing structure and bluestone surface including the placement of stone, the likely date of construction, and the prominence and availability of bluestone in the nineteenth century. Bluestone use in Melbourne dates from the 1840s, and it became Australia's most prominent infrastructure heritage stone used in pavements, drains, and water crossings, in addition to building construction. The use of the local basalt for early infrastructure is readily recorded and not an unusual approach for water crossings and management in Victoria.

5.1 Fords

There are a number of examples of fords across Victoria that are constructed of bluestone. The examples below include some fords included on the Victorian Heritage Register as well as examples that are subject to heritage controls at a local level. These examples are distinctive for the identifiable wheel tracks, smaller cobbles and the reduced slope at the entrance to the river, often adopting an angled approach to further reduce the angle of the approach.

Werribee Park Mansion (Wedge's Ford) (VHR H1613)

Within the grounds of the Werribee Park Mansion is bluestone ford constructed over the Werribee River in 1835 as the first crossing on the road from Melbourne to Geelong. Bluestone blocks were used to form a crossing in the river (Figure 13). This example includes cleanly cut bluestone pitchers, neatly laid in rows. This is comparable to Dobie as an example of bluestone laid in rows in a riverbed, however the Werribee example includes smaller cobbles and shows evidence of depressions and markings from wagons and vehicles indicating its use as a ford. Notably the cobbles are laid out in neat rows where the stonework at Dobie comprises larger stones in irregular rows.



Figure 13. Bluestone for at Werribee Park Mansion, c. 2024. Source: Google Maps review, Matt Higgo.

Bluestone ford over Charleycombe Creek at Buangor (HO141, Ararat Planning Scheme)

The bluestone ford over Charleycombe Creek at Buangor is related initially to the Mt Cole run, and later the Buangor run and is associated with pastoral activity (Figure 14). It is not known when the ford was lined with bluestone pitchers, but the place's citation in the Rural Ararat Heritage Study (Ballinger & Westbrooke, 2016) suggests that their installation is likely to date from the 1860s when the responsibility for roads in the area was handed over to the Ararat Road District, which was gazetted in 1861. The ford is identified as an early and rare surviving example of road infrastructure.



Figure 14: 1860s Bluestone ford over Charleycombe Creek at Buangor. Source: Rural Ararat Heritage Study, Volume 3.

Cobbledick's Ford, Mount Cottrell (City of Wyndham HO18)

Cobbledick's Road, including the ford across the Werribee River, was formally gazetted as a road in July 1869 (Victorian Government Gazette 1869, p. 1027). During the late nineteenth century, the ford required regular maintenance due to erosion, flooding, and the accumulation of silt and debris (Figure 15). Repairs were undertaken shortly after its gazettal in 1869, with further works recorded in 1871, 1872 and 1875 (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1869, 3; The Bacchus Marsh Express 1871, 3; The Bacchus Marsh Express 1872, 3; The Bacchus Marsh Express 1875, 4). Measures to reduce flood damage included the placement of substantial logs along the ford to deflect river flows and protect the metalled crossing surface (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1873, 3).

Despite its rudimentary design and susceptibility to closure during periods of high rainfall, the ford remained an important crossing and was continuously used from its establishment until

2022 (The Sun News Pictorial 1925, 4). Cobbledick's Ford remained open to public use until the October 2022 floods. Following this event, concrete bollards were installed to prevent vehicles from crossing the river at the ford.

The ford comprises bluestone cobbles laid in neat courses forming the road surface and extending under the water to the other side of the river. The bluestones are in a good condition where visible above the water. A timber post is visible embedded in the mud adjacent to the cobbles. Concrete has also been poured adjacent to the cobbles.



Figure 15: Cobbledick's Ford across the Werribee River in Wyndham Vale. Source: Extent Heritage 2025

Conclusions on the nature and significance of comparable historical fords

The above examples of fords are from the west of Melbourne on the basalt plains and include a variety of constructions dates across the nineteenth century. Notably, all the examples indicate the extension of bluestone up the adjacent vehicle tracks either side of the river, which there is limited evidence of at the Dobie bluestone surface. The approaches to the fords are typically flat and frequently on an angle to the watercourse. Noting that the example at Dobie has been altered through the construction of the new concrete bridge, there is limited evidence of a flat approach as would be typical of fords.

The examples are all of bluestone construction with variability between the size and cut of the basalt reflecting their often early construction date prior to the development of industries to support consistent quarrying and dressing of stone. This contrasts with the example at Dobie which features particularly well cut and larger stones, suggesting a greater level of investment associated with larger infrastructure development (such as a bridge) rather than as an early ad-hoc river crossing. A further occurrence that is notable striations and other wear on the stone are visible even in the photograph at Figure 14, and evident at the other fords. This has

been established over a longer period of use of up to 150 years in some examples rather than the less than a decade supposed for the Dobie 'ford'.

These factors support the conclusion that the bluestone surface at Dobie was not created as a ford in the 1850s. The other examples also have clear links between their establishment and associated landowners, and more robust historical information that clearly identify the presence, if not the construction, of the fords.

5.2 Water management infrastructure (weirs)

The following heritage places have been identified as comparable with the Dobie bluestone surface for the purposes of its assessment as an item of historical water management infrastructure.

Bluestone Weir at Byaduk North (Southern Grampians Shire HO85)

The bluestone surface on the Hopkins River at Dobie is aesthetically and structurally similar to the locally significant bluestone weir at North Byaduk. This weir is located about 150 metres northeast of the Hamilton-Port Fairy Road at North Byaduk. The structure, dating from after 1857, is built of dressed mortared bluestone, and reveals a high level of skill in stone masonry (Figure 16). It consists of two stone piers on either side of a narrow gully, with a stepped stone wall of approximately 2 metres in height, and the width of the structure is about 2 metres. The weir retains a high level of integrity and is in good condition. This weir is of a smaller scale than the bluestone surface at Dobie, and earlier than is postulated for the Dobie example, but it is of similar construction utilising cut regular bluestone blocks. The example at North Byaduk includes stonework that are carefully articulated and mortared, likely constructed by skilled craftsmen, with the quality of the work greater than what is evident at Dobie. The arrangement of stonework at Dobie adopts a more utilitarian arrangement and lacks the compositional qualities demonstrated at North Byaduk.



