

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

Victorian College for the Deaf



VHR Number: H2122

Deaf Children Australia (Former Victorian Deaf and Dumb Institution)

HIS prepared for the Victorian School Building Authority
June 2025

Cover Image: c1945 – Detail from oblique aerial photograph by C. D. Pratt, showing the original St Kilda Road elevation of the 1928 school building, at lower left. The c1940 trade block is visible behind the bluestone building, on the right, along the High Street frontage. (Source: State Library of Victoria, 'Special. Over St Kilda Road', <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/21166>)

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ISSUED	REVIEW	ISSUED BY
April 2024	Draft 1	Ruth Redden
27 June 2025	Final	Elizabeth Offer (Reviewed by Dr Claire Miller)

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HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT FOR VICTORIAN COLLEGE FOR THE DEAF

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

This Heritage Impact Statement has been prepared in accordance with the standard Heritage Victoria guidelines to accompany a permit application for:

- removal of non-contributory fabric
- partial demolition of contributory or primary fabric
- construction of a new building
- internal alterations to contributory or primary areas and
- landscape work, including a new ramp and new fencing.

The removal of the contemporary non-contributory fabric, being the temporary portable classrooms to the northeast of the site, has been applied for under a separate permit exemption application (P45283).

The proposed works are mainly to the north and northeast portion of the site, and predominantly affect buildings known as:

- B1 – Bluestone Building (primary significance)
- B2 – 1928 School Building (primary significance)
- 1990s Administration building (non-contributory)
- Temporary (portable) classrooms (non-contributory)

Details of the proposed works are outlined in the architectural drawings prepared by NBRS Architecture.

- NBRS, *Victorian College for the Deaf*, Issue 14, 12.06.2025

Further details are included in the following supporting documents attached to this application:

- NBRS, *Technical Reference Sheet 1 Victorian College for the Deaf*, Issue 5, 27.06.2025
- Erbas, *VCD 597 St Kilda Rd, Melbourne, Vic 3004 Electrical Services*, Issue P2, 15.05.24
- Erbas, *VCD 597 St Kilda Rd, Melbourne, Vic 3004 Fire Services*, Issue P3, 15.05.24
- Erbas, *VCD 597 St Kilda Rd, Melbourne, Vic 3004 Hydraulic Services*, Issue P2, 15.05.24
- Northrop, *Structural Drawings, Victorian College for the Deaf*, Rev 2, 09.05.24
- Northrop, *Civil Drawings, Victorian College for the Deaf*, Rev 1, 15.05.24
- 3 Acres Landscape Architects, *Victorian College for the Deaf*, Issue 2, 14.05.24
- NBRS, *Conservation Management Plan Victorian College for the Deaf*, May 2022

1.2 METHODOLOGY

NBRS was engaged by the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) in 2021 at feasibility stage to prepare a Heritage Site Analysis for the site, which was later expanded to a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) in 2022, a copy of which has been provided to Heritage Victoria. The CMP includes a detailed history of the place, survey and analysis of the subject site and fabric, and proposed conservation policies. The CMP has been referred to in the preparation of the proposed works.

This Heritage Impact Statement has been prepared in accordance with the guidelines set out in the *Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*, 2013, known as The Burra Charter, and the Heritage Victoria publication, *Heritage Victoria Guidelines for preparing heritage impact statements* (2021).

1.3 PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

Pre-application advice was sought in relation to the proposed works (pre-application meeting number P35220, held 11 January 2024). At the pre-application meeting NBRS presented the scope of works, with the general footprint and massing of the proposed new build included. The heritage planning officer appeared comfortable with the proposed direction and did not raise any major issues with the proposal.

Since the pre-application advice, the scope of works has been revised to include:

- New perimeter fencing to the St Kilda Road and High Street boundaries;
- New sliding gate with intercom to the proposed new perimeter fencing on the High Street boundary;
- Fencing around the proposed Block N;
- New palings to the non-original gate at the corner of St Kilda Road and High Street; and
- Rectifying the palings on the extant angled front fence.

1.4 SITE LOCATION

The subject site is located at 597 St Kilda Road, Melbourne (Plan PP3084E/Lot 47E), at the northeast corner of the intersection of St Kilda Road and High Street. The site is bounded by St Kilda Road to the west, Moubray Street to the north, Punt Road to the east and High Street to the south. Wesley College is located on the same block, immediately to the north and east.

