

Kawarau

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

405 Tooronga Road, Hawthorn East

February 2026

Prepared for

ALIA COLLEGE

Prepared by

LOVELL CHEN





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

This report was prepared and Kawarau is located on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people who have been custodians of this land for thousands of years. 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 that this report includes a post-contact history that forms only a small part of the ongoing story.

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Project no.	Issue no.	Description	Issue date	Approval
20251106	1	Draft Heritage Impact Statement	25/02/2026	MK
20251106	2	Heritage Impact Statement	27/02/2026	MK

Referencing

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Cover image: 2008 view of Kwarau
Source: Victorian Heritage Database

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Background	1
1.1.1	Documentation	1
1.1.2	Pre-application meeting	1
2.0	HERITAGE CONTROLS AND LISTINGS	2
2.1	Victorian Heritage Register	2
2.2	Boroondara Planning Scheme	3
2.3	National Trust	3
3.0	BRIEF HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION	4
3.1	Brief history	4
3.2	Subject site	4
4.0	PROPOSED WORKS	9
4.1	New addition	9
4.2	Carport	12
4.3	Internal arrangement	13
5.0	REASON FOR THE WORKS	15
6.0	ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACTS	15
6.1	Permit policy and permit exemptions	15
6.2	The extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place [S101(2)(a)]	16
6.2.1	New addition	16
6.2.2	Carport	16
6.2.3	Internal arrangement	17
6.3	The extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place [S101(2)(b)]	17
7.0	CONCLUSION	18

1.0 Introduction

This Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) has been prepared for Alia College to accompany a permit application to Heritage Victoria (HV) for the construction of an addition to the main building and the replacement of a carport at Kawarau, located at 405 Toorong Road, Hawthorn East (Figure 1).

We respectfully acknowledge that Kawarau is located on the land of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People.



Figure 1 Aerial image showing the site of Kawarau as indicated in yellow hatch
Source: Nearmap, capture date 10 December 2025

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Documentation

This HIS makes reference to the following documentation:

- Architectural drawings “Alia College” (numbered TP00-TP10 inclusive) prepared by Bryant Alsop and dated 26 February 2026

1.1.2 Pre-application meeting

A pre-application meeting was held with Heritage Victoria in December 2025. Heritage Victoria provided written comments in relation to a schematic design for the proposal, which are extracted below for reference:

There is a level of comfort, at officer level, with the siting of the proposed addition which is considered appropriate and aligned with previous advice from Heritage Victoria. It is evident that the addition has been designed as a companion building to the heritage place. However, its scale is visually imposing in relation to the existing structure which is exacerbated by the proposed roof form, materials, and colours. The following comments are intended to assist in the design of the addition so as to yield a better, more sympathetic heritage outcome:

- The glazed linkage is considered a lightweight solution that mitigates some of the potential visual impacts of the addition and provides an appropriate transition between the significant building and the proposed addition. As such, it serves to distinguish the proposed new built form from the existing.
- It is recommended that the colour scheme of the proposed addition better reflect existing palate so as to be more in keeping with the character and reduce its visual impact.
- The proposed hipped roof form is reflective of the historic type and pitch, however, amending this may further assist in reducing the visual dominance of the proposed addition. Specifically, it may help to consider introducing multiple hips rather than having a single, large hip so as to soften its presence.
- The proposed western windows reimagine the original window detailing which is generally considered a good approach. However, when viewed in conjunction with the proposed cladding, is visually distracting. The proposed windows are already distinguished from the original fabric through the materiality of the framing and the sill detail without the need for additional gestures.

Removal of the non-original carport would be considered a positive heritage outcome. However, there is some concern with the proposed reconstruction of the carport to match the existing as the current structure is considered intrusive.

The proposal has been amended in response to these comments. The works are described in detail at Section 4.0 of this report.