Figure 16: The locally listed bluestone weir at North Byaduk. Source: Victorian Heritage Database

Donnelly's Creek Weir (VHI H8022-0032)

Donnelly's Creek Weir, was constructed as the first diversion scheme on the Watts River completed in 1891. The weir, at the time of construction comprised channels lined with hand-cut bluestone or granite pitchers, but was later lined with concrete (Figure 17). While the bluestone is no longer evident it is an example of laid stone surfaces being employed as part of engineered water-management works.

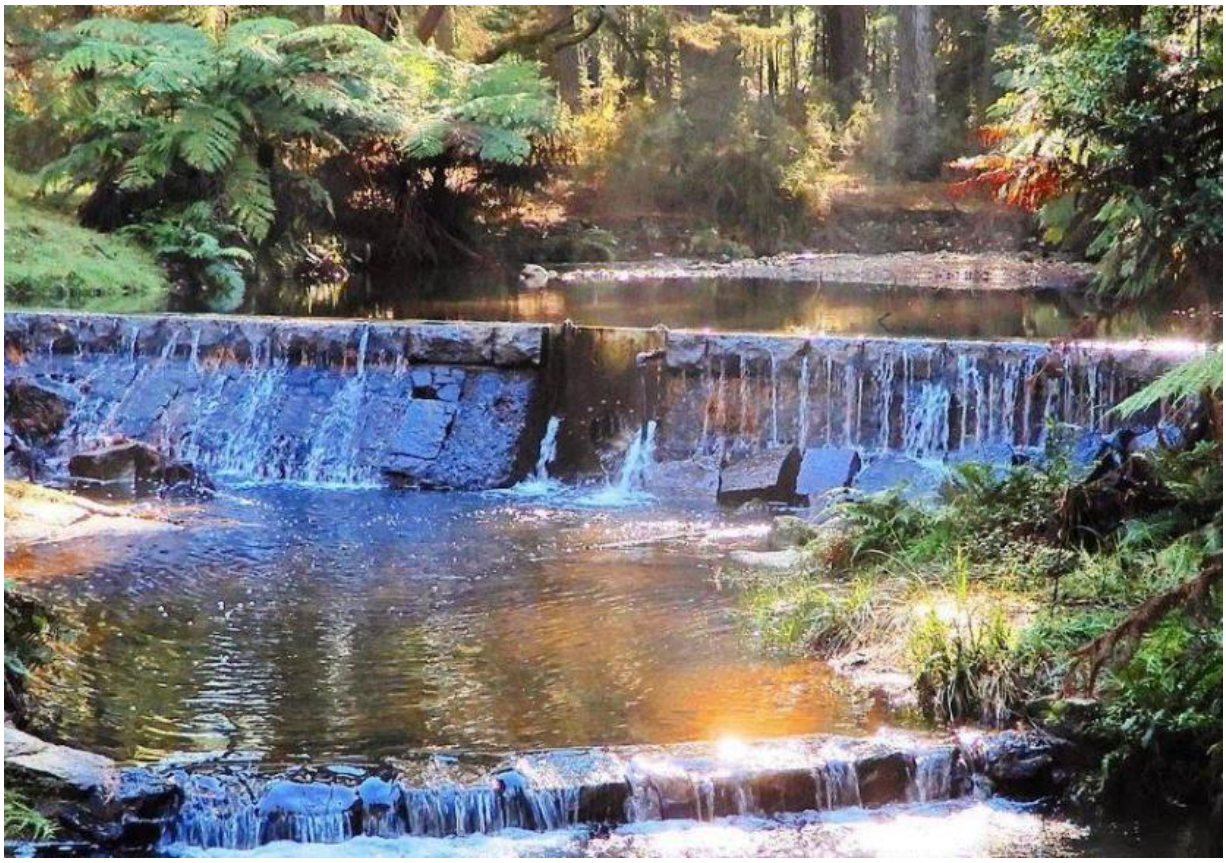


Figure 17. Donnelly's Creek Weir c. 2020. Source: Parks Victoria Facebook page.

5.3 Other examples of water management infrastructure in Victoria

Several late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century water-management structures in Victoria used construction techniques including dressed or hand-cut stone pitchers laid across or beside a watercourse. In these cases, the bluestone was used to support engineering purposes with the stonework used to stabilise channels, protect banks and beds from erosion, control flows, or form part of weirs, races, by-washes or other engineered water-supply infrastructure.

Many of the earliest examples of bluestone water management infrastructure in Victoria are part of large-scale engineered water supply systems such as the Yan Yean system (Victoria's first, constructed 1853-1857) (Figure 18), and the Coliban system constructed to supply Bendigo in 1866-1877 (Figure 19). These systems employed bluestone surfaces in their constituent diversion weirs, bye-washes/spillways, outlet/inlet channels and over-chutes. The

masonry in all of these cases is very high quality, very tightly articulated and mortared. Both of these examples are significant at a State level and involve large scale infrastructure which is not overly comparable to the bluestone surface at Dobie.

Other examples include the bluestone embankments of the Yarra River and Maribyrnong River where Depression-era sustenance money saw the establishment of stretches of both rivers lined with bluestone blocks to prevent erosion in the 1930s (Lacey, 2004) (Figure 20). A similar approach was taken to the Moonee Ponds Creek, where the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works introduced major engineering works including excavation of a wide channel, raising the embankment on the western side and introduction of a central low-flow channel lined with bluestone pitchers along the embanked section.