The subject site consists of a collection of buildings generally located to the north and east portions of the site, with landscaping and open spaces in the south and west portions. The site is surrounded by small-scale inner-suburban residential development to the east of Punt Road and larger-scale development to the west of St Kilda Road.

The extent of the Victorian Heritage Register for the subject site overall aligns with the subject parcel, with a portion of Wesley College to the east included in the registration (a car park).

No physical works are proposed to the Bluestone Building (B1). The area of proposed works is limited to the 1928 School Building (B2), and two buildings not registered in the VHR, being the Administration Building constructed in the 1990s to the immediate east (elevation) of B2 and temporary classrooms in the northeast corner of the site. Some landscaping work is proposed to F3 – the treelined drive, and to F2 – the entrance gateway, as well as to a portion of the perimeter fencing on the west and south boundaries.

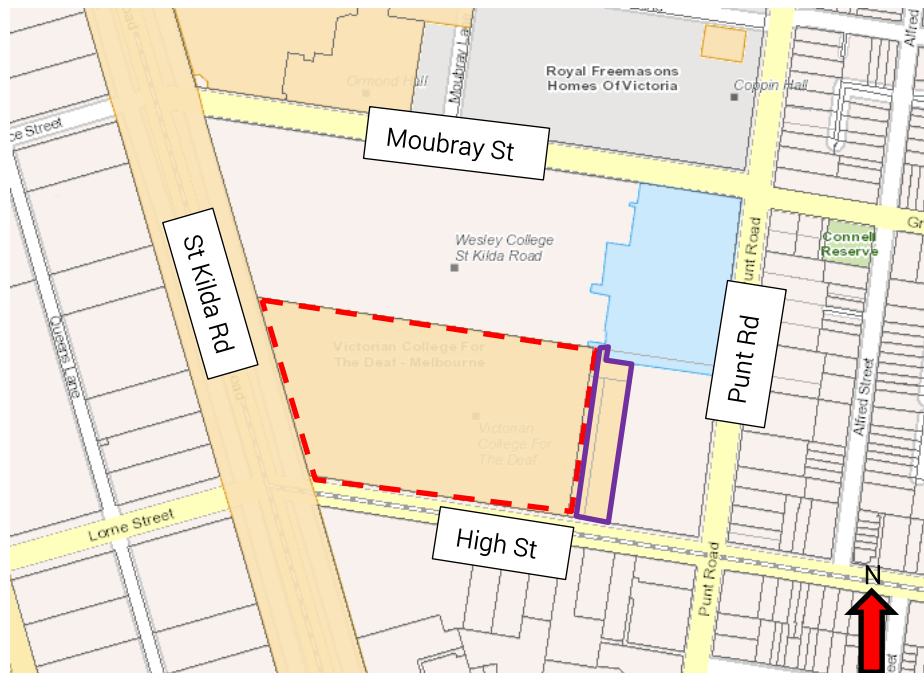


Figure 1: Extract from VicPlan showing location of subject site (denoted by red dashed lines) in relation to adjoining places on the Victorian Heritage Register (denoted by orange) and the Heritage Inventory (blue). The portion of the VHR extent that is part of Wesley College is outlined in solid purple. Source: VicPlan, 2024 with NBRS overlay