2.0 Heritage Controls and listings

2.1 Victorian Heritage Register

Kawarau, located at 405 Tooronga Road, Hawthorn East, is included as place number H0489 in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR), as a place of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria. The VHR extent of registration is shown in Figure 2 and described as follows:

.... All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 489 encompassing all of Lot 2 on Plan of Subdivisions 522210

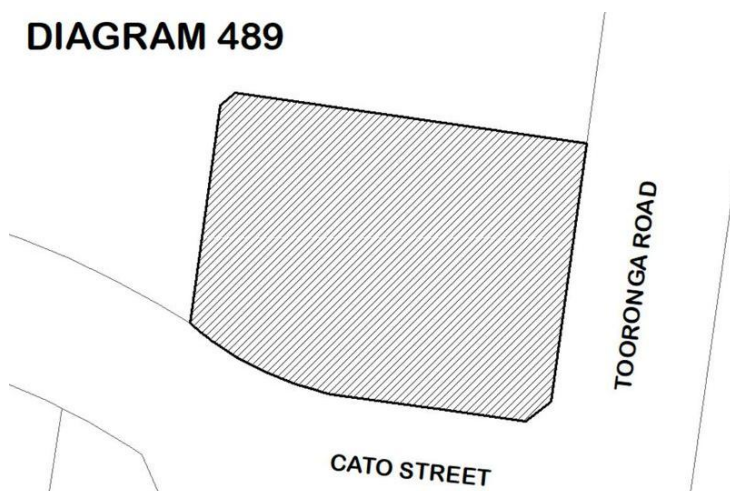


Figure 2 Diagram 489 showing the extent of registration for Kawarau (H0489)

Source: Victorian Heritage Database, <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/582>, accessed by 9 February 2026

The statement of significance for the place as included in the VHR documentation is reproduced below:

What is significant?

Kawarau, an Italianate mansion originally known as Warrington, with nineteenth-century bi-chrome outbuilding. The residence was built for Robert Robinson, a Melbourne grain merchant, and completed in 1893 at the time of the bank crash and economic depression. The design of the original house has been attributed to Francis Coote, of the architectural practice Beswick and Coote. The house was acquired by Frederick Cato, of the retailing firm Moran and Cato in 1904. Cato commissioned the architectural firm Ussher and Kemp to undertake extensions, including a billiard room. The two-storey house is constructed of stuccoed brick with a slate roof and is symmetrically planned with a double-storey arcade supported by Corinthian columns. The interior is a mixture of Victorian and Edwardian styles. The 1904 billiard room contains deep fibrous plaster frieze of Art Nouveau ornamentation with a ceiling of red pine divided into an octagonal pattern.

How is it significant?

Kawarau is of historic and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Kawarau is of historical importance through its ability to demonstrate the wealth amassed by Melbourne merchants in the late nineteenth century, and their demise following the economic depression of the 1890s. The former mansion is also of historical significance as a result of its association with the philanthropist Frederick Cato and his retailing firm Moran and Cato which was founded in 1881. It demonstrates the wealth amassed by the firm in less than a decade, and the continuing success of the firm illustrated by the addition of finely-detailed interior features, including the billiard room constructed in 1904. Kawarau is architecturally important as the grandest of a small group of Italianate mansions and possesses one of the most extensive and complete collections of Edwardian plasterwork in Victoria. It incorporates the widest known assemblage of decorative art nouveau fibrous plaster and timber work, including exceptional examples in the billiard room. Kawarau is important as a rare example of the architect Coote's work. It is also important as the most intact surviving example of the work of Ussher and Kemp, one of the most important practitioners in Victoria in the Edwardian period.

2.2 Boroondara Planning Scheme

Kawarau is individually identified as HO130 in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (HO) of the Boroondara Planning Scheme, matching the VHR extent of registration for the place.

In accordance with Clause 43.01-3, no permit is required under the Heritage Overlay to develop a heritage place which is included in the VHR, other than an application to subdivide a heritage place of which all or part is included in the VHR.

2.3 National Trust

Kawarau is also identified as property number B1554 on the National Trust Register as a place of State significance. As outlined in the statement of significance, this classification 'excludes more recent interior modification and notes the damaging effect of the immediately surrounding development.'¹ This listing does not have any statutory implications.

¹ National Trust Database, 'Kawarau', http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/search/nattrust_result_detail/65171 accessed 23 February 2026.