Figure 18. Example of a channel in the Yan Yean Water Supply System. Source: Context, 2006.



Figure 19. Detail of bluestone element in the Coliban waterway at Taradale. Source: Taradale Victoria website.



Figure 20. Detail of bluestone embankment on the Maribyrnong River. Source: Jane Bunn, Facebook.

5.4 Other bluestone bridge examples

Black Arch Rail Bridge (City of Maribyrnong HO164/City of Brimbank HO40)

The bluestone rail bridge over Stony Creek was constructed in c. 1859 includes a bridge with curved wing walls, including more recent concrete extensions (Figure 21). Notably the bridge supposedly retains a cobbled creek bed beneath the bridge, including a flat stone paved apron beneath the span. This appears to be a directly comparable example to the former arrangement at Dobie prior to the construction of the concrete bridge. While inconclusive, this presents as a highly comparative example to Dobie that may provide an indication of the intention of the bluestone surface beneath the bridge.

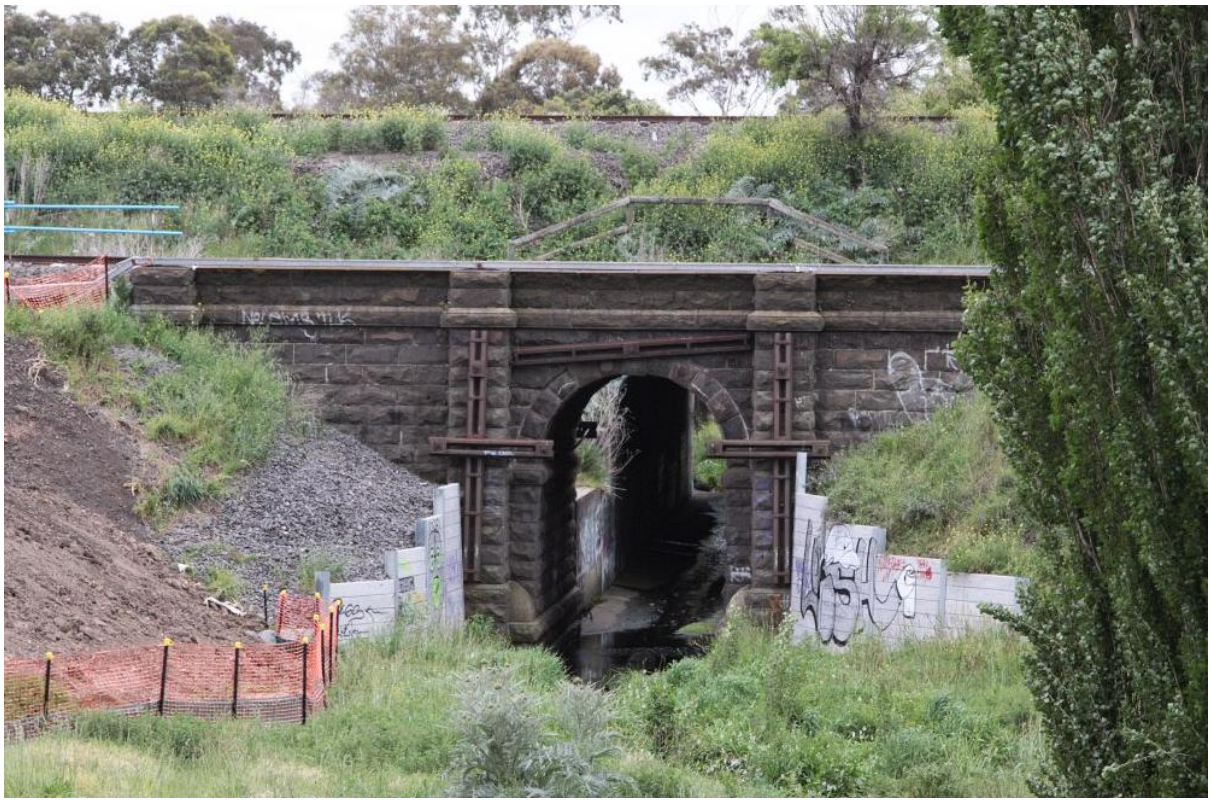


Figure 21. Bluestone bridge over Stony Creek. Source: Rail Geelong, 2012.

Masonry bridge/culvert at Smythes Creek

There is an example of a masonry bridge on the Glenelg Highway at Smythes Creek. While the construction date of this feature is unknown, the structure demonstrates the characteristics of a typical nineteenth century construction including large basalt blockwork (Figure 22). Notably, the feature includes a paved surface constructed of bluestone at its base. While the size and composition of the bluestone differs from the example at Dobie, it appears to be for anti-scour purposes. This bridge and associated bluestone structure are not subject to any heritage controls.



Figure 22. The masonry bridge/culvert on the Glenelg Highway at Smythes Creek. Source: Department of Transport and Planning.

Bridge over Kororoit Creek, Melton Highway (HO54, City of Melton)

The existing structure over Kororoit Creek on the Melton Highway was constructed in c. 1860. The structure includes a stone arch with a girder span which was added in c. 1870 (Figure 23 and Figure 24). The bridge was replaced with a concrete structure in c. 1950 retaining the girder span. Beneath the bridge is a bluestone surface with neat courses that is similar to the example at Dobie, although presenting as a far more intact example with the retention of the girder span and greater extent of stonework when compared to Dobie.



Figure 23. The masonry bridge on the Melton Highway over Kororoit Creek. Source: Department of Transport and Planning.



Figure 24. Detail of the bluestone surface beneath the masonry bridge on the Melton Highway over Kororoit Creek. Source: Department of Transport and Planning.

