

**andrea proctor landscapes**  
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**HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT FOR LAKE COLAC HOLIDAY PARK**  
VHR H2259: COLAC BOTANIC GARDENS  
PREPARED ON BEHALF OF BELGRAVIA PRO



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Issue Register

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## 1. Introduction

This Heritage Impact Statement has been prepared on behalf of Belgravia Pro, who hold the lease from Colac Otway Shire for the Lake Colac Holiday Park. The Holiday Park sits within the historic footprint of the heritage registered Colac Botanic Gardens, and this report is to support the Heritage Victoria permit application for upgrade works to the Park including:

- Two new studio accommodation blocks totally 6 individual, en-suite rooms
- New Camp kitchen
- New amenities blocks and landscaping including accessible facilities
- Refurbishment of the existing amenities block in keeping with the new one (painted to match, internal renovations)
- New dump point
- New boom gates
- Electrical upgrades
- Demolition of ten non-compliant and end of life ensuite blocks from 1977

The caravan park has existed within the botanic gardens footprint since 1977. This area falls under the footprint of the Botanic Gardens but does not contain any trees of heritage significance and has no obvious connection to the gardens other than as part of the broader lake recreational precinct. While the caravan park in itself is not noted as significant on the heritage registration, it is included as part of a diverse offering of recreational activities and facilities, contributing to the social significance of the broader Colac Botanic Gardens site.

This Heritage Impact Statement assesses the site against its identified and statutorily protected heritage significance. It is possible that architectural significance exists beyond this, but previous registrations have not sustained this by including it in the registration of the place. This is discussed in detail within the report.

The Heritage Impact Statement has been prepared following a pre-application meeting with Lauren Keating and Jessica Hood of Heritage Victoria and is guided by pre-application advice from 16.10.2024 as a result of this meeting. The pre-application number for these works is P40244.

While we understand Heritage Victoria had some preliminary concerns over the location of the maintenance shed and accommodation units. This was considered and some modifications were made, and for the remaining works, after undertaking a thorough review of the proposed works, the history of the place and relevant conservation studies, the proposed works are supported from a heritage perspective.

**Note on naming:** The current name of the site is the Lake Colac Holiday Park, but it has previously been referred to as the “caravan park”. In this document the term Lake Colac Holiday Park relates to the current site and its management. The term “caravan park” is used in a generic sense to refer to the site over time and when quoting previous studies.

## 2. Registration Summary

<b>Address:</b>	1-5 Fyans Street Colac, Colac Otway Shire
<b>Name:</b>	Colac Botanic Gardens
<b>Supporting the Permit application for:</b>	Upgrade works to the Lake Colac Holiday Park as detailed in the document "Bpro Lake Colac Holiday Park, Heritage Consultant Update October 2024" by Mark Giles
<b>Date:</b>	December 2024
<b>VHR Number:</b>	H2259
<b>Prepared by:</b>	Andrea Proctor (PGDipLArch 2008, BHort 2004, <i>University of Melbourne</i> ) and Sandra Schwarz (MLarch 2019, <i>University of Melbourne</i> , MLarch 2019 <i>SLU</i> ) andrea proctor landscapes 235 Queens Road Wandin North, 3139 admin@andreaproctor.com.au m: 0411 03 7886
<b>On behalf of:</b>	Colac Otway Shire Council
<b>World Heritage:</b>	The site is not in a World Heritage Environs area
<b>Adjacent Sites:</b>	The site is not within the immediate environs of any other property on the Victorian Heritage Register
<b>Additional legislation:</b>	Works will need to comply with the National Construction Code (NCC) 2022, Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and any local Colac Otway Shire Council requirements where applicable. This is particularly relevant to non-compliance of the 1977 ensuites.

## 3. Existing Conditions of the Lake Colac Holiday Park

### History

The below focuses on the history and development of the Lake Colac Holiday Park. For a broader history of the development of the Colac Botanic Gardens, refer to the *Colac Botanic Gardens Master Plan (2024, attached)* and Heritage Victoria Statement of Significance (below).

Sitting on the lands of the Gulidjan and Gabuband people, the Colac Botanic Gardens was first identified as a "Botanic Gardens...for the purposes of Public recreation" in 1865. For most of its history the focus has been on the formally landscaped "botanic garden" portion of the site at the top of the hill and the Lake Colac foreshore immediately adjacent to this area. It is unknown if the area occupied by the Lake Colac Holiday Park was landscaped in any way prior to 1975, but the area was included in William Guilfoyle's 1910 plan for the site and has been identified as being on fill.<sup>i</sup> Guilfoyle's plan included ambitious (and now considered environmentally unsuitable) plans for the creek line and area now occupied by the caravan park. Fortunately, these were never implemented. Indeed, even his plans for the upper portion of the site were not fully carried out.