3.0 Brief history and description

3.1 Brief history

The property at 405 Tooronga Road, located at the corner of Cato Street, includes the mansion 'Kawarau' (formerly 'Warrington'), constructed in 1892 on an eight-acre allotment for Robert Robinson (Figure 3). The property was purchased by Frederick Cato in 1895 and subsequently renamed 'Kawarau'. In 1904, Cato added a two-storey wing to the north-west corner of the mansion (Figure 4).²

By the early twentieth century, the estate comprised the mansion positioned in the north-east corner of the property, stables in the south-east corner, and landscaped grounds featuring an asphalt tennis court, a summer house and a circular drive between the buildings (Figure 5). This arrangement remained largely unchanged until mid-1940s (Figure 6). From 1947 onwards, land to the west and south of the property was progressively subdivided, primarily for manufacturing purposes, including the establishment of Cato Street through the southern portion of the estate by 1960 (Figure 7).³

Kawarau was purchased by the Commonwealth of Australia in 1953 for use as interim office accommodation for the Post Master General's Department.⁴ The property was later put up for sale in 1979, advertised as 'a Hawthorn landmark, included on the Australian Heritage Commission Register – Superb example of the Victorian Italianate era, 20 rooms, unique ceilings, stained glass and many other features.'⁵ Following its sale, the building was adapted for use as a restaurant and is now occupied by Alia College for educational purposes.

3.2 Subject site

The subject site occupies a 1,753 sqm allotment bounded by Tooronga Road to the east, Cato street to the south and a school campus to the north and west. The immediate surrounding area was developed from the mid-twentieth century following the subdivision of the original property.

Kawarau is two-storey rendered brick residence with a complex slate-cladded hipped roof, rendered brick chimneys, projecting faceted bays, and a two-storey arcade supported by Corinthian columns (Figure 8). The north (rear) elevation comprises the north and east elevations of the 1904 ballroom addition (to the north-west), a narrow projecting bay with an airlock, and timber-framed double-hung windows at both levels of the original residence. A non-original external timber stair has been added beside the projecting bay (Figure 9). The overall building form remains generally intact externally, including the arrangement of the north (rear) elevation.

Along the eastern boundary is a simple single-storey rectangular brick outbuilding with a hipped slate roof. The footprint of this building is evident on the MMBW plan, dating from 1916 (Figure 5). The outbuilding is partially concealed by a solid rendered brick fence/wall extending along the boundary. An open carport currently spans the space between the mansion and the outbuilding (Figure 10).

The remainder of the site comprises a domestic garden setting with mature vegetation to the south and west of the mansion. Vehicular access is provided via Tooronga Road, leading to an at-grade asphalt carpark located to the north of the building.

² Jenniffer F. O'Donnell, *Kawarau*, passim.

³ Jenniffer F. O'Donnell, *Kawarau*, pp. 91-93.

⁴ Jenniffer F. O'Donnell, *Kawarau*, pp. 94.

⁵ *The Age*, 'Sale Notice – Hawthorn East 405 Tooronga Rd.', 20 August 1979, p.35

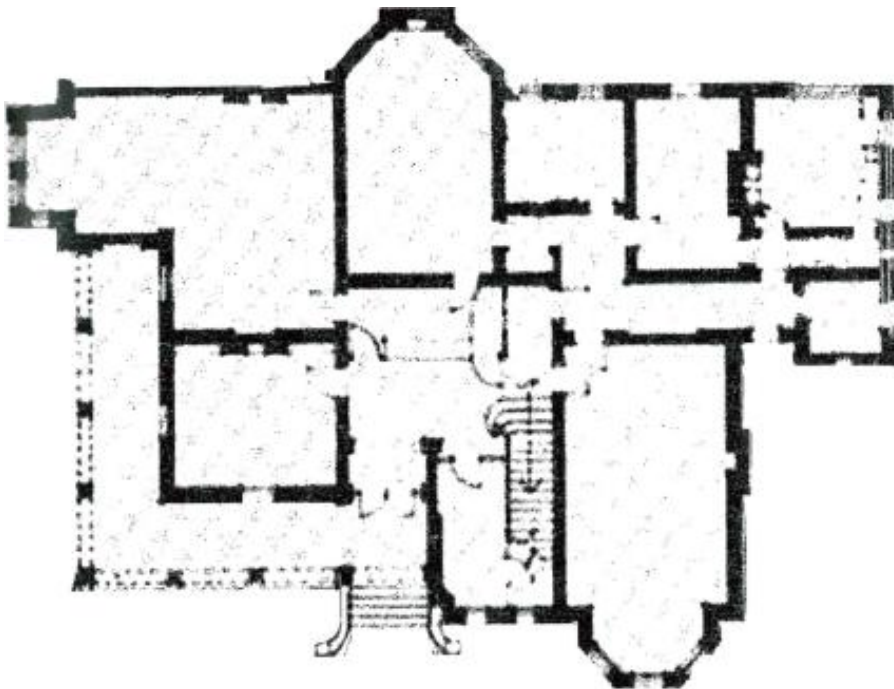


Figure 3 Probably the original ground floor plan of the subject site
Source: La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, H97.250/424, referenced in *Kawarau*,
Jenniffer F. O'Donnell