Youls Creek Bridge, Woolsthorpe (VHR 1457)

The Youls Creek Bridge was constructed in 1856 constructed of regularly coursed bluestone with a bluestone surface below (Figure 25 and Figure 26). The bridge includes a bluestone parapet and wingwalls and is notable as a rare example of a single-span stone bridge. The bluestone surface beneath the bridge is not mentioned in the VHR citation, with the coursing of the stonework less identifiable in the remaining surface. It is unclear whether the bluestone beneath the bridge is remnant from an earlier structure or is a scouring surface, and therefore makes a limited comparator to the example at Dobie.



Figure 25. Detail of the bluestone surface beneath the Youl's Creek Bridge. Source: Department of Transport and Planning.



Figure 26. The Youl's Creek Bridge. Source: Department of Transport and Planning.

Stone culvert, Beechworth-Wodonga Road, Wooragee

The stone culvert located beneath the Beechworth-Wodonga Road at Wooragee has an unknown construction date, however it typifies a mid-nineteenth century construction through its arched detailing and use of local stone (Figure 27). Evident beneath the culvert is a lined bluestone surface similar to the surface at Dobie, which adds to the potential of the example at Dobie being a scouring surface. This presents as a more intact example when compared to Dobie due to the retention of the structure above. This example is not subject to any heritage controls



Figure 27. Detail of the bluestone surface beneath the stone culvert at Wooragee. Source: Department of Transport and Planning.

Bridge over Waurn Ponds Creek (VHR H1104)

The bridge over Waurn Ponds Creek was constructed in 1868 from local limestone with bluestone detailing (Figure 28). The bridge is notable for its use of limestone and bluestone detailing including the keystone. The bluestone surface, which is comparable to the occurrence at Dobie is absent from the statement of significance. The incorporation of bluestone paving is likely a scouring device and is considered a better example than that at Dobie as it retains the original context beneath the bridge and a more substantiated provenance.



Figure 28. Detail of the bluestone surface beneath the bridge over Waurn Ponds Creek. Source: Department of Transport and Planning.

Conclusions on the nature and significance of comparable historical bridges

The above examples of bluestone bridges largely from western Victoria make use of the locally available basalt and adopt a typical approach to bridges in the nineteenth century. The examples collectively establish that a flat bluestone surface beneath a masonry bridge or structure (such as a culvert) is a recurring feature of nineteenth century Victorian bridge construction. In five of the examples, the presence of this bluestone surface is interpreted as serving an anti-scour or scouring-protection functions reinforcing the idea that the bluestone surface at Dobie may have been constructed for the same function.

The examples at Kororoit Creek and Wooragee are closely aligned with the example at Dobie in terms of form, however retain a greater extent of original bridge fabric allowing the

relationship between the bridge and below surface to be better understood than the example at Dobie. The example at Warun Ponds is a particularly strong comparator as the surface is well preserved and retains is original context enabling its function as an scouring device to be legible.

The comparative evidence of bluestone bridges with associated similar bluestone ground surfaces supports the likelihood of the surface at Dobie being a scour-protection apron associated with bridge construction and is consistent with the approaches above, rather than a standalone river crossing element.

6. Assessment against Criteria

The following section assesses the Hopkins River bluestone surface against the *Heritage Council of Victoria's Criteria and Threshold Guidelines* to determine whether the place has a reasonable prospect of inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register. The assessment draws on the historical background, physical description and comparative analysis set out in the preceding sections, with particular regard to the uncertain date and function of the bluestone surface, the extent of disturbance caused by successive bridge works, and the limited ability of the surviving fabric to demonstrate a clearly defined class or level of significance. In addition to the basic and state level tests provided by the guidelines, the assessment also considers the Exclusion Guidelines for each HERCON criterion. Criterion A – Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history

A place or object is likely to satisfy this criterion at the state level only if all the following requisites are met:

Basic Test		
A1	The place/object has a clear association with an event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life in Victoria's cultural history. AND	The bluestone surface is in a changed context with its exact function unknown, which means that it cannot easily be related to a wider class of places. It may be associated with flood mitigation or water management or may form part of the previous bridge structure as an anti scoring device. While this could be associated with the establishment of roads and management of water, the degraded condition of the bluestone surface means the class is not readily discernible. On this basis, the bluestone surface does not have a clear association with an event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life.

A2	The event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life is of historical importance, having made a strong or influential contribution to Victoria. AND	As established by the assessment at A1 the bluestone feature cannot be clearly associated with a specific event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life and therefore this test is not applicable.
A3	There is evidence of the association to the event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life in Victoria's cultural history.	While is can be demonstrated that flooding occurred at the Hopkins Creek, and bridge upgrades and modifications were undertaken, the exact construction date of the bluestone surface cannot be clearly identified, and its function is not clearly evident from the remnant fabric and therefore it makes a limited contribution to a broader understanding of its function and historical associations.
State Level Test		
SA1	The place/object allows the clear association with the event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life of historical importance to be understood better than most other places or objects in Victoria with substantially the same association.	To be considered at a State level, the association with the place must be better understood than most other places in Victoria with the same association. The bluestone surface at Dobie is not specifically referenced in any historical account of flood mitigation or road engineering and its construction date remains uncertain. It has some form of association with the establishment of a road and crossing point but does not present an example which provides a greater level of understanding over other examples. The level of change to the area has also diminished the ability to understand the legibility of the bluestone surface in the context of a river crossing. It therefore makes a limited contribution to an understanding of the historic river crossings or water management in Victoria, with various other examples better and more clearly demonstrating this historic process.