In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century it was common for areas of botanic gardens to be annexed for use by a caravan park including at Kyneton, Wombat Hill and Camperdown Botanic Gardens. These were often seen as available



space, and in the case of Colac the situation in a prime location near the lake would have contributed to its appeal as a tourism site.

The caravan park (Lake Colac Holiday Park) was an initiative of the Colac City Council from around 1975, intended to be a section of land leased out by the Colac Botanic Gardens for income towards improvements in the site.<sup>ii</sup> The caravan park included an unusual design in dispensing with the typical communal amenities block in preference for late modernist designed individual, single unit ensuites in the Googie Architectural style (space-age style). These units, comprising twelve blocks of two units each were designed by Deputy Engineer Doug Cole who designed and managed the project. *“The design, preparation and construction and supervision broke new ground, not only for council but also for the Colac Waterworks and Sewerage Authority and other authorities. New regulations had virtually to be written by the Trust and Sewerage Authority for the design to be achieved.”*<sup>iii</sup> The units were originally painted in pastel colours of pink and lime green. All were repainted in 1990. The park also offered a new, affordable alternative for tourists travelling with motor cars and caravans, attracting this new type of visitors to the area. The design of the units was *“late modernist design of the high-tech plug-in space age modular architectural style”*<sup>iv</sup> but is a late example of this style, coming in 1977, some eight years after the sixties space race and as this design style’s popularity was fading.

No significant changes appear to have occurred to the layout and structure of the Holiday Park during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, beyond the addition of a fence marking the boundary of the leased property and removal of a managers residence by a previous tenant.

In the first decades of the new millennium, community revegetation has occurred in the broader area to the east, adjacent to the Holiday Park. Impacts from erosion, the drying of Lake Colac, as well as flooding have impacted the Park due to its low level and close proximity to the lake.

### Existing Conditions

The Colac Botanic Gardens Holiday Park sits in the north-eastern triangular tip of the Colac Botanic Gardens heritage registration site. Having opened in 1977 the leased property sits with its northern edge on Lake Colac. To the west it is bound by Fyans Street, and to the east by Barongarook Creek. Across the creek, further to the east, are residential properties (heritage overlay), which extend into Egan Reserve (created in the late 1980s) and the current Bird Sanctuary.



Figure 1: Entrance to the Lake Colac Holiday Park from Fyans Street

The Lake Colac walking track, connecting various lakeside facilities on the foreshore, runs along the northern front of the Holiday Park and into the Bird Sanctuary. It features a timber bridge over Barongarook Creek in close proximity to the Holiday Park and their boat launching area.

The site currently contains twenty-four drive-through ensuite caravan sites, forty camping sites, twelve double ensuite amenity units, an amenities block, a temporary office and large

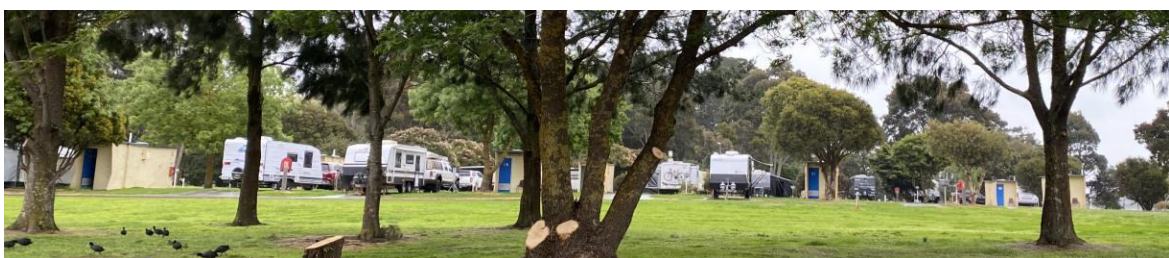
shed. The subject of this application is the first works for a Landscape Master Plan which entails six new ensuite cabins (in two blocks), a new camp kitchen, refurbishment of the existing amenities block and addition of a new (accessible) amenities block, demolition of aging infrastructure and minor upgrade works.