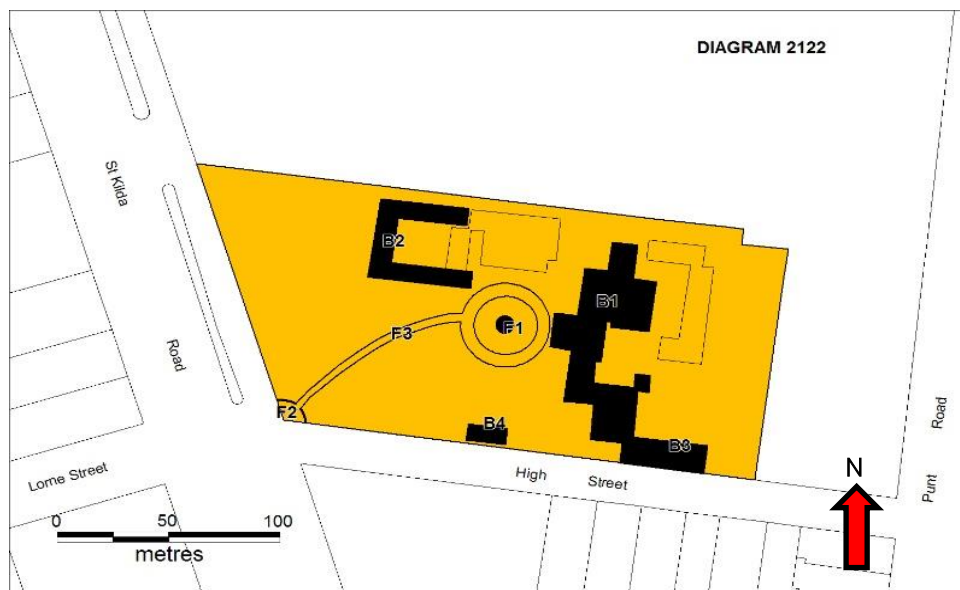


Figure 2: VHR extent of registration plan for H2122. The buildings in black are the registered elements. Source: Victorian Heritage Database, 2024, with NBRS overlay.

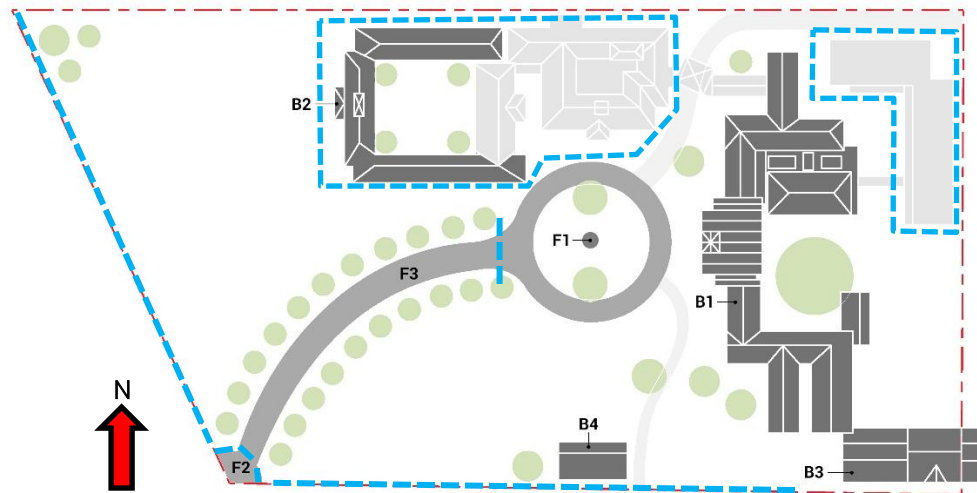


Figure 3: Site diagram indicating the registered elements in dark grey while buildings of a light grey are not registered. The area of the proposed works is in dashed blue. Source: NBRS 2021, with NBRS overlay.

1.5 AUTHORSHIP

The first draft of this report was prepared by Ruth Redden, Principal (previous)– Heritage with assistance from Dr Elizabeth Offer, Heritage Consultant. The current version has been updated by Dr Elizabeth Offer and reviewed by Dr Claire Miller, Associate; all of **NBRS**.

1.6 LIMITATIONS

This report is limited to the assessment of potential impacts on the post-contact cultural heritage values of the site and does not include Aboriginal cultural heritage and archaeological assessment. This report only addresses the relevant planning provisions that relate to post-contact built heritage.

A separate Archaeological Heritage Due Diligence Assessment has been prepared by TerraCulture Heritage Consultants and was included in the Conservation Management Plan prepared for the Victorian College for the Deaf by NBRS dated 2022.

1.7 COPYRIGHT

Copyright of this report remains with the author, **NBRS**. Unless otherwise noted, all images are by the author.

2.0 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

2.1 PREVIOUS CMP

A Conservation Management Plan (CMP) was prepared for the subject site in 2022 by **NBRS**.

Section 2 of the CMP includes a substantial and detailed history that is too extensive to reproduce here but which should be referred to.

Section 3 of the CMP provides a detailed survey and analysis of the existing fabric.