Exclusion Guidelines for Criterion A

The place or object is unlikely to satisfy this criterion at state level if any of the following conditions apply:

XA1	Tenuous or indirect historical importance	The association of the place/object to the historically important event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life is incidental (minor, secondary) or unremarkable. For instance, every rural property is not important in demonstrating the spread of European settlement or pastoral land use across Victoria.	The site has been so disturbed by successive timber, bluestone and concrete bridges that the surface's precise role in the sequence cannot be firmly established; its association with the broader pattern of Victorian road engineering and management of waterways is not clearly evident. There is no clear evidence in the historic record detailing the construction of the feature, in contrast with other early river crossings in the State.
XA2	Low or questionable historical importance	The place/object has an association with, or demonstrates evidence of, a historical event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life that is too narrowly defined, i.e. the event, phase etc has not made a strong or influential contribution to Victoria. For example, thyme cultivation is an activity of historical importance, but it has not made a strong or influential contribution to Victoria (as opposed to 'Agriculture').	As the exact function of the bluestone surface is not clearly evident or documented, its associations with the development of roadways including water crossings, and management of waterways more broadly are tenuous as the function is not clearly defined.
XA3	Poor evidence	No reliable or verifiable physical, documentary or oral history evidence remains to demonstrate the association of the place/object with a historical event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life. For example, a 'legend' relating to a place or object needs to be backed up by strong	The existing bluestone surface lacks verifiable physical and documentary evidence that effectively demonstrate a link with either road construction, including crossing waterways, or management of waterways.

		documentary or other evidence if the place/object is to be registered on the basis of that story.	

As the place does not meet the basic test for Criterion A and all three exclusion guidelines apply, there is no reasonable prospect for the place to meet Criterion A at a State level.

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

A place or object is likely to satisfy this criterion at the state level only if all the following requisites are met:

Basic Test		
B1	The place/object has a clear association with an event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life of importance in Victoria's cultural history. AND	As per the assessment at A1, the lack of understanding of the function of the bluestone surface means that it cannot easily be related to a wider class of places. It may be associated with flood mitigation or water management or may form part of the previous bridge structure. While this could be associated with the establishment of roads and management of water, the degraded condition of the bluestone surface means the class is not readily discernible. On this basis, the bluestone surface does not have a clear association with an event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life.
B2	There is evidence of the association to the event, phase, etc*. AND	As noted above, the date of construction is not evident from the physical fabric and the stylistic similarity of the stonework does not provide clarify on the exact construction date and therefore there is a lack of evidence to effectively demonstrate an association with a class of place.

B3	There is evidence that the place/object is rare or uncommon, or has rare or uncommon features	The level of disturbance to the bluestone surface has resulted in a loss of understanding of the function and construction date of the bluestone surface. In reviewing comparative examples, the surface does not match known bluestone fords in scale, cut, wear or context, nor the more skilfully mortared water-management weirs. While it is more comparable to the surfaces located beneath the bluestone bridges, the changed context of the surface means it cannot be confidently attributed to a single class of place. As demonstrated by the comparative analysis, there are numerous examples of bluestone features located below bridge structures of a similar layout and scale to the example at Dobie. The lack of certainty over the exact 'class' of place and the numerous better and more complete examples of similar bluestone features, including in their original context, means that this test is not met.
State Level Test		
SB1	the place/object is rare or uncommon, being one of a small number of places/objects remaining that demonstrates the important event, phase etc*; OR	There are numerous examples of water management, flood mitigation and water crossings across Victoria that better demonstrate the use of bluestone in water engineering
SB2	the place/object is rare or uncommon, containing unusual features, and these features are of note and these features were not widely replicated in Victoria; OR	There are numerous examples of bluestone features associated with bridges which exist within Victoria and provide better and more complete examples of the feature found at Dobie. For the example at Dobie, its tenuous association with the historical record and unclear 'class' of place renders this test unmet.
SB3	the existence of the class of place/object that demonstrates the important event, phase etc* is endangered to the point of rarity due to	There is no evidence of a defined class of Victorian flood-mitigation bluestone surfaces that is now endangered.

	threats and pressures on such places/objects in Victoria.		

Exclusion Guidelines for Criterion B

The place or object is unlikely to satisfy this criterion at the state level if any of the following conditions apply:

XB1	Low or questionable importance of attribute linked to the place/object	The place/object is rare, or is even the only one of its type, but the attribute(s) of claimed rarity is of questionable importance. For example, the only two-storey potting shed or bandstand with fitted windows	As the function or construction date of the bluestone surface cannot be determined, its importance remains questionable. Its use of bluestone is not considered rare in the context of the early infrastructure in Victoria and its layout is not particularly unusual. Without further understanding of its function, which is unlikely to be gained, its importance remains low.
XB2	Dependence on too many qualifiers	The claimed rarity is dependent upon numerous qualifiers being strung together. For example, 'the place is the only stone house with a slate roof in the Federation style designed by the architect John Smith'. As a general guide, the identification of a class and one qualifier will be acceptable, such as 'Federation style houses'	As the function of the bluestone surface is not readily understood, it cannot be defined as a class of place. More broadly it could be considered as a water management device, of which there are many examples. To demonstrate any specific 'rare' or 'uncommon' features would require the application of further qualifiers (i.e. well-dressed bluestone pitchers, evidence of earlier bridge construction etc) that would result in this exclusion guideline being relevant.

XB3	Place/object is 'endangered' only because of an imminent demolition threat	For the purpose of this criterion, 'endangered' should generally relate to a class of place/object that has become so rare over time that there is a risk that in the short to medium term that no such place/object will remain.	As established the exact 'class' of place that can be applied to the bluestone feature remains ambiguous, however if considered as part of a group of bluestone water management features throughout Victoria, there is no imminent threat that this class of place is, or would be, endangered.
XB4	Poor evidence	No reliable or verifiable physical, documentary or oral history evidence remains to demonstrate the association of the place/object with a historical event, phase etc. or to the rarity/endangered status being claimed.	There is a lack of documentary evidence that demonstrates the association between the bluestone surface and the development of roadways and flood mitigation measures and therefore is insufficient to demonstrate a rare or uncommon element.
XB5	Uniqueness rather than rarity is claimed	All places and objects are unique: small variations in fabric and form are to be expected between places and objects in a class. This is not the same as rarity under these guidelines.	As per the exclusion guideline, the bluestone surface at Dobie possesses elements that are individualised to its context, however as established above that does not equate to rarity in the context of this criterion.

