

FINE ART GALLERY, BALLARAT

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

40 Lydiard Street N, Ballarat VIC 3350

FINE ART GALLERY

March 2025

Prepared for

**ART GALLERY
OF BALLARAT**

Prepared by

LOVELL CHEN



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

This report was prepared on the lands of the Wurundjeri 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.

Art Gallery of Ballarat is located on the lands of the Wadawurrung people, who are, and have always been the custodians of this land. We pay our respects to the Elders past and present, and acknowledge the stories, traditions and cultures of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Quality Assurance Register

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Project no.	Issue no.	Description	Issue date	Approval
20230142	1	Draft HIS	13/12/2024	KW
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Cover image: Fine Art Gallery façade

Source: Lovell Chen, 2024

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) has been prepared for the Art Gallery of Ballarat as part of a permit application for proposed upgrades and conservation works to the Victorian Heritage Register registered place known as the Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat (VHR no. H0680). The name 'Ballarat' is thought to derive from the Wadawurrung words for 'resting place', acknowledging the longstanding connection of these Traditional Owners to the Country on which the registered place is located.

The proposal relates to the installation of new plywood and plaster walls to the Oddie Gallery, Ferry Gallery, Crouch Gallery, Skewes and Griffith Gallery and main staircase for the purpose of displaying artworks with improved flexibility and security. The proposal also includes conservation works to the interior fabric of these spaces.

The proposed works are documented in the design development issue (DD2) drawings prepared by Lovell Chen, numbered A.00 - A.05, dated 29/01/2025.

It is noted that a pre-application meeting was held with Heritage Victoria on 25 November 2024, and the advice provided in relation to the wall lining project indicated that a permit application would be required for the works. The content of this HIS addresses the information requested by Heritage Victoria in their written advice.

2.0 STATUTORY HERITAGE CONTROLS

2.1 Victorian Heritage Register

The Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat, located at 38-48 Lydiard Street North, is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR), with VHR number H0680. The registered place comprises the Fine Art Gallery building (1890) and the Bones' Buildings (1886). The proposed works are to the interior of the former.

The description of the extent of registration and the corresponding diagram (Figure 1) are reproduced below.

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 680 encompassing all of Crown allotments 55A, 55B, 55C, 55D, 55E, 55F, 56, 57 and 58, Section 4A Township of Ballarat, and part of the road reserve of Lydiard Street North to the width of the permanent verandah and pavilions.¹

¹ Victorian Heritage Database, 'Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat', <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/75>, accessed 29 November 2024.

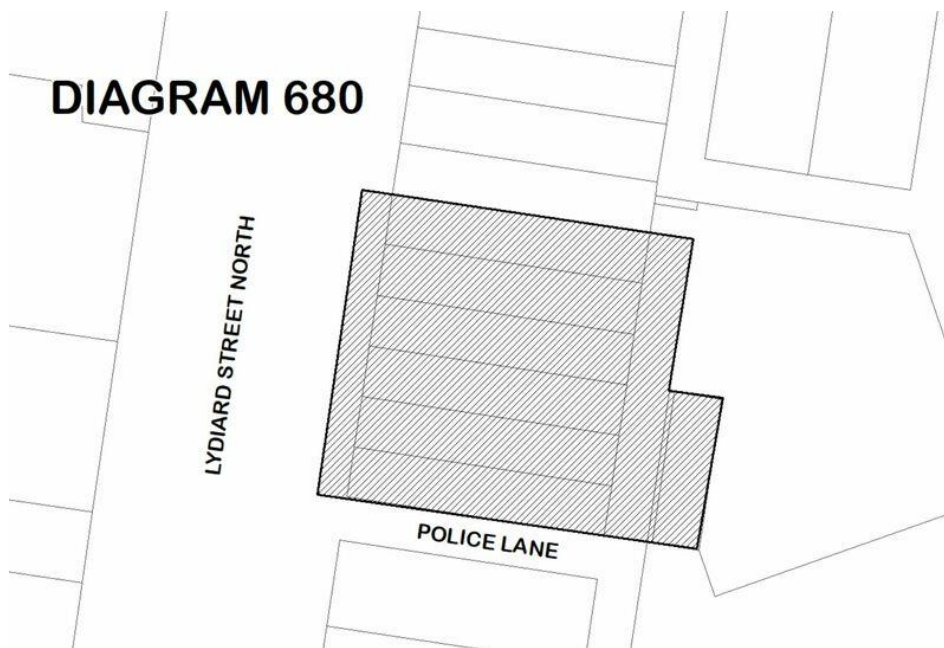


Figure 1 Extent of registration diagram of Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat
Source: Victorian Heritage Database, accessed 23 September 2024

The statement of significance for the Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat, is reproduced below.