Pertinent information regarding the area of proposed works from Sections 2 and 3 of the CMP are reproduced below:

- The parcel of land was set aside for the College in August 1864, with the earliest extant fabric constructed in stages in 1866 and 1871, being a three-storey basalt building with a central portion and flanking wings (B1).¹
- Substantial iron fences were constructed over the 1870s and 1880s to enclose portions of the site, including a boys' playground.²
- The School Building (B2) was constructed in 1928 and was designed by Public Works Department architect Edwin Evan Smith at a cost of £7,531. The building replaced an earlier structure that was originally a hospital before it was converted into the Garden School.³
- The School Building incorporates both Georgian Revival and Art Deco features.⁴
- The School Building contained 14 new classrooms and accommodation for 132 students. For the first time, each class had their own separate classroom, whereas previously two or three classes operated within the one room.⁵
- Over the course of its history, the School Building has undergone alterations and improvements, with several newspaper articles from the 1930s noting works having been undertaken to the buildings at the school, although the extent of the works is unclear.⁶
- In 1953, alterations occurred to the School Building, including a second storey over the west wing to the St Kilda Road frontage, designed by the Public Works Department under architect Percy Everett. This addition provided further classrooms.⁷ This second storey was removed in 1995 and the building was restored to its original appearance with the addition of small towers over the restored roof at the front.⁸
- In 1971, an administration building was constructed to the east of the School Building (B2)
- In 1985, a science and graphics room was built to the south of the 1928 School Building.⁹
- An additional single-storey wing was constructed to the School Building in 1995 and located to the east of the building, completely enclosing the courtyard on all sides.¹⁰
- The administration building constructed in 1971 to the east of the School Building (B2) was demolished in the mid-1990s and replaced by the extant single-storey

¹ Victorian College for the Deaf CMP, NBRS, 2022, pp10-11

² Ibid, p.18

³ Ibid, pp32-33

⁴ Ibid, pp63

⁵ Ibid, pp32-33

⁶ Ibid, pp32-33

⁷ Ibid, pp36

⁸ Ibid, pp38

⁹ Ibid, pp36

¹⁰ Ibid, pp38

building, the School Administration building, with roofs to match those of the School Building.¹¹ The new administration building was opened in 1998.

- In the mid to late 1990s, temporary classrooms were established to the northeast corner of the site.¹²

In 2021-2, works were undertaken on the angled entrance gateway, including repair works, painting, and the installation of a gate and two additional timber columns with capping.



Figure 4: Image showing the fence and gateway to the corner of St Kilda Road and High Street, early twentieth century (possibly 1910s-20s). Source: State Library of Victoria, H2009.61/79



Figure 5: Image of the registered entrance gateway from 2019, before works were undertaken on the fence and the existing gate was introduced. Source: Google Street View 2019

¹¹ Ibid, pp39

¹² Ibid, pp39



Figure 6: Image of the entrance gateway from 2022 after the works were undertaken on the fence and the existing gate was installed. Source: Google Street View 2022