*Lake Colac Holiday Park entrance*



*Barongarook Creek and bridge and northern interface with Lake Colac*



*Lake Colac Holiday Park with the 1977 ensuites*





*Screening planting along Fyans Street in the vicinity of the new accommodation units*

The boundary of the Holiday Park is relatively densely planted with a mixture of small trees and shrubs, screening views into the site from the Colac Botanic Gardens. The most visually open areas within the Holiday Park face north and allow for views over Lake Colac, which will not be impacted by the proposed changes. From an aesthetic perspective, the views from the Colac Botanic Gardens to the Holiday Park are limited and are not considered to be impacted by the proposed works.



*Example of high-quality screening planting between the Lake Colac Holiday Park and main portion of Colac Botanic Gardens*

## 4. Heritage Values

The Lake Colac Holiday Park inclusion on the Victorian Heritage Register is due to its location within the greater footprint of the Colac Botanic Gardens. As part of ongoing leases since its creation, the Holiday Park technically remains on the botanic garden heritage register and part of Council managed land. The park has never been part of the function of the botanic garden and appears to have been screened from view since its creation in the late 1970s.

### Limitations

The most recent heritage assessment for the Colac Botanic Gardens would have occurred as part of its inclusion on the Victorian Heritage Register in 2010. Prior to this, the site was included in the 2003 *Colac Otway Heritage Study* by Mary Sheehan & Associates which in turn was based on a 1993 report *Colac Botanic Gardens – A Conservation Study* by Patrick & Wallace Pty Ltd Landscape Architects.

With the possible exception of the Heritage Victorian assessment, all these assessments are now well out of date. The Patrick & Wallace report was a combined Conservation Management and Master Plan (as was typical in the era) and does not have the depth of a site-specific CMP. Since this time legislation and heritage practices have changed, there is greater access to digitised files and site pressures have shifted. Such mentions that are made of the caravan park make only limited mention of its history, development and relationship to the Gardens.

The recently endorsed *Colac Botanic Gardens Master Plan 2024 – 2044* recommends the production of a new Conservation Management Plan as a high priority. Until this time assessments of heritage values are based on best available information.

### Colac Botanic Gardens – A Conservation Study (Patrick & Wallace Pty Ltd Landscape Architects, 1993)

The 1993 Conservation Study acknowledges the connection and value of the caravan park as part of a broader offering of recreational activities and facilities along the Lake Colac foreshore, including the remaining Rowing Club, children's playground, Angling Club and Toilet Block but no architectural merit was noted for any of these facilities at the time.<sup>v</sup> The report focuses on the importance of effective screening (visually and as a wind break) and otherwise concentrates on what would now be considered Master Plan matters. It summarises the park by stating *"it occupies a secluded part of the site, screened by effective planting... The Caravan Park should not be made larger but the present facility is acceptable the present facility is acceptable"*<sup>vi</sup>

### Colac Otway Heritage Study (Mary Sheehan & Associates, 2003)

The Mary Sheehan & Associates report draws heavily on the Patrick & Wallace document in relation to the botanic gardens and also identifies the twelve modernist ensuite facilities as being of aesthetic and historic significance to the State of Victoria stating that: *"The 24 Caravan Park Amenity Units,<sup>1</sup> located in the Colac Botanic Gardens Caravan Park, were designed and built in the mid-1970s. Each one has been constructed from a single-unit fibreglass module and contains a one-piece fibreglass shower; a stainless-steel washbasin with drainage board; toilet; power points and hot water service tank. The 24 Caravan Park Amenity Units are of aesthetic and historic importance to the State of Victoria. The 24 Caravan Park Amenity Units are aesthetically*

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<sup>1</sup> The 24 units referenced by the report are in 12 blocks of two units. For the purposes of this report they are listed as 12 blocks of two units each



*important as excellent examples of late modernist design of the high-tech plug-in space age modular architectural style, demonstrated in the pyramidal or free curved shapes of each unit. The Caravan Park Amenity Units are aesthetically important in demonstrating rarity by combining sanitary services in an innovative functional conception with a futurist design. The Caravan Park Amenity Units are historically important through association with the impact of the motor car and caravan as an affordable alternative for travellers and tourists. The Caravan Park Amenity Units are historically important in demonstrating the efforts of local communities to promote and attract tourists to the area”<sup>vii</sup>*

It should be noted that the recommendations of the report were not actioned during the registration of the site by Heritage Victoria in 2010, with no reference made of the ensuite blocks and significance focusing on the site as a botanic garden and only capturing the caravan park site by default. Neither have the blocks been identified for protection under the Colac Otway Planning Scheme despite the report being over 20 years old.