What is significant?

The Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat constructed 1887-90 to the designs of Tappin, Gilbert and Dennehy, a double storey Renaissance Revival building with rusticated pilasters and twin pyramidal pavilions to the ground level, and including an internal stone stairway and Art Nouveau ceiling decoration. It also includes the adjoining double-storey Classical style Bones' Buildings to the north (built 1886) which features a single-storey verandah, and a multi-storey red brick extension to the 1890 building (designed by Clegg, Morrow and Cameron and constructed in 1927).

How is it significant?

The Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

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

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

Why is it significant?

The Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat is of historical significance as one of the earliest regional galleries in Australia and a highly successful cultural institution which draws visitors from around Victoria. It holds items of importance to Victoria's cultural history, including the Eureka flag and collections associated with members of the Lindsay family of artists and writers. [Criterion A]

The Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat is of architectural significance as a fine example of a Renaissance Revival building. It demonstrates the principal characteristics of the Renaissance Revival style including Corinthian columns to the first-floor windows, and parapet with triangular pediment flanked by balustrading. Internally, the grand entrance is emphasized by elements including an impressive stone stairway, Art Nouveau ceiling decoration in the stairwell and a fruit and foliage pattern in the front upstairs gallery. The gallery expanded into the northern Bones' Buildings in 1987, which stands as a fine Classical building within the highly intact nineteenth century streetscape of Ballarat. [Criterion D]²

2.2 Victorian Heritage Inventory

The rear portion of the registered extent for the Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat falls within the Victorian Heritage Inventory (VHR) site Camp Street Precinct (VHI no. H7622-0021).

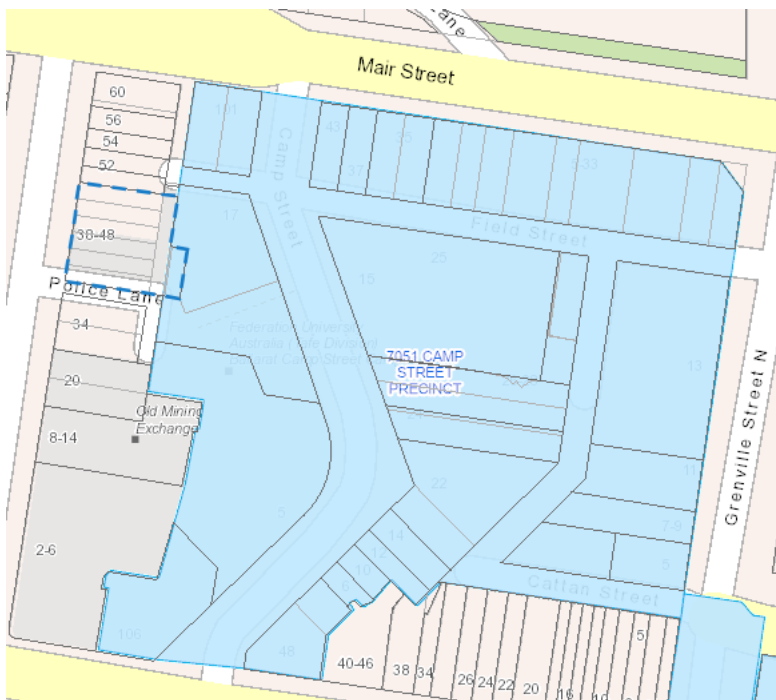


Figure 2 Camp Street Precinct, 38-48 Lydiard Street North outlined
Source: VicPlan, accessed 29 November 2024

2.3 Ballarat Heritage Overlay

The Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat is identified as HO76 in the Ballarat Heritage Overlay. The mapped extent of HO76 is consistent with the VHR extent of registration (Figure 3). The Lydiard Street Heritage Precinct (HO171) surrounds but does not include the Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat.

² Victorian Heritage Database, 'Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat', <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/75>, accessed 23 September 2024.