As the place does not meet the basic test for Criterion B and all exclusion guidelines apply, there is no reasonable prospect for the place to meet Criterion B at a State level

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

A place or object is likely to satisfy this criterion at the state level only if all the following requisites are met:

Basic Test		
C1	The: physical fabric, AND/OR documentary evidence, AND/OR associated oral history or cultural narratives, relating to the place/object indicates a likelihood that the place/object contains evidence of cultural heritage significance that is not currently visible and/or well understood or available from other sources. AND	The bluestone surface does not demonstrate through its physical fabric, documentary or oral evidence that would suggest the place holds information not already understood. There is no reason to believe that the site contains deposits that will yield further information that can contribute to our knowledge of the place or that of Dobie or Victoria's wider cultural or natural history. Heritage Victoria has declined to include the site on the VHI on this basis.
C2	From what we know of the place/object the physical evidence is likely to be of an integrity and/or condition that it could yield information through detailed investigation (see definition of 'integrity' on p.6).	The site has been heavily disturbed by three successive generations of bridge construction (1859 timber bridge, c.1890s/1938 bluestone bridge and 1966 concrete bridge), and Heritage Victoria's own determination found the place does not meet the threshold for inclusion on the Victorian Heritage Inventory.
State Level Test		
SC1	The information that might be obtained through investigation has the potential to yield knowledge of significance to Victoria.	As there is no evidence that the place would yield information through investigation there is no prospect that this test is met.

Exclusion Guidelines for Criterion C

The place or object is unlikely to satisfy this criterion at the state level if any of the following conditions apply:

XC1	Poor evidence	No reliable or verifiable physical, documentary or oral history evidence exists to provide a reasonable indication that physical evidence of research potential may be present OR	The site has been heavily disturbed by three successive generations of bridge construction (1859 timber bridge, c.1890s/1938 bluestone bridge and 1966 concrete bridge), and there is no notable

		insufficient information exists to locate the likely physical evidence with sufficient accuracy.	documentary evidence to indicate that physical evidence could provide more information that what is already understood about the place.
XC2	Dubious importance of information to be yielded	The information likely to be yielded is of low or questionable historical importance, i.e. the information is unlikely to contribute to an understanding or appreciation of important aspects of Victoria's cultural history.	Should the bluestone surface be excavated, this would likely only provide clarification of the construction date of the surface and is unlikely add to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.
XC3	High degree of disturbance	The physical evidence has been, or is likely to have been, so disturbed by subsequent activity that any research potential is compromised.	The repeated rebuilding or bridges and alterations and burial of remains within later embankments has disturbed the physical evidence and therefore it is unlikely to yield any further information.

As the place does not meet the basic test for Criterion C and all three exclusion guidelines apply, there is no reasonable prospect for the place to meet Criterion C at a State level.

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

A place or object is likely to satisfy this criterion at the state level only if all the following requisites are met:

Basic Test		
D1	The place/object is one of a class of places/objects that has a clear association with an event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life in Victoria's history. AND	The lack of certainty about the origin and construction purpose/date of the bluestone surface means that it cannot easily be related to a wider class of places. It may be associated with flood mitigation or water management or may form part of the previous bridge structure. The bluestone surface is in a fragmentary condition and the class is not readily discernible. On this basis, the

		bluestone surface does not have a clear association with an event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life.
D2	The event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life is of historical importance, having made a strong or influential contribution to Victoria. AND	As a class of place cannot be established, the place does not demonstrate historical importance or as having made a strong or influential contribution.
D3	The principal characteristics of the class are evident in the physical fabric of the place/object.	The fragmentary, buried and disturbed state of the bluestone surface means the principal characteristics of place are not clearly demonstrated. When compared to examples in the comparative analysis, the surface lacks the traffic wear expected of a ford and lacks the mortared, finely articulated masonry expected of a purpose-built weir such as North Byaduk.
State Level Test		
SD1	The place/object is a notable example of the class in Victoria	There are numerous other examples of bluestone water management features/wiers/bridges etc. that have clearer historical associations, are more intact and are more readily identifiable as a 'class' in Victoria. The feature at Dobie cannot be considered 'notable' in this comparative context.

Exclusion Guidelines for Criterion D

The place or object is unlikely to satisfy this criterion at the state level if any of the following conditions apply:

XD1	Demonstrates few characteristics of the class	The place/object does not exhibit the principal characteristics that define the class, either having never possessed them or having lost them through subsequent	The bluestone surface has undergone extensive activity and disturbance to a point where it can no longer be attributed to a class of place and therefore does not demonstrate any

		development, activity or disturbance.	characteristics of a readily identifiable 'class'.
XD2	Poor evidence	There is a lack of reliable or verifiable physical, documentary or other evidence to indicate the place/object clearly belongs to a specific class of place/object and is a notable example within that class.	The bluestone surface's nature and function remain uncertain, and lacks the evidence to be definitively classed as a type of place.
XD3	Low or questionable historical importance of class	The class itself is not associated with an event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life of historical importance in the Victorian context, or the association is incidental or cannot be substantiated. For example, not every fine example of a road culvert or fowl house warrants inclusion in the VHR.	The degraded condition and lack of definitive characteristics mean the class of place is not readily discernible, accordingly the bluestone surface has questionable historical importance.