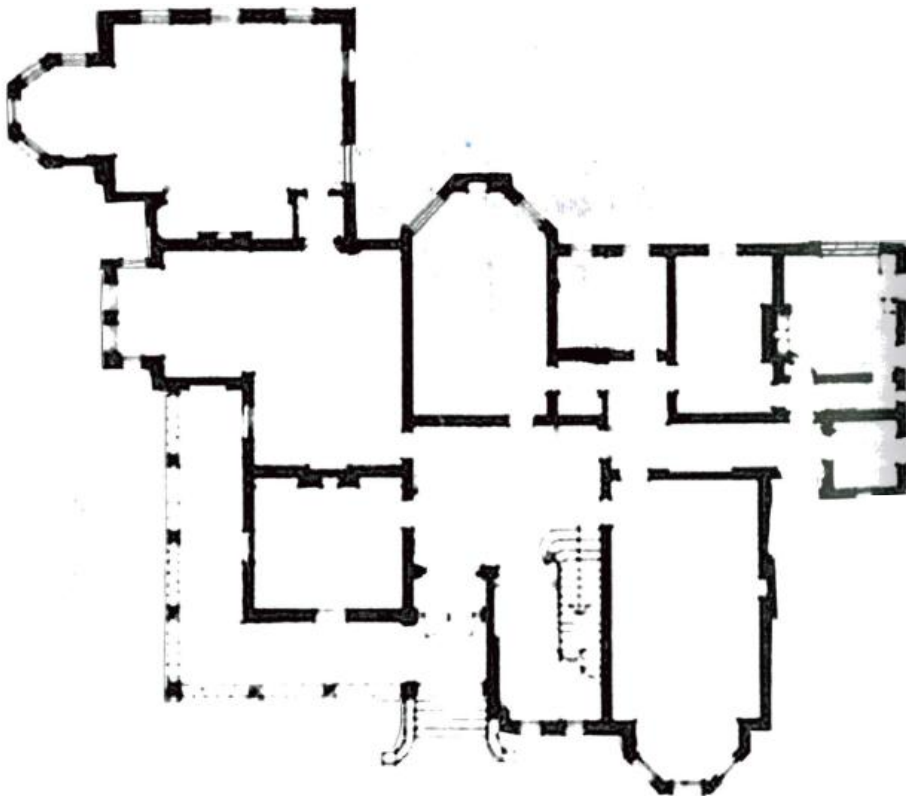


Figure 4 The ground floor plan showing Kemp's addition added to the north-west of the main building
Source: La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, H97.250/424, referenced in *Kawarau*,
Jenniffer F. O'Donnell