In accordance with Clause 43.01-3, a planning permit is not required under the Heritage Overlay to develop a heritage place which is included in the Victorian Heritage Register, other than an application to subdivide a heritage place of which all or part is included in the Victorian Heritage Register.

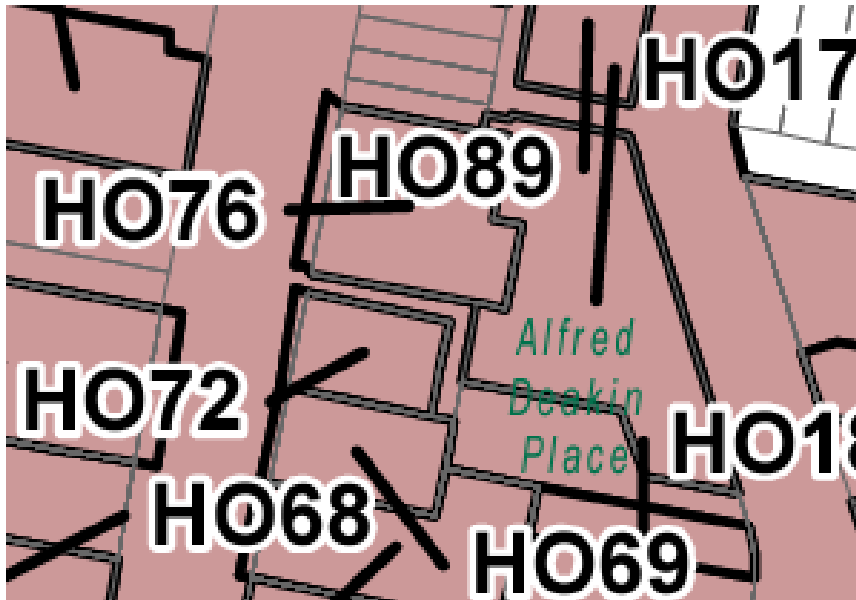


Figure 3 HO map detail showing HO76
Source: Ballarat Planning Scheme

3.0 HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

The Fine Art Gallery building is located on the eastern side of Lydiard Street North and is bounded by Police Lane to the south. Lydiard Street is characterised by nineteenth century commercial and civic buildings. The Fine Art Gallery building forms part of the Art Gallery of Ballarat precinct, which also encompasses the abutting Bones' building to the north and the former Police Station and contemporary built form and landscaping to the east (Figure 4).

In 1887, the recently formed Ballarat Fine Art Public Gallery Association was granted three adjoining allotments in Lydiard Street for the purpose of constructing a permanent Fine Art Gallery. The Association selected the design submission of Tappin, Gilbert and Denehy and the building was constructed in 1887-1890.

The Art Gallery is designed in a Renaissance Revival style. The façade of the two-storey building, which fronts Lydiard Street, incorporates a trabeated arrangement comprising a rusticated bluestone base and a cement-rendered upper level with a central bay articulated and demarcated by Corinthian pilasters and an ornate pediment below which the painted signage reads 'FINE ART GALLERY'. The gallery spaces, Oddie and Ferry, were situated on the first floor, accessible via a central stair hall (Figure 5). Between 1927-1928, a substantial rear extension was constructed to the designs of Clegg, Morrow and Cameron (Figure 6). The Fine Art Gallery was continually altered and expanded into a precinct during the remainder of the twentieth century.



Figure 4 Aerial imagery of Fine Art Gallery building (highlighted in orange), within Art Gallery of Ballarat precinct (outlined in red)
Source: Nearmap, 6 July 2024