As the place does not meet the basic test for Criterion D and all three exclusion guidelines apply, there is no reasonable prospect for the place to meet Criterion D at a State level.

Criterion E – Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics

A place or object is likely to satisfy this criterion at the state level only if all the following requisites are met:

Basic Test		
E1	The physical fabric of the place/object clearly exhibits particular aesthetic characteristics	The bluestone surface employs high quality fairly regularly cut masonry blocks, however does not demonstrate a particularly refined example of remnant bridge structure nor a flood mitigation measure. Given the fragmentary nature of the bluestone surface, the physical fabric does not exhibit a particularly strong characteristics.

State Level Test			
SE1	The aesthetic characteristics are 'beyond the ordinary' or are outstanding as demonstrated by: evidence from within the relevant discipline (architecture, art, design or equivalent); AND/OR critical recognition of the aesthetic characteristics of the place/object within a relevant art, design, architectural or related discipline within Victoria; AND/OR wide public acknowledgement of exceptional aesthetic qualities of the place/object in Victoria expressed in publications, print or digital media, painting, sculpture, songs, poetry, literature, or other media.	Any aesthetic qualities of the bluestone feature have never been noted or recognised.

Exclusion Guidelines for Criterion E

The place or object is unlikely to satisfy this criterion at the state level if any of the following conditions apply:

XE1	Lacks distinctiveness	The place/object has aesthetic qualities but they do not exceed those of the general class to which the place/object belongs.	As noted above, the remains are fragmentary, their purpose is uncertain, and they do not exhibit clearly definable aesthetic characteristics.
XE2	Poor, indirect or unproven recognition	The aesthetic qualities of the place/object have only received limited public or disciplinary recognition (as appropriate).	There is very limited public and disciplinary recognition of the bluestone surface.
XE3	Degraded aesthetic qualities	The aesthetic characteristics of the place/object have been irreversibly degraded through changes to the fabric of the place/object,	The bluestone surface has been modified to such an extent that its function is no longer clearly determinable. While it is presumed to be associated with water

		changes to the setting of the place/object; or the degraded condition of significant elements of the place/object (in some instances).	management as part of the construction of a bridge, it has been degraded through the removal of associated fabric to such a point that its function is no longer legible from the remaining fabric.
XE4	No clearly definable aesthetic characteristics	Being “pretty” or “attractive” or popular is insufficient for the purposes of satisfying this criterion.	The bluestone surface has no clearly definable aesthetic characteristics.

As the place does not meet the basic test for Criterion E and all four exclusion guidelines apply, there is no reasonable prospect for the place to meet Criterion E at a State level.

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

A place or object is likely to satisfy this criterion at the state level only if all the following requisites are met:

Basic Test		
F1	The place/object contains physical evidence that clearly demonstrates creative or technical achievement for the time in which it was created.	The bluestone surface is considered to represent an example of what appears to be a flood management approach or associated with the construction of a bluestone bridge, but lacks any form creative or technical achievement which would elevate it above an ordinary structure. The remnant of the modified bluestone bridge is insufficient to represent late nineteenth or early twentieth century construction techniques. When considered against other similar structures and features in the comparative analysis, it is not identifiable as a place that demonstrates a creative or technical achievement.
F2	The physical evidence demonstrates a high degree of integrity.	The bluestone surface and associated fabric, survives only as fragmentary, partly buried wingwalls and abutment

		remnants and therefore does not demonstrate a high degree of integrity. .
State Level Test		
SF1	The nature and/or scale of the achievement is of a high degree or 'beyond the ordinary' for the period in which it was undertaken as demonstrated by: evidence from within the relevant creative or technological discipline that recognises the place/object as a breakthrough in terms of design, fabrication or construction techniques and/or as a successful solution to a technical problem that extended the limits of existing technology; AND/OR critical acclaim of the place/object within the relevant creative or technological discipline as an outstanding example in Victoria; AND/OR wide acknowledgement of exceptional merit in Victoria in media such as publications or print/digital media; AND/OR recognition of the place/object as an outstanding example of the creative adaptation of available materials and technology of the period.	Noting the place does not meet the basic test for criterion F, there is no evidence that any of the state level tests apply.

Exclusion Guidelines for Criterion F

The place or object is unlikely to satisfy this criterion at the state level if any of the following conditions apply:

XF1	High degree of achievement unproven or unsubstantiated	The available documentary or technical evidence indicates the creative or technical achievements of the place/object are unlikely	Given the remnant fabric, and the unknown construction date, the bluestone surface is not demonstrative of any technical ability that exceeds the ordinary. When compared to

		to be of a high degree or 'beyond the ordinary'.	the other examples of bridges, fords and weirs, the remaining fabric lacks the sophistication of these structures.

As the place does not meet the basic test for Criterion F and the exclusion guideline applies, there is no reasonable prospect for the place to meet Criterion A at a State level.

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

A place or object is likely to satisfy this criterion at the state level only if all the following requisites are met:

Basic Test		
G1	The place/object demonstrates social value to a community or cultural group in the present day in the context of its cultural heritage significance. Evidence must be provided that all three facets of social value are met: existence of a community or cultural group existence of a strong attachment of a community or cultural group to the place or object; (iii) existence of a time depth to that attachment	There is no evidence to suggest that the bluestone surface or the bridge remains are associated with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. While no community consultation has been undertaken, previous assessments indicate that that local Council officers 'were unaware of the existence of the bluestone surface and bridge remnants'.
State Level Test		
SG1	Evidence that the social value resonates across the broader Victorian community as part of a story that contributes to Victoria's identity	There is no evidence that the value of the place resonates across the broader Victorian community.