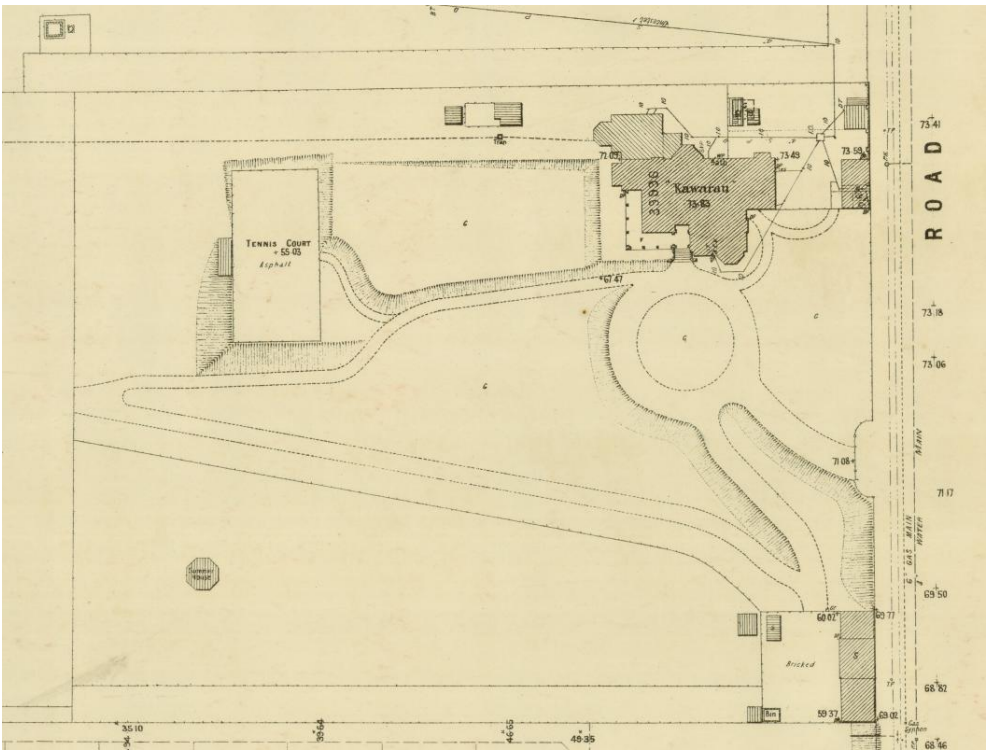


Figure 5 1916 MMBW Detail Plan no. 1520 showing the mansion with 1904 addition and property layout
 Source: State Library of Victoria



Figure 6 1945 aerial image of the subject property, prior to subdivision
 Source: Land Victoria Aerial Photography Collection, Landata, SERV



Figure 7 1989 aerial image of the subject property as indicated and the development in the vicinity, including the establishment of the Cato Street (to the south of the subject site) and the commercial development
Source: Historical Aerial Photography Collection, Geoscience Australia



Figure 8 Historical photos of the subject site
Source: Victorian Collections, <https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/6052a342c9704ed38a6f7876>, accessed by 18 February 2026, referenced in *Kawarau*, Jenniffer F. O'Donnell (2016)



Figure 9 View along the north elevation of Kawarau
Source: Lovell Chen, 2025



Figure 10 View to the carport adjoining the east elevation of Kawarau
Source: Lovell Chen, 2025

4.0 Proposed works

The proposal is for a new two-storey addition to the rear of the building, replacement of the existing carport and minor internal alterations to facilitate DDA-compliant access between the original building and the new works. These works are described in detail below.

4.1 New addition

It is proposed to remove the external fire stair and timber airlock to allow for the construction of a new two-storey addition to the north (rear) of the main building (Figure 11). All services attached to the building in this area will be relocated as required and the pavers in this location will be removed. The proposed new addition will be approximately 10.5m x 13m, and set 2m back from the north property boundary. It will accommodate two tutorial rooms, bathrooms, additional storage spaces, and a lift to provide vertical circulation. The addition is designed in a half-hipped roof form, with an overall height of approximately 8.4m that finishes just above the eaves line of the building (Figure 12). A glazed two-storey linking element with a flat roof and aluminium framing connects the new addition to the existing building and finishes below the eave line (Figure 13). The upper section of the addition will be standing-seam metal cladding in Colorbond Dune, above a light grey brick base. Two rectangular windows are proposed on the east elevation at both levels, which will be visible from Toorong Road and finished with clear glazing and Colorbond Manor Red expressed metal frames. The window frames are designed as simple, contemporary projections around the windows. On the north elevation, lightweight aluminium-framed windows and two doors (to the external storage) are proposed, with clerestory windows incorporated into the west elevation at both levels. A metal canopy is included at ground level on the east elevation to provide weather protection to the new entrance.

The original projecting bay of the heritage building will be retained intact and enclosed within the proposed addition with the chimney above also retained. Two existing windows at ground floor and level 1 will be modified into doors facilitate DDA-compliant access between the heritage building and the new addition (Figure 14 & Figure 15). In addition, the existing non-original door at the level 1 entry from the timber stairs will be widened to provide an additional accessible entry to the addition (Figure 11).