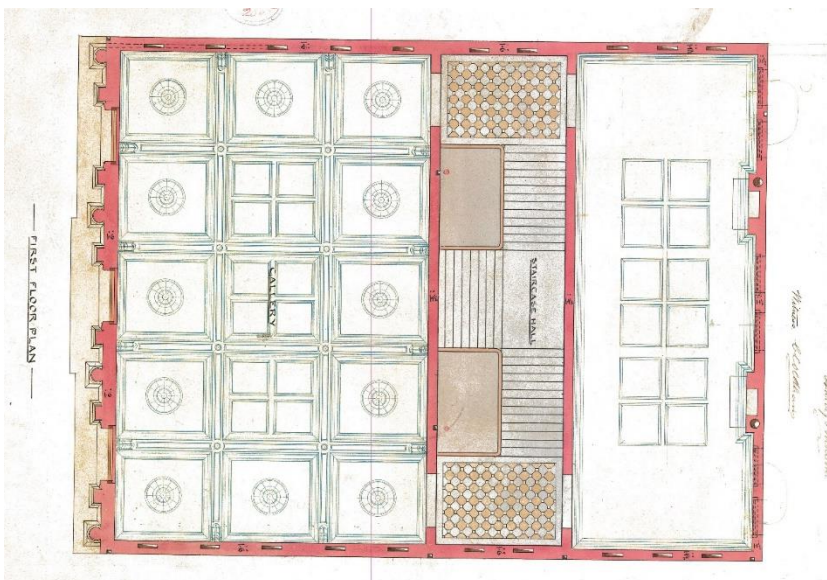


Figure 5 1888 first floor ceiling plan by Tappin, Gilbert and Denehy showing the original arrangement of the upper floor gallery spaces
Source: Art Gallery of Ballarat

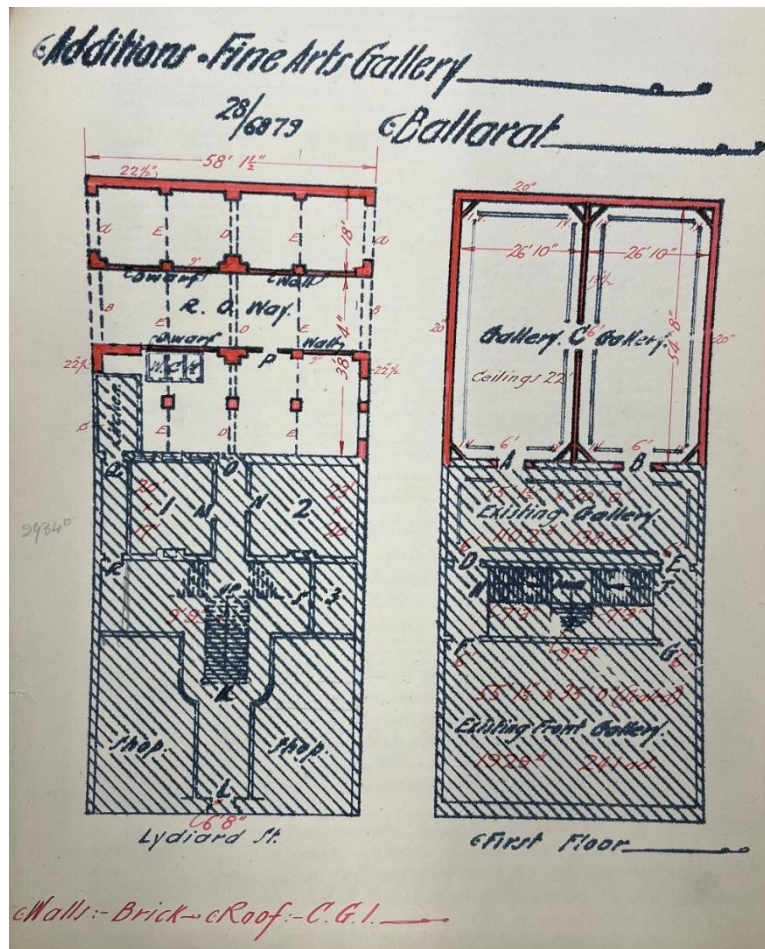


Figure 6 1928 ground and first floor proposed plans by Clegg, Morrow and Cameron showing the addition of the upper level gallery spaces to the rear of the original building
Source: Public Building File, VPRS 7882/P0001, Public Record Office Victoria

3.1 First floor galleries

The subject of this application relates to the first floor gallery spaces within the building and the main staircase. The arrangement of the galleries on the first floor is indicated at Figure 7, with the Oddie and Ferry galleries located either side of the main staircase within the original 1887-90 building (Figure 5). Within the rear 1927-28 extension to the gallery are the Skewes and Griffith and Crouch, which are arranged perpendicular to the Ferry Gallery (Figure 6). These internal spaces have walls of hard plaster on masonry and each has a distinct paint colour scheme.