Exclusion Guidelines for Criterion G

The place or object is unlikely to satisfy this criterion at the state level if any of the following conditions apply:

XG1	Lack of a community or cultural group	As required under Step 1 (i).	As noted above, there is no current community or cultural group which has a demonstrated association with the bluestone surface.
XG2	Lack of a strong or special attachment	As required under Step 1 (ii).	There is not current community or cultural group with an association to the bluestone surface.
XG3	Lack of time depth (ie: lack of existence)	As required under Step 1 (iii).	There is not current community or cultural group with an association to the bluestone surface.
XG4	Not resonant across the broader Victorian community	The social value does not exert an influence across the Victorian community as required under Step 2(a).	There is not current community or cultural group with an association to the bluestone surface.
XG5	Not part of Victoria's identity	The social value is not associated with, nor represents, nor is identified with an established or emerging story or theme that contributes to or forms part of Victoria's identity, as required under Step 2(b).	There is not current community or cultural group with an association to the bluestone surface.
XG6	The social value is historical rather than in the present day	The association with the community, or the community itself, no longer exists. In this case it may be relevant to consider the cultural heritage significance of the place/object under Criterion A.	There is not current community or cultural group with an association to the bluestone surface.
XG7	No association between the social value and the place/object	The place/object does not demonstrate social value because there is no association or low association between the proposed social value and the place/object.	There is not current community or cultural group with an association to the bluestone surface.

As the place does not meet the basic test for Criterion G and all seven exclusion guidelines apply, there is no reasonable prospect for the place to meet Criterion G at a State level.

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

A place or object is likely to satisfy this criterion at the state level only if all the following requisites are met:

Basic Test		
H1	The place/object has a direct association with a person, or group of persons, who have made a strong or influential contribution in their field of endeavour.	No significant association with the life or works of a person, or groups of persons has been identified for the bluestone surface.
H2	There is evidence of the association between the place/object and the person	There is no evidence of an association with the place and a person or group of persons.
H3	The association relates: directly to achievements of the person(s); AND to an enduring and/or close interaction between the person(s) and the place/object.	As above there is no association between a person or group or persons and the bluestone surface.
State Level Test		
SH1	The life or works of the person/persons are important to Victoria's history. AND	There is no relevant association to meet this test.
SH2	The place/object allows the association between the person or group of persons and their importance in Victoria's history to be readily appreciated better than most other places or objects in Victoria.	There is no relevant association to meet this test.

Exclusion Guidelines for Criterion H

The place is unlikely to satisfy this criterion at the state level if any of the following conditions apply:

XH1	Poor, indirect or unproven association.	The association of the person(s) with the place/object is tenuous or cannot be substantiated or verified. For example, the person spent a brief, transitory or incidental time at the place without leaving evidence or achieving anything there that is relevant to their importance	No association can be demonstrated between the bluestone surface and a specific person or group or persons.
XH2	Inability to demonstrate association	No (or very limited) physical or documentary evidence remains to demonstrate the association of the place/object with the person(s) or, in the case of physical evidence, the remaining physical fabric has been so altered that it no longer demonstrates reasonable evidence of the association.	The place is not associated with a specific person or persons and therefore cannot be demonstrated.
XH3	Person(s) is of local significance only	There is insufficient reliable or verifying information available to support a claim that the person(s) is of more than local importance.	The place is not associated with a specific person or persons.

As the place does not meet the basic test for Criterion H and all three exclusion guidelines apply, there is no reasonable prospect for the place to meet Criterion H at a State level.

7. Conclusion

This report has assessed the Hopkins River bluestone surface at Dobie to determine whether the place has a reasonable prospect of inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register. The assessment has considered the available historical evidence, the surviving physical fabric, previous heritage investigations, comparative examples of fords, bridges and water-management infrastructure, and the Heritage Council of Victoria's Criteria and Threshold Guidelines.

The bluestone surface has previously been described as a possible historic ford. However, the evidence reviewed for this report does not support the conclusion that the surface was constructed as a mid-nineteenth-century ford. The documentary record more clearly demonstrates a sequence of bridge construction, repair, flood damage, modification and eventual replacement at the Hopkins River crossing. The surviving bluestone surface is more likely to be associated with these later bridge works, including possible scour protection (as demonstrated in the examples include above beneath other early bridge structures), flood

management or riverbed stabilisation, than with a purpose-built early road ford, however an exact construction date cannot be established through the historic record.

The physical evidence is also limited. Although the surface comprises substantial cut bluestone blocks and is located in a historically important crossing point, its date, original function and relationship to the former bridge structures cannot be confirmed with sufficient certainty. The place has been affected by successive phases of bridge construction and removal, including the 1859 timber bridge, the later bluestone bridge, the 1938 widening and lowering works, and the construction of the present concrete bridge in 1966. These changes have reduced the ability of the remaining fabric to clearly demonstrate its original purpose or use.

The comparative analysis indicates that the Dobie bluestone surface does not closely resemble known early bluestone fords in Victoria, which typically retain clearer road approaches, smaller cobbles or pitchers, evidence of vehicular wear, and stronger documentary associations with use as crossings. Nor does it clearly demonstrate the characteristics of more formally designed water-management structures, such as documented weirs or engineered channels. Its form appears to be utilitarian and site-specific rather than a representative, rare or technically outstanding example of a recognised class of place. When compared to other water-scouring features there are several other more intact examples which retain a fuller context and therefore better demonstrate this historic function.

On the basis of the available evidence, the Hopkins River bluestone surface does not satisfy any of the Heritage Council of Victoria's criteria at the State level. The place is not demonstrated to have historical, rarity, research, representative, aesthetic, technical, social or associative significance sufficient to meet the threshold for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register. In addition to not meeting the basic tests for any criterion, all relevant exclusion criteria apply. It can therefore be concluded that the Hopkins River bluestone surface does not have a reasonable prospect of inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register.

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