Figure 11 North elevation of Kwarau, showing the external fire stairs, timber airlock, pavers to be demolished; the services to be relocated as required; the windows and door proposed to be modified are indicated
Source: Lovell Chen, 2025



Figure 12 Rendered image of the proposed addition
Source: Bryant Alsop, drawing no. TP10



Figure 13 Rendered image showing the proposed glazed linking element
Source: Bryant Alsop, drawing no. TP10



Figure 14 Existing window opening (as indicated) on ground level to be modified into a new door opening
Source: Lovell Chen, 2025

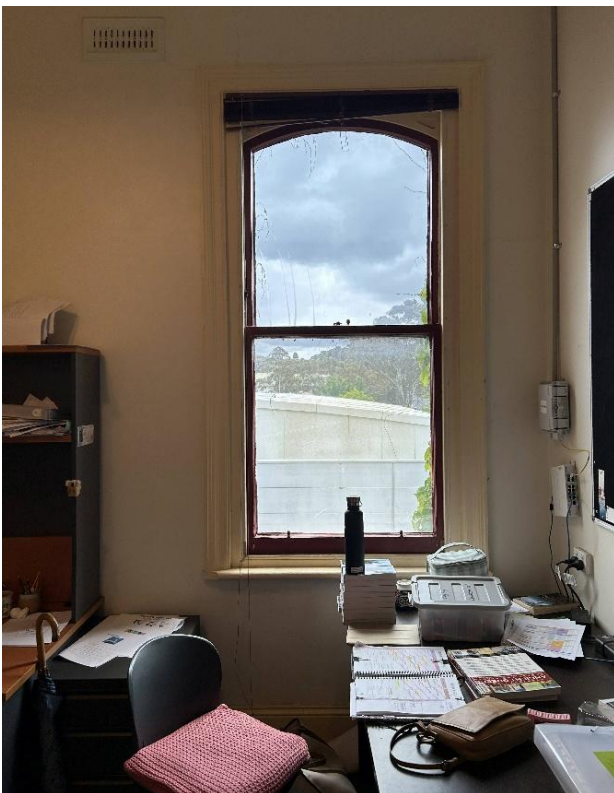


Figure 15 Existing window openings on first level to be modified into a new door opening
Source: Lovell Chen, 2025

4.2 Carport

It is proposed to remove the existing non-original carport and associated verandah and storage structures to the east of the main building, and replace them with a new freestanding carport (Figure 16). Following demolition, the affected east elevation of the heritage building and the west elevation of the outbuilding will be made good. The new carport will be a standalone and self-supporting structure, physically separated and set away from both the main building and the existing brick outbuilding.

The proposed new carport will be an open-sided structure with a skillion roof form, finishing at a maximum height of 2.8m-3.2m. It will be clad in Colorbond metal cladding in light grey and supported by painted metal posts. The width of the proposed carport is 6m, which is narrower than the existing carport and will finish behind the north elevation of the main building. As a result, one window on the east elevation of the main building will be revealed (Figure 17).



Figure 16 The existing carport and the verandah (as indicated) attached to the east elevation
Source: Lovell Chen, 2025



Figure 17 Rendered image of the proposed freestanding carport
Source: Bryant Alsop, drawing no. TP12

4.3 Internal arrangement

Internally, minor alterations are required to facilitate DDA-compliant movement through the heritage building. At ground level, a section of one partition wall in the original building will be removed to connect access from the addition through to the existing hallway. A similar arrangement is proposed at level 1, with the proposed removal of one door and partition wall in the main building. In addition, it is proposed to remove two sections of existing partition walls in the 1904 addition to enable access from the addition. The remaining sections of these walls will be otherwise retained.

The eastern staircase, which will become redundant, will be retained in situ and is proposed to be blocked off by the installation of new 1.2m glazed balustrades at both levels (Figure 18). In addition, new compliant handrails and balustrades will be installed to both sides of the main stair (Figure 20). The new handrails will have a round stainless-steel profile and will be fixed to the wall on one side and to the stair tread on the other. The original timber handrails and balustrades will be retained in situ. New glazed balustrades will sit behind the existing balustrades and be fixed to the floor at the first-floor landing.

Externally, a new 1.2m glazed balustrade will also be installed to the first-floor balcony, positioned behind the original balustrade, which is currently not compliant with the National Construction Code (NCC; Figure 19). The original balustrade will be retained in situ.