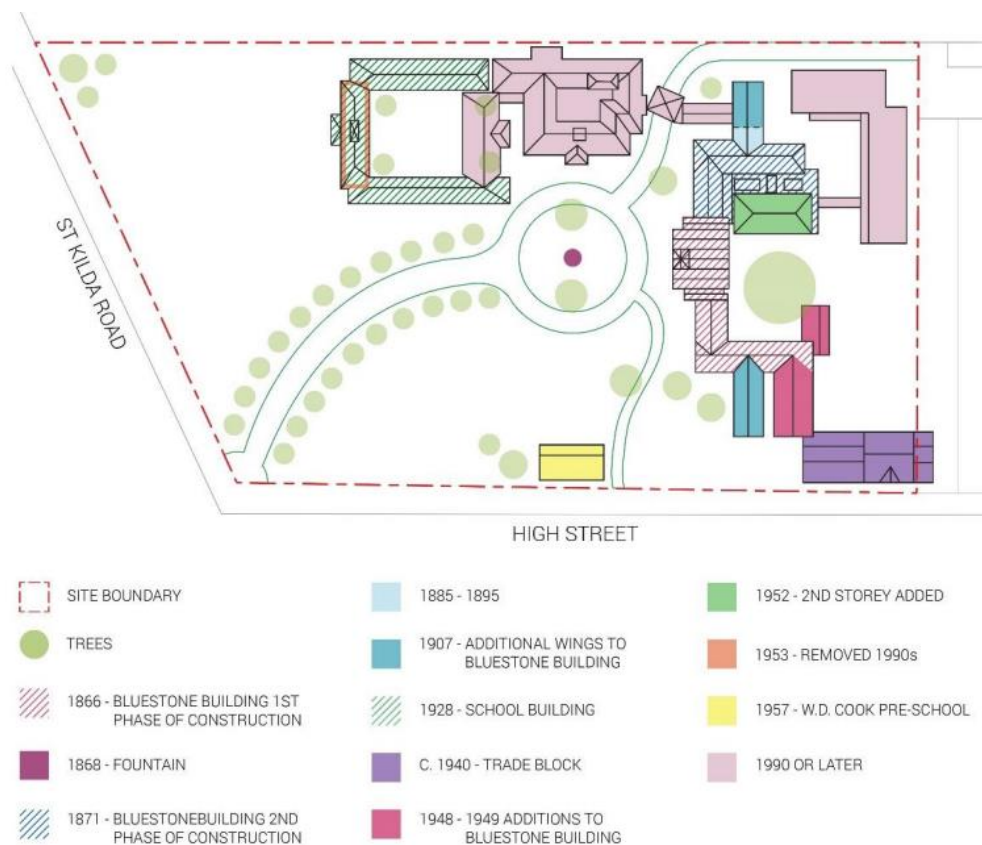


Figure 7: Diagram showing the historical development of the site since the construction of the first building, the bluestone building, in 1866. Source: NBRS, 2022.

3.0 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

3.1 SITE CONTEXT

The Victorian College for the Deaf is located to the northeast corner of the intersection of St Kilda Road and High Street, on a block bounded by St Kilda and Punt roads and High and Moubray streets. Welsey College is located on the same block to the north of the site.

On St Kilda Road to the west of the subject site, the streetscape is generally characterised by high-rise commercial development, a considerable portion of which are holiday apartments and hotels, generally dating to the late twentieth century or of more recent development. The buildings are set back behind rows of street trees lining tram tracks.

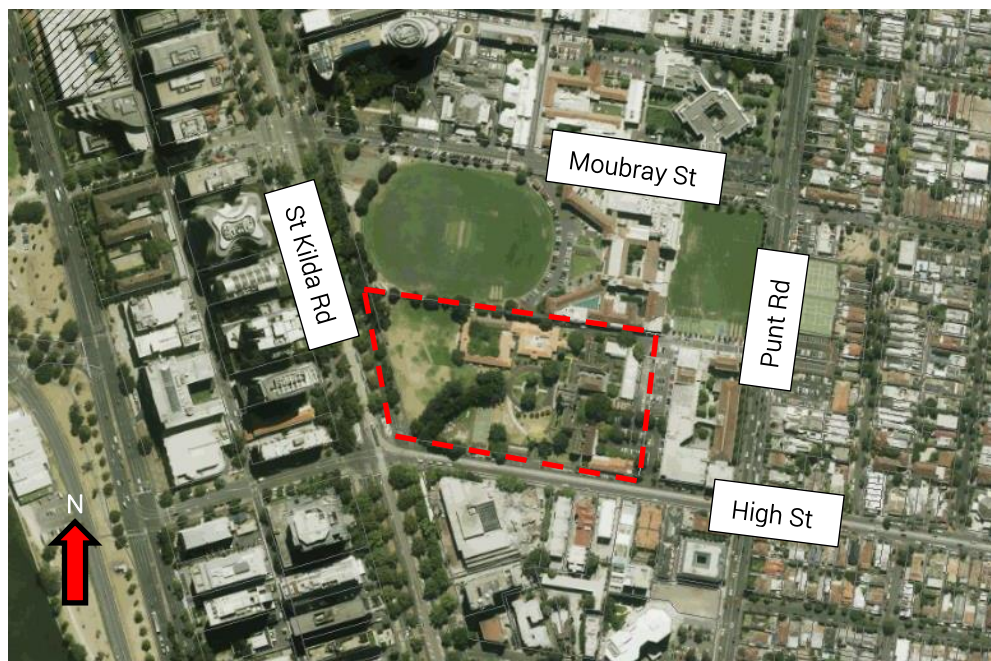


Figure 8: Aerial image of subject site (denoted by red dashed lines). Source: VicPlan, 2024, with NBRS overlays.