It was not within the capacity of this assessment or qualifications of the report writers to undertake a full assessment into the architectural merit or otherwise of the ensuite units, although high level architectural advice was sought and a desktop review undertaken. This identified that the method of construction (potentially pre-fabricated drop in fibreglass) is likely to be unusual and potentially of heritage interest, but that they are not by a well-known designer. The “*the high-tech plug-in space age modular architectural style*” (also known as Googie Architecture) of the ensuites is very late in the period, which peaked during the 1960s.

While the ensuites are architecturally interesting, the identification of *historic* significance in the report is respectfully questioned. While the method of providing tourism facilities in a futuristic design is architecturally interesting, and likely to be ahead of their time in providing individual ensuite facilities rather than a central block, their association with “*the motor car and caravan as an affordable alternative for travellers*” is questioned given the lateness of the establishment of Colac’s caravan park in 1977 (compared to 1960 for Camperdown Botanic Gardens<sup>viii</sup> and 1959 for Kyneton Botanic Gardens<sup>ix</sup>). Also questioned is their importance “*in demonstrating the efforts of local communities to promote and attract tourists to the area*” given that most botanic gardens have been long standing tourist attractions, and at best this is unlikely to be associated with the botanic garden site (where the registered significance lies), but rather its connection to Lake Colac.

An added complexity, discussed below and not related to their significance, is that the ensuites are at end of life and no longer fit for purpose. Significant renovation works would be required to meet the current National Construction Code. However, a more complex issue is the condition of the structures. According to the Colac Otway Shire Council Property Officer “the roof on each of the blocks are a concrete slab. The concrete has, over the years become brittle and has lost its water resistance. The slabs are allowing water to penetrate and absorb into the steel mesh. A few years ago there was an attempt to seal the slabs. It was not... successful. The slabs are crumbling into powder.”<sup>x</sup> This means that retention of all units is financially and practically unviable regardless of any architectural merit.

### Colac Botanic Gardens Statement of Significance (Victorian Heritage Register Report H2259)

For completeness, a copy of the Heritage Victoria Statement of Significance is reproduced here. The Registration was activated on December 9, 2010.

#### What is significant?

The Colac Botanic Gardens occupy an elevated site of approximately 16 hectares north-east of the town centre bounded by the southern shores of Lake Colac, Gellibrand Street, Fyans Street and Barongarook Creek.

The main entrance to the Colac Botanic Garden is through the south-west entrance Bilson gates (1962) on the corner of Fyans Street and Gellibrand Street where a carriage drive, lined with predominantly *Quercus robur* (English Oak) and few *Quercus cerris* (Turkey Oak), forms a row around the perimeter of the Gardens and is open to vehicle access. The area enclosed by the drive has a network of winding paths and is mainly open lawn with specimen trees, shrubberies, some bedding plants together with a palm bed, rose garden, rose arbour, pond and fountain, and cannon (acquired 1904) near the south eastern gate. The curator's cottage (c.1924, now a cafe) is located at the western end of the gardens with playground equipment, picnic facilities and car parking at the eastern end. A caravan park occupies the north-east corner along Barongarook Creek adjacent to the lake shore.

A steep escarpment planted with *Pinus radiata* (Monterey Pines) and specimen trees runs between the botanic gardens and the flat area around the shore of Lake Colac which contains remnant terracing, an old brick toilet block with castellated roof (c1930s), a walking track, a fire brigade asphalt training track and shed, rotunda (1999), car parks, a rowing club, angling club, public toilets, boat ramp (1968) and jetty (1971). The escarpment provides separation between the two areas and provides extensive views from the Botanic Gardens over Lake Colac.

The site was temporarily reserved in 1865 for botanical and recreational purposes after a request from local residents. Little progress was made until 1868 when Daniel Bunce, Director of the Geelong Botanic Gardens, was approached to lay out a plan for the garden. Implementation of the plan was slow with the construction of a carriageway and planting of trees the only known details.

Between c1875 -80, curators Reeves and McDonald made changes to the carriageway and introduced garden beds, curved paths, lawns and shady arbours. In the 1890s structures added to the gardens included a pavilion overlooking the lake a conservatory in the south-eastern corner and a permanent rowing clubhouse on the edge of the lake joining the existing structures of piers, baths and a boat shed. Most of these structures have been removed.