The Oddie Gallery is the largest of the gallery spaces and is located to the Lydiard Street (west) side of the main stair (Figure 8). The room has moulded plaster skirtings and timber architraves which match those in the stair hall. The ceiling is defined by deep beams supported on large, foliated plaster consoles, setting out a three by five panelled grid. Decorative plaster vents are located within the frieze and are centrally positioned between the consoles.

The Ferry Gallery is on the east side of the stair hall (Figure 9). This narrower gallery has sets of picture rails, plaster cornices and timber skirtings and architraves.

The main stair hall at level one is also used as a gallery space (Figure 10). The original doors to the galleries are six panelled stained timber, with elaborate, heavy moulded timber architraves and brass plate and timber handles. The skirtings and cornices are moulded hard plaster.

The pair of galleries in the 1927-28 extension are the Crouch Gallery (south) (Figure 11) and Skewes and Griffith Gallery (north) (Figure 12). The plan for both galleries is identical, being a rectangular footprint with canted corners. Each gallery has a timber dado rail and picture rails at the height of the top of the timber architraves. The skirtings are moulded timber and the ceilings and cornices are likely fibrous plaster.

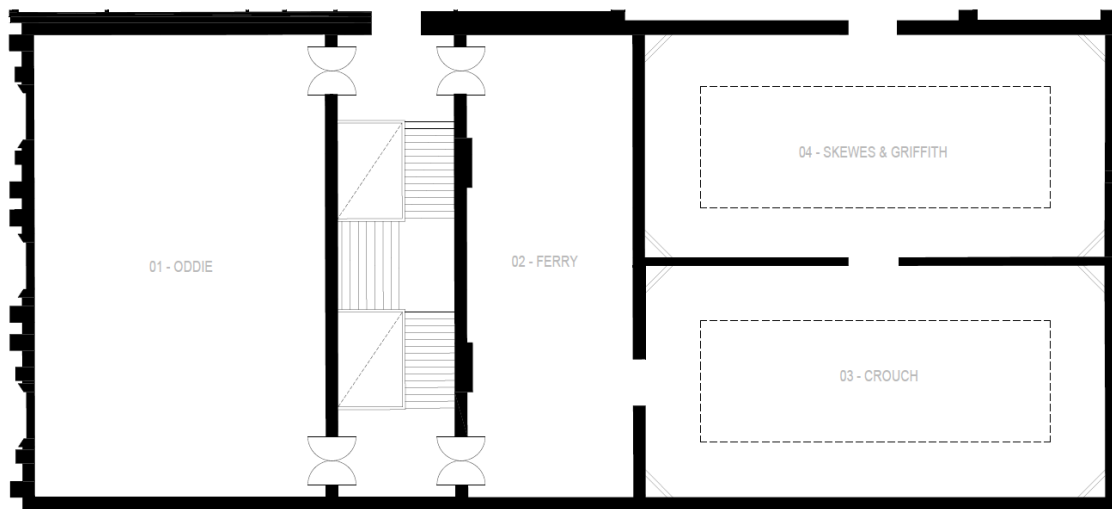


Figure 7 Existing first floor plan of Fine Art Gallery building
Source: Lovell Chen