On High Street to the south of the site, the streetscape is characterised by medium-scale residential development dating to the mid to late twentieth century. A recent high-rise residential building was constructed to the southeast corner of High Street and St Kilda Road, which dominates views towards High Street from the driveway, playground and sports oval of the College.

There are other educational institutions located within the vicinity of the subject site, including Monash University, Melbourne Polytechnic, St Mary's College and the Mac Robertson Girls High School. The College is also in close proximity to Albert Park and Fawkner Park.

3.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject site comprises a collection of buildings that are generally located to the north and east of the allotment, with landscaped and open spaces in the west and south. Buildings include the 1866 Bluestone Building (B1), which was the original school building and is now largely occupied by Deaf Children Australia; the 1928 School Building (B2) now used as the main school building by the Victorian College for the Deaf; and the Administration Building to its east; the Trade Block (B3) in the south-east corner, constructed c.1940; the W.D. Cook Pre-School building (B4); and temporary classrooms constructed behind the Bluestone

Building in the north-east corner of the site. Both the Trade Block (B3) and the W.D. Cook Pre-School (B4) have frontages to High Street, on the southern boundary of the site.

Exterior spaces include an oval on the western side, between the main School Building (B2) and St Kilda Road, and playground spaces in the southern portion, which borders High Street. These are separated by a curved, tree-lined driveway (F3) connecting the corner entrance with the timber gate (F2) to a circular driveway surrounding a fountain (F1), known as the Rose Fountain after the founder of the school. The fountain and surrounding trees, plantings and path create a formal landscape setting as the foreground to both the Bluestone Building and the later Administration Building. To the west and south boundary perimeter is a timber-framed and chain wire fence, with a low hedge behind.

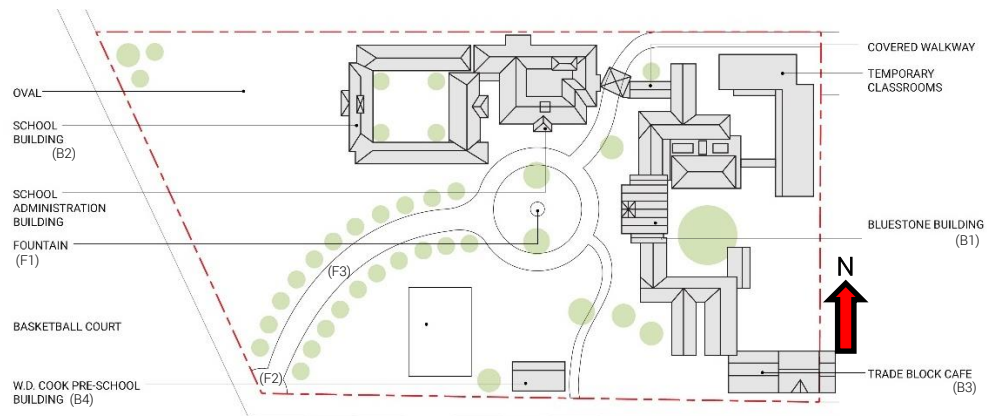


Figure 9: Site diagram showing the buildings and main features of the subject site. Source: NBRS, 2022



Figure 10: Playground in the southern portion. Source: NBRS 2021



Figure 11: Playground in the southern portion. Source: NBRS 2021

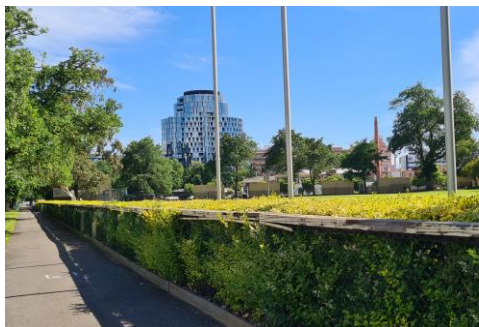


Figure 12: Fence to the perimeter, on the west boundary. Source: NBRS 2021



Figure 13: timber gate (F2) to the circular driveway. Source: NBRS 2025

3.3 1928 SCHOOL BUILDING (B2)

Constructed in 1928, the School Building is an interwar single-storey rendered brick building with a hipped roof clad in terracotta tiles and an enclosed courtyard configuration. The building originally comprised three wings (north, west, and south elevations) and presented a U-shaped footprint. The addition of the east wing in the 1990s has enclosed the building configuration. The building is designed with both Georgian Revival and Art Deco features.