In 1910 William Guilfoyle, Director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, prepared a plan and a 'Report on the remodelling and development of the Colac Botanic Gardens', which are extant, suggesting some improvements and remodelling to take advantage of the slope and vistas across over the lake which he considered had been ignored. This included simplifying the existing path system within the circular drive, and removal of borders and crowded areas in favour of larger trees and clumps of shrubs and a palm and cordyline bed all of which were implemented. Curators Archibald Campbell (1911-40) and Dugald Leitch (1940-55) were responsible for implementation of part of the Guilfoyle plan and maintaining the maturing Gardens but, with Guilfoyle's death in 1912, any further influence ended. The last resident curator Donald



Greenwood (1955-65) was responsible for the addition of many native plants and in more recent times the gardens have more simplified planting and a park-like character.

The Colac Botanic Gardens contains many rare plant species only found in historic gardens and several significant and uncommon trees including four *Cupressus forbesii* (Tecate Cypress), a very large *Sophora japonica* (Pagoda Tree), a *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Eila Keightley' (Kohuhu), a large *Araucaria bidwillii* (Bunya Bunya Pine) and an outstanding *Ulmus x hollandica* 'Vegeta' (Huntington Elm). In March 1996, James Guilfoyle, grandson of William Guilfoyle, planted an *Arbutus canariensis* (Canary Island Strawberry Tree). In 2004 the Australian Plant Society planted an Otway Flora Bed on the eastern side of the Gardens. This site is on the land of the traditional owners.

### How is it significant?

Colac Botanic Gardens are of historical, aesthetic, and scientific (botanical) significance to the State of Victoria.

### Why is it significant?

Colac Botanic Gardens are of historical significance as an important example of a regional botanical garden, established in the nineteenth century in response to the increased wealth of Victoria with the discovery of gold and the desire to provide a place for recreation and education in keeping with European trends.

The Colac Botanic Gardens are of historical importance through the association with Daniel Bunce and William Guilfoyle, two pioneers of botanic gardens and garden design in Victoria.

The Colac Botanic Gardens are of aesthetic significance due to their park - like character and elevated location immediately above the southern shore of Lake Colac, providing vistas across the lake. The gardens are of aesthetic significance for the sub-tropical plant groups supported by Guilfoyle together with his gardenesque style. They are of aesthetic significance for the contrasting form and variety of trees and plants which includes conifers, evergreen and deciduous plantings, together with the leaf shapes, colours and flowers, also contribute to the Garden's aesthetic quality and appeal.

The Colac Botanic Gardens are of scientific (botanical) significance for a number of rare plants and trees including four *Cupressus forbesii* (Tecate Cypress), the only known examples in Victoria, a large *Sophora japonica* (Pagoda Tree), *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Eila Keightley' (Kohuhu), and large *Araucaria bidwillii* (Bunya Bunya Pine) and an outstanding *Ulmus x hollandica* 'Vegeta' (Huntington Elm).

### Summary

Overall, the cultural heritage value of the Lake Colac Holiday Park within the site of the Colac Botanic Gardens is extremely limited. The site operates in physical proximity to the foreshore, but is well screened and not in direct connection to the heritage botanic gardens and their recognised heritage values.

There is a possibility of the ensuite blocks being of architectural significance, but a considerable body of work is required to determine this and is outside the scope of this Heritage Impact Statement, especially as there are practical concerns in play which limit the capacity of the land manager to retain all the units, regardless of their significance.

## 5. The Proposed Works

The permit application is for the first works for a Landscape Master Plan which entails six new en-suite cabins (in two blocks), a new camp kitchen, refurbishment of the existing amenities block and addition of a new (accessible) amenities block, demolition of aging infrastructure and minor upgrade works. In producing this Heritage Impact Statement the following documents were reviewed, with recommendations made accordingly:

### General

- Patrick & Wallace Pty Ltd Landscape Architects, 1993, *Colac Botanic Gardens – A Conservation Study*
- Mary Sheehan and Associates, 2003, *Colac Otway Heritage Study – Volume 2*
- andrea proctor landscapes, 2024, *Colac Botanic Gardens Master Plan 2024 - 2044*
- Colac Otway Shire in association with klg landscape consultants and LMH Consulting Group, 2016, *Lake Colac Foreshore Master Plan*
- Pre-application meeting feedback letter from Heritage Victoria Letter, 16.10.2024
- Sustainable Park Solutions, 2024, *Lake Colac Holiday Park Landscape Masterplan*, Revision 4

### Project Documentation (proposed works)

- Mark Giles Bpro *Lake Colac Holiday Park, Heritage Consultant Update January 2025* (attached)
- Sustainable spaces Unregistrable Movable Dwelling *ComfyPod* plans for Studio Cabins, ensuite units, Camp Kitchen, Shower / Toilet amenity block and Office replacement (attached)