Figure 8 Oddie Gallery



Figure 9 Ferry Gallery

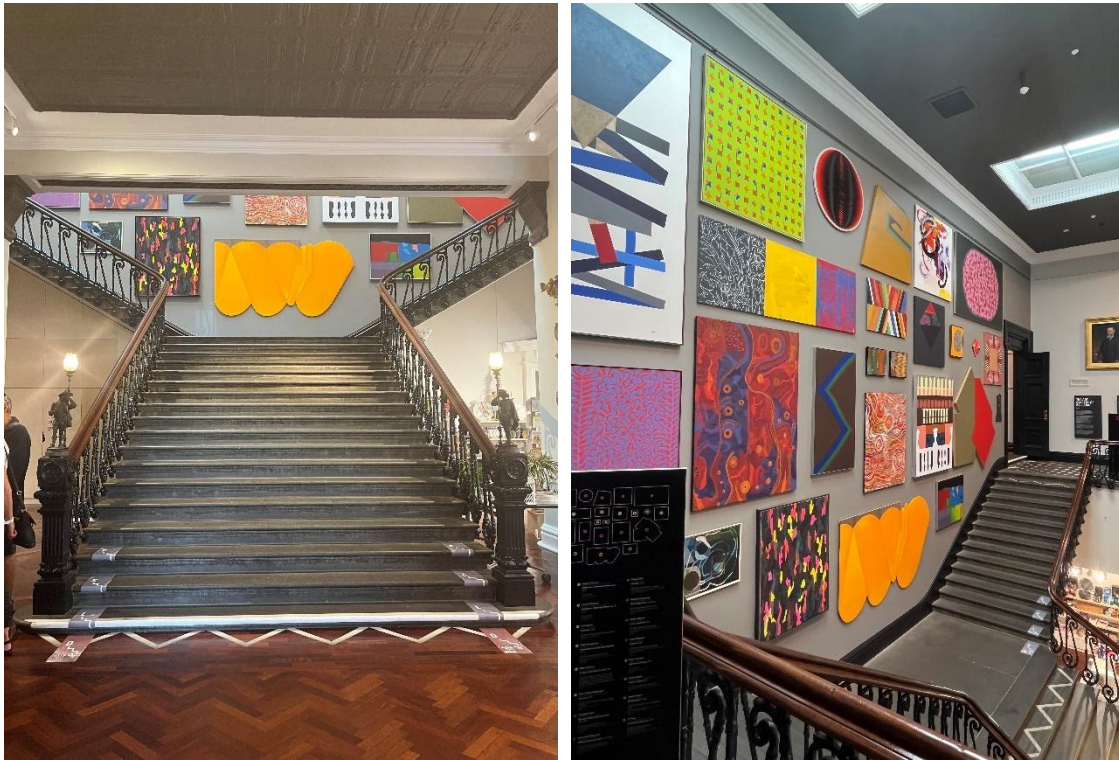


Figure 10 Main stair at ground floor (left) and first floor (right)



Figure 11 Crouch Gallery



Figure 12 Skewes and Griffith Gallery

4.0 PROPOSED WORKS

It is proposed to install linings to the existing flat wall faces which will present as new panels within the Oddie Gallery, Ferry Gallery, Crouch Gallery, Skewes and Griffith Gallery and level one of the main stair hall.

The proposed wall panels will comprise a timber stud frame, with plywood backing and plaster board fixed to the frame. Timber strapping will surround the wall linings and new power outlets are to be incorporated into the underside of the linings, and will be concealed by an overhang to the plaster. The linings will sit forward of the existing flat walls by approximately 122mm. Insulation will be installed within the cavity created by the wall lining.

The new wall panel system is designed to be set away from the existing ornamental elements, generally a distance of 200mm from existing consoles, cornices, architraves, and skirtings, with greater clearances for the brass taps and George Crouch plaque in the main stair hall (which will be retained in situ). The panels will be painted in a colour scheme to match the existing walls in each space, and existing signage will be removed and reinstated as required.

The sections of the skirtings with existing power outlets will be made good by removing the outlets and carrying out hard plaster or timber splice repairs (as appropriate). In addition, hard plaster crack repairs and refinishing, as well as treating areas of efflorescence, within the Oddie Gallery, Ferry Gallery, and stair will be undertaken.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACTS

Pursuant to section 101(2)(a) of the *Heritage Act 2017*, the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, in determining whether to approve a permit application, must consider the extent to which approval of the application would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place.

The Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat is of historical significance as an early and successful regional gallery in Victoria. The Fine Art Gallery building in particular is of architectural significance for its Renaissance Revival design, exhibited internally in the decorative detailing and finishes in the main stair and the Oddie Gallery.

One of the standing permit exemptions for the interiors of the 1890 Fine Art Gallery building and the 1920s Crouch Hall reads:

Installation, removal or replacement of carpets and/or flexible floor coverings, window furnishings, and devices for mounting flat wall hung artworks including sacrificial wall finishes (e.g. plasterboard).³

This exemption envisages the use of temporary plasterboard wall linings for rotating exhibitions and new curation within the galleries. While it is acknowledged that the exemption relates to smaller scale mountings, the proposal is consistent with the spirit of this exemption, which recognises that the installation of such devices can be done in a manner which does not impact significant fabric. The proposed works represent a more permanent installation of a panel system for the hanging of artworks, so that the continual installation and removal of wall hanging devices to the original and early walls is no longer required.