Figure 18 Existing non-compliant stair to be retained but made redundant and closed off
Source: Bryant Alsop, 2026



Figure 19 Existing original balustrades to the first-floor balcony; the glazed balustrade is proposed behind
Source: Bryant Alsop, 2026



Figure 20 The main stair showing the existing original timber handrails and balustrades
Source: Bryant Alsop, 2026

5.0 Reason for the works

The proposed addition is required to support the ongoing use of the place by Alia College by providing additional tutorial and storage spaces. The space provided within the existing building does not allow for future growth at the school, and the original internal layout and features of the building are not suitable for extensive modification or rearrangement to provide additional space. This is particularly in areas where the internal fabric ('Edwardian plasterwork' and 'decorative art nouveau fibrous plaster and timber work, including exceptional examples in the billiard room') is identified in the VHR statement of significance as contributing to the architectural significance of the place.

In addition, it is noted that currently, the building is not accessible from a DDA perspective. The proposal for compliant access has been developed in response to notification from the City of Boroondara requiring that specific compliance items are addressed, including the provision of a lift and accessible/ambulant toilets. To facilitate this, the addition also incorporates a lift to provide DDA-compliant access to both levels of the building without the need to navigate steps or staircases, which is not currently available to staff and students at the school. The proposed scope of works seeks to rectify this issue in a sensitive and considered manner which limits the overall impact on the presentation and appreciation of Kawarau, and on the associated significant spaces and fabric of the building.

6.0 Assessment of heritage impacts

Section 101 of the *Heritage Act 2017* sets out the considerations which must be made in determining permit applications. As relevant to the proposed works, the considerations of the Executive Director in determining a permit are reproduced below:

S101(2)(a) The extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place or registered object.

S101(2)(b) The extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or registered object.

6.1 Permit policy and permit exemptions

The General Permit Exemptions for all registered places (August 2024) as relevant to the proposed works is reproduced below, noting that there are conditions associated with this exemption which have not been reproduced:

4.2 New interior fitouts of internal areas that have previously been adapted for current use, limited to the removal, replacement and installation of:

- Shelving
- Display units
- Furnishings
- Lighting and services
- Floor coverings
- Wall finishes.

The VHR documentation also include some site-specific exemptions for the registered place. The relevant of these are reproduced below:

Like for like maintenance and repair of the rendered brick wall to the east of the Kawarau residence.

Demolition of the modern covered garage area in a manner that does not damage the nineteenth-century bi-chrome brick building at the eastern boundary, followed by making good any prior damage to this outbuilding where the garage was attached to it.

As such, the removal of the existing carport is exempt from obtaining a permit approval from Heritage Victoria and no further assessment for its removal is provided below.

6.2 The extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place [S101(2)(a)]

6.2.1 *New addition*

The proposed addition has been designed to provide additional tutorial and storage spaces for the school, as well as DDA-compliant vertical circulation. As visible new works, the design and detailing of the proposed addition have been carefully refined and simplified in response to pre-application comments by Heritage Victoria to present as a successful contemporary addition to the building. The glazed linking element will ensure clear distinction is provided between the new and historic fabric and the use of light-coloured metal cladding and face brick will complement the cream render of the historic building without imitation. Both the addition and the glazed linking element are appropriately sited and scaled so that they remain generally in line with or below the eaves line of the existing building. The proposed roof form of the rear addition beyond the linking element is a simple half-hipped form with its maximum height finished within 0.5m above the existing eaves line, ensuring that important view lines to the chimneys are retained. The overall height of the addition is such that it will not be visible in key views to the principal façade (south elevation) of the heritage building.

While part of the original north elevation will be enclosed within the new addition and the 1904 two-storey wing will be concealed in views from Tooronga Road, the balance of the original building will remain visible and the original projecting element on the north elevation will be retained as existing within the new addition. Only minimal intervention to original fabric is proposed, including two existing window openings to be modified to create new accessible entries. One additional non-original entry at level 1 in the 1904 wing will also be modified to widen this entry. This approach ensures physical impacts on original or early fabric will be minimised by utilising and altering existing openings rather than creating additional openings.

Overall, the scale, materials and colours of the proposed rear addition respect the architectural significance of Kawarau while remaining clearly identifiable as a contemporary and secondary addition to the heritage place.

There will be no heritage impact from the removal of the external timber stair.