### Description of works

A full description of the proposed works can be found in the above listed project documentation and are summarised as follows:

- Repainting of existing shed
- Two new “Unregistrable Movable Dwelling ComfyPod studio cabins” blocks each containing three individual en-suite rooms (six new rooms in total)
- New Comfypod Camp Kitchen in current open area of land
- Replacement of the existing office with a Comfypod container office
- Renovation and painting of the existing amenity block and shed and new accessible ComfyPod shower / toilet amenity unit containing seven standard cubicles, one Accessible Bathroom and one Laundry facility
- New dump point
- New boom gates
- Electrical upgrades
- Demolition of ten non-compliant and end of life ensuite blocks from 1977 (the remaining two are being retained)

### Purpose of Proposed Works

The purpose of the proposed works is to ensure the long-term viability of the Lake Colac Holiday Park and to provide accommodation for short-term essential workers and tourists as per the Lease Contract. The



proposed ComfyPod studio cabins aim to cater for essential workers during the week and tourists on weekends. This is an accommodation type not currently available within the park for essential workers, who require temporary residence for short-term contracts (3-4 weeks). This lack of local accommodation for workers has been experienced firsthand by the report writers when working in the area.

According to the Holiday Park Managers, the proposed changes, will allow for the following:

- Fulfilment of the lease contract deliverable to provide short-term accommodation for essential workers and tourists
- Allow the provision of month-long essential worker accommodation alongside week-long options (noting that the proposed studios meet the minimum requirements for use by essential work accommodation including internal bathrooms and self-catering facilities)
- Make better use of locations on the site that are in less demand for caravans
- Create short-term accommodation for non-caravan owners in a location that is already screened from the Colac Botanic Gardens

## 6. Impacts of the Proposal

### Historical significance

The works are considered to have a neutral impact on the historical significance of the Colac Botanic Gardens as identified in the Heritage Victoria registration for the following reasons:

- The Holiday Park in question dates from 1977, and is not part of the original 1865 Colac Botanic Gardens
- There is no evidence of pre-1970s botanic gardens fabric within the Holiday Park footprint, or any evidence that this area was ever developed as part of the botanic gardens
- The heritage values for the place relate to its role as a botanic garden. The associated historic, aesthetic and scientific (botanic) values listed in the Heritage Registration all relate to this role, not the Holiday Park, which was added in 1977
- The Colac Botanic Gardens Conservation Study (1993) does not identify any part of the Holiday Park as having heritage significance
- The Colac Otway Heritage Study (2003) only identifies the twelve ensuites as having aesthetic and historical significance, which was not adopted on the Victorian Heritage Register or in any of the planning schemes. This report is over 20 years old and historic significance of these units is respectfully disputed.
- The proposed works do not impact any heritage fabric

### Aesthetic

The works are considered to have a positive impact on the aesthetic significance of the Colac Botanic Gardens as identified in the Heritage Victoria registration<sup>2</sup> for the following reasons:

- Works allow the replacement of temporary and aging infrastructure with more permanent buildings of a higher design integrity (see attached project documentation)
- The works help ensure the long-term viability of the site, including its capacity to be self-funding and therefore maintained in a suitable condition as befits its location beside a heritage botanic garden

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<sup>2</sup> Excluding the demolition of the ten 1977 ensuites which is discussed separately in Section 7

- The Lake Colac Holiday Park is not in any identified heritage views of the Gardens, a high-level review of which was undertaken as part of the *Colac Botanic Gardens Master Plan 2024 – 2044*. Other infrastructure including the Anglers Club, car park, toilets and jetty have a greater impact on the aesthetic value of the area than the Lake Colac Holiday Park which is well screened
- The visual impact of the Lake Colac Holiday Park does not relate to the identified aesthetic significance of the Gardens which focuses on their park-like character, elevated location, vistas across the lake, sub-tropical and varied planting and gardenesque style. Tucked into the north-west corner of the site, none of these factors are in any way impacted by the Lake Colac Holiday Park
- Non-heritage views to and from the Gardens have been taken into consideration, with the proposed accommodation location being behind existing screening planting and in the least obtrusive location possible
- Only the Studio Cabins (Unregistrable Movable Dwellings) and Camp Kitchen (also non-permanent), are new structures. Both are in locations where they nestle into existing screening planting to minimise their visual impact on the site
- Any potential concerns can be managed through conditions monitoring, including:
  - Construction to adhere with AS4970 – Protection of Trees on Development Sites, especially in relation to service installation and construction site management
  - Review of the boundary screening planting and supplementary planting where required in consultation with the botanic gardens horticultural team