The design for the wall linings has been carefully resolved so that the most important ornamental elements, being the architraves, skirtings, cornices and consoles, and brass taps, will remain visible. The projection of the new wall panels will alter the presentation of these features but not to a detrimental degree considering the clearance of the plasterboard edges and the relatively shallow depth of the wall linings; the moulded detailing will continue to present as prominent decorative elements within the spaces. The square edges of the plasterboard will sit neatly next to the architraves, skirtings, cornices and consoles, not competing with the moulded forms. The bold architraves in particular will continue to be visually striking.

The existing picture and dado rails in the gallery spaces will be retained and will not be physically impacted by the installation. These elements will be mostly concealed, but their visibility at the junctions with architraves, to the extent of the set back distances, will make the historical display format legible. The concealment of the picture and dado rails will not adversely impact the understanding and significance of the gallery spaces. The retention of these elements ensures that if the panels were to be removed in the future, the picture and dado rails will continue to be evident.

The historic and continuing use of the gallery spaces will be unaffected. Furthermore, the neutral and unadorned appearance of the wall linings will be painted to match the existing wall finishes and will retain the intended contrast with the ceilings. The distinction between the spaces, in particular between the original galleries and stair hall and the extension, will not be impacted as the colour scheme and the distinguishing decorative detailing will be maintained.

³ Victorian Heritage Database, 'Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat', <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/75>, accessed 23 September 2024.

The mechanical fixings will result in new penetrations to the existing brick masonry walls. However, this change is reversible in the sense that the penetrations could be filled and the wall surface replastered and repainted if the new wall linings and timber studs were to be removed in future.

Another of the standing permit exemptions for the interiors states:

Removal or replacement of existing electrical wiring. If wiring is currently exposed, it should remain exposed. If it is fully concealed it should remain fully concealed.⁴

The chasing of new wiring for the replacement power outlets comes under this exemption.

6.0 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Reasonable or economic use

Pursuant to section 101(2)(b) of the *Heritage Act 2017*, the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, in determining whether to approve a permit application, must consider the extent to which refusal of the application would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place.

The purpose of the proposal is to provide a more flexible display space for the Art Gallery of Ballarat. The existing arrangement has constraints related to the size and medium of the art that can be displayed. The proposed works will enable the Art Gallery of Ballarat to display a greater variety of art works, by providing a flat, uniform surface for projecting images and video for example. Further there will be greater flexibility for rehanging the collection or changing exhibitions, without causing damage to the existing hard plaster walls. The proposal is compatible with the historical and current use of the place as an art gallery as it improves the possible presentation and curation of art, in line with contemporary expectations for this class of cultural institution.

No economic use argument is being put forward in relation to the proposed works.

6.2 Conservation works

Pursuant to section 101(2)(f) of the *Heritage Act 2017*, the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, in determining whether to approve a permit application, must consider any matters relating to the protection and conservation of the registered place that they consider relevant.

The proposal includes refinishing hard plaster to the gallery walls, patch repairing hard plaster cracks and treating efflorescence. The new wall system will also allow for power outlets to be recessed, with the altered sections of the existing plaster and timber skirtings to be restored. These are positive conservation outcomes and are consistent with the following standing permit exemption, which applies to the proposed locations:

Minor repairs and maintenance which replaces like with like. Repairs and maintenance must maximise protection and retention of significant fabric and include the conservation of existing details or elements. Any repairs and maintenance must not exacerbate the decay of fabric due to chemical

⁴ Victorian Heritage Database, 'Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat', <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/75>, accessed 23 September 2024.

incompatibility of new materials, obscure fabric or limit access to such fabric for future maintenance.⁵

The proposal will also ensure that there will be no further impacts to the walls associated with display of artworks, protecting significant fabric.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed installation of wall linings to the first floor gallery spaces in the Fine Art Gallery building will have limited impact on the architectural significance of the Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat. The proposed design has been carefully considered so that the most significant decorative attributes of Renaissance Revival interiors are not obscured. While the wall surfaces of the galleries will be changed to a modest extent, the impact on the appreciation and presentation of the overall gallery spaces will be negligible. The new linings will also not adversely affect the historical significance of the place, rather it will promote the continuation of the historical use.

⁵ Victorian Heritage Database, 'Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat', <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/75>, accessed 23 September 2024.