6.2.2 *Carport*

As noted above, the removal of the existing carport will be undertaken in accordance with the existing permit exemption. The associated verandah element attached to the east elevation of Kawarau is not original (refer Figure 5) and does not contribute to the significance of the place. The surrounding heritage fabric of Kawarau and the brick outbuilding will be made good following the removal of these elements. As such, there will be no heritage impact from the removal of the existing carport and verandah.

The proposed freestanding carport is required to provide weather protection for vehicles on site. Notwithstanding that some concern was raised in the pre-application comments in relation to the replacement of the carport in this location, the proposed new structure is narrower in width than the existing and will be physically separated from both the heritage building and brick outbuilding. While it may be partly visible from Tooronga Road, it is a modest open-sided structure that will be read as a secondary element within the site. Its strategic setback from the northern end of the heritage buildings is a positive outcome in revealing more of the east elevation of Kawarau and managing the potential for the proposed carport to present as a visually intrusive element in the place.

The replacement of the existing carport represents as an improved heritage outcome, as it will reveal original elements of the main building currently visually concealed by the existing carport while continuing to provide weather protection for vehicles stored on site. Overall, the proposal has been carefully designed to minimise visual impacts on the registered place and to avoid physical intervention to any significant fabric.

6.2.3 *Internal arrangement*

The internal arrangement and fabric of Kawarau remains largely intact and a limited amount of intervention is required into the existing fabric where DDA-compliant circulation will be provided within the existing building. Although some original/early fabric will be lost, this is limited to the extent of sections of a small number of existing partition walls only, and the balance of these walls will be retained to maintain an understanding of the existing internal layout. As such, the adverse impact on the significance of the heritage place will be limited in extent and the overall internal layout will remain legible. The exception to this one complete wall to an existing office at level 1, however because of the layout of these spaces, the hallway and room arrangement will remain legible in this location.

The installation of glazed balustrades to the staircase proposed to be made redundant, the first-floor stair landing and the balcony, along with the installation of new handrails to the main stair are minimal, contemporary and reversible interventions. These works are required to safely restrict access to a redundant staircase and to ensure the building complies with the NCC, which will not result in any adverse impact on the significance of the heritage place. The original balustrades and handrails will be retained in situ, with all new installations to be standalone elements that do not physically impact the original features. It is noted that remediation works to the first-floor balcony were identified during the pre-application meeting, however other works to the balcony do not form part of this application.

6.3 **The extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place [S101(2)(b)]**

While originally a residence, the use of the place for residential purposes had ceased by the early-1950s and the existing use of Kawarau is as a school building. It has operated as an independent school for 27 years. Currently, the only means through which vertical circulation is provided in the building is by way of two internal staircases and an external fire stair. As such, the existing building is currently not accessible to people unable to navigate stairs. Essential upgrades are required to support the school's ongoing development and to provide universally accessible pathways within the school building. The proposed lift, accessible/ambulant toilets and accessible circulation corridors are necessary to meet the mandatory Building Code requirements for the continued granting of an occupancy permit. A Building Order issued by the City of Boroondara requires the site to be upgraded to address current safety and access standards. Without these upgrades, the school will no longer be permitted to operate after nearly three decades.

An alternative location for the required addition, immediately north of the 1904 extension, was explored. However, this location was determined to be unsuitable due to access constraints and the need to maintain adequate natural lighting and outlook from key spaces at both ground level and the first floor. The current proposal represents the minimum necessary scale to achieve compliant circulation paths and the minimum height for compliant ceilings and lift overrun. Refusal of the permit application would directly affect the use of the place as an inclusive educational facility and adversely impact on the provision of equitable access into the building.

The proposed works are also critical to supporting the school's growth and providing essential tutorial and storage spaces. Overall, the proposed works are necessary to accommodate projected enrolment growth and to ensure the ongoing management and viable use of the heritage place.

7.0 Conclusion

The proposal is for an addition and minor works to Kawarau to provide DDA-compliant access into and within the building, and for on-site vehicle accommodation. These works will deliver universally accessible facilities to support the ongoing operation and expansion of Alia College. The location, scale and presentation of the proposed addition has been carefully designed to minimise physical and visual impacts on significant spaces and fabric. Both the proposed addition and the new carport are located at the side/rear of the building and will not obscure any existing view lines to the principal façade of the registered place. The overall design has been refined to meet contemporary functional requirements while mitigating and managing impacts on the historic and architectural significance of the place.