### Scientific (botanical)

The works are considered to have a neutral impact on the scientific (botanical) significance of the Colac Botanic Gardens as identified in the Heritage Victoria registration for the following reasons:

- No trees of heritage value have been identified within the Lake Colac Holiday Park footprint
- The Holiday Park, as a separate and screened entity to the heritage gardens has never been known to play a scientific role on the site

### Social

The works are considered to have a positive impact on the social significance of the Colac Botanic Gardens as identified in the Heritage Victoria registration for the following reasons:

- While not part of the formal Statement of Significance, the registration states that: “*The Colac Botanic Gardens are of **social significance to local residents and visitors** due to the long and continuing association with lake-side recreational activities of the community demonstrated by the continuing presence of facilities such as the rowing club, the angling club, boat ramp and pier, playground and **caravan park**.*” The proposed works enhance this significance.
- The works help ensure the long-term viability of the site and its attractiveness to visitors, including those who will visit the Gardens and Lake Foreshore.
- Works will facilitate the ongoing use of the Holiday Park, which has continuous, social connections to Lake Colac and the Colac Community since 1977.

## 7. Removal of the 1977 Ensuites

As discussed above, the 12 ensuite units (24 individual bathrooms across 12 units) have been identified in one report as being of potential State level aesthetic significance due to their unusual design in the Google Architectural style. Such design is unusual in Victoria, however the failure of subsequent heritage registrations to action the report’s recommendations and questions in regard to historic significance means



that further research would be required to determine what, if any, architectural or aesthetic significance these structures have.

Complicating their retention is their dispersed location across the site, poor condition (leaking, crumbling roofs with unsuccessful attempted repair) and the difficulty in renovating these structures to the extent required to meet the current National Construction Code. Such structures no longer meet community expectations in regard to Lake Colac Holiday Park infrastructure and do not meet the minimum standards for use for essential worker accommodation which stipulates private, internal bathrooms as a minimum.<sup>xi</sup> Current works propose removing ten of these structures and retaining the remaining two. This removal is written into the lease agreement signed with the tenant.

The 2003 recommendation to nominate the blocks for State registration did not eventuate, and they were not included on the 2010 registration of the Botanic Gardens site. Indeed, given their age and lack of context it is unlikely that they would be registered on their own if it was not for their chance location within the Gardens footprint. The blocks are not associated with any prominent designer or identified heritage values of the Gardens and would post date the period of significance.<sup>3</sup>

The proposed works allow for the retention of two blocks on the eastern side of the park. Retention of these blocks allows for a representative sample of the style and in a location that will not impede on the reasonable use of the Lake Colac Holiday Park for social and recreational purposes. It is recommended that these two blocks be retained in the short term and that a thorough review of their significance and recommendations as to their long-term management and retention prospects be made as part of the anticipated Conservation Management Plan for the Colac Botanic Gardens. Removal should not take place without a full heritage assessment being undertaken, focused on their architectural merit and including a comparative analysis.

This recommendation is made in attempting to strike a reasonable balance between supporting the reasonable use of the place as a caravan park in an under-resourced tourist area and meeting current legal requirements in regard to design and access, with preserving a potentially unusual architectural style, albeit one that is not associated with any designer of note and is not connected to the identified heritage values of the place which relate to the adjacent Botanic Garden.

## 8. Means of Limiting Impact

The following design considerations have been adopted as a means of limiting the impact of the proposed works on the heritage values of the place:

- The use of demountable (and potentially relocatable) structures for the cabins, meaning works are fully reversible
- Location in a well screened corner of the gardens
- Location of structures in open areas and away from mature trees
- Presentation of the proposals to Heritage Victoria and the Friends of the Colac Botanic Gardens with no substantial objections raised

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<sup>3</sup> While this has not been identified it is unlikely to post date 1940 with the retirement of Curator Archibald Campbell who was given “free hand...as long as he keeps in mind Mr. Guilfoyle’s plans”

- The decision was made to retain and renovate the existing amenities block and maintenance shed to minimise the need for new works

Heritage Victoria requested a review of the location of both cabins and the relocated maintenance shed. Belgravia Pro have decided not to replace the maintenance shed, removing this concern. The locations of the two sites have been reviewed as part of this HIS and are considered appropriate from a heritage perspective and the most practical response to site management. The reasons for this are as follows:

- The location of the studio cabins is focussed on maintaining existing views to Lake Colac for the majority of the Holiday Park visitors, being relatively tucked away and set within planted surrounds.
- The studio cabins are located behind the existing boundary planting (see picture below) which allows the greatest screening of the addition of such accommodation.
- No heritage views have been identified in the area, with external infrastructure (Anglers Club, car park, toilets and jetty) having a greater impact on the aesthetic value of the area than the Lake Colac Holiday Park which is well screened

On review, and based on our knowledge of the site, it is the opinion of this report that the proposed locations are suitable and do not impact on any heritage views from the botanic gardens and the Lake Colac Holiday Park.



*Screening planting along Fyans Street in the vicinity of the new accommodation units*

## 9. Recommendations

This report makes the following recommendations:

- That a permit be granted for the works

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- That a condition of permit includes the review of the Holiday Park boundary plantings and supplementary planting where required to adequately screen the park. This should be done by or in consultation with the Colac Otway botanic gardens team
- That a condition of permit include works being undertaken in accordance with AS4970 – Protection of Trees on Development Sites
- That all buildings be in a neutral and recessive colour scheme (e.g. brown, charcoal, grey)
- That a thorough assessment of the aesthetic and architectural merit be undertaken of the remaining two ensuite blocks before any further works are undertaken to them (including demolition). Such a report should include recommendations as to their long-term management and retention prospects

## 10. Conclusion

The proposed works to Lake Colac Holiday Park, including installation of the Studio Cabins and Camp Kitchen, replacement of the Office and upgrading of the shed and amenity block is considered to support the registered heritage values of the place, which primarily relate to the adjacent Colac Botanic Gardens.

The Holiday Park dates from the mid 1970s and is well screened, being away from significant view lines, trees and heritage fabric. There is no evidence that the area was ever developed as part of the Botanic Gardens and no part of the proposed works are considered to have a negative impact on the registered heritage values of the place.

The retention of the 1977 ensuite cabins, while desirable, is not tenable due to the age and condition of the structures and complicated by their lack of compliance with current design and accessibility standards. The retention of two (removal of ten) is considered to strike a reasonable balance on an item where any heritage significance is complex to determine and does not relate to the registered values of the site.

The Lake Colac Holiday Park Landscape Masterplan is part of a new twenty-one year lease which commenced in early 2024. The upgrade of the site is necessary for Council to meet its obligations to its new tenant and to provide much needed accommodation for essential works and tourists. As a relatively recent feature within the heritage of the broader site, disconnected from the formal gardens and away from significant views, the minor additions are considered to be appropriate. The upgrade of the site will assist its financial viability, replacing temporary and aging infrastructure with quality facilities which better service the community. As such it is recommended that a heritage permit be granted.

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<sup>i</sup> Patrick & Wallace Pty Ltd Landscape Architects, 1993, *Colac Botanic Gardens – A Conservation Study* p 33

<sup>ii</sup> Patrick & Wallace Pty Ltd Landscape Architects, 1993, *Colac Botanic Gardens – A Conservation Study* p 154

<sup>iii</sup> M. Sheehan and Associates, 2003, *Colac Otway Heritage Study – Volume 2* p.216

<sup>iv</sup> M. Sheehan and Associates, 2003, *Colac Otway Heritage Study – Volume 2* p.215

<sup>v</sup> Patrick & Wallace Pty Ltd Landscape Architects, 1993, *Colac Botanic Gardens – A Conservation Study* p 105

<sup>vi</sup> Patrick & Wallace Pty Ltd Landscape Architects, 1993, *Colac Botanic Gardens – A Conservation Study* p 105

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<sup>vii</sup> M. Sheehan and Associates, 2003, *Colac Otway Heritage Study – Volume 2* p.215

<sup>viii</sup> VHR H2256, Camperdown Botanic Gardens and Arboretum

<sup>ix</sup> VHR H1994, Kyneton Botanic Gardens

<sup>x</sup> Per comm. from Property Officer to Mark Giles 19/12/24

<sup>xi</sup> Pers comm. Mark Giles

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

Andrea Proctor Landscapes  
235 Queens Road  
Wandin North, 3139  
Victoria  
Australia

ph: 0411 03 7886  
e: [admin@andreaproctor.com.au](mailto:admin@andreaproctor.com.au)  
[www.andreaproctor.com.au](http://www.andreaproctor.com.au)

abn: 50 948 044 192

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