Figure 14: 1928 School Building, as viewed across the oval. Source: NBRS, 2021



Figure 15: Aerial image of 1928 School Building (denoted by red dashed lines) and adjoining 1990s additions. Source: Nearmap, 2024 with NBRS overlay.

The front façade of the building presents to the school oval and has a central skillion roof portico or porch, with a small cupola capped in terracotta tiles to the primary roof. The walls have exposed brick beneath the windowsills (clinker brick soldier course with red brick beneath), with rendered brick above. The openings are vertically proportioned, with upper-level clerestory windows facing the courtyard. There is a covered walkway to the perimeter of the courtyard, supported by square timber posts and timber boards to soffit.

Internally, rooms have been significantly altered, with little original fabric extant beyond windows and timber doors.



Figure 16: Central portico or porch to façade of School Building. Source: NBRS, 2021.



Figure 17: Central courtyard to 1928 School Building. Source: NBRS, 2024.

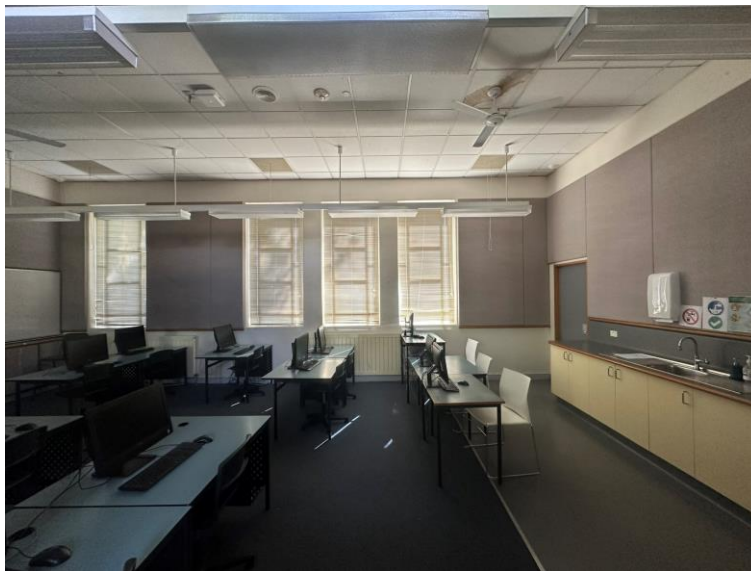


Figure 18: Existing classroom in 1928 School Building. Source: NBRS, 2024.

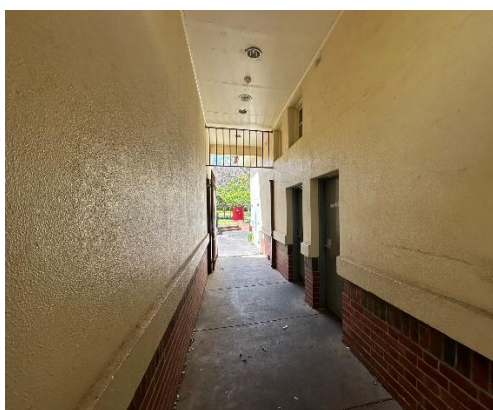


Figure 19: Existing corridor to the southeast corner of the School Building, with entrance to store rooms to the left (1990's portion of building) and male amenities to the right (1928 portion of building). Source: NBRS, 2024.



Figure 20: Male amenities, with shower rooms behind, within 1928 portion of building. Source: NBRS, 2024.

An addition was constructed to the School Building in the 1990s and is used for classrooms. This addition comprised the fourth (east) wing of the courtyard and was designed to match the original 1928 building, with only slight modifications such as a different brick course used for construction of the base wall and contemporary windows installed.



Figure 21: Detail of original 1928 School Building wall (western wall of internal courtyard). Lower portion constructed with red bricks in a Flemish bond, capped with clinker brick soldier course. Source NBRS, 2023



Figure 22: Detail of non-original 1990s School Building wall (eastern wall of internal courtyard). Lower portion constructed with red bricks in a stretcher bond, capped with clinker brick soldier course. Source NBRS, 2024.

3.4 SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

The School Administration Building was designed to match the 1928 School Building (B2). It is accessible from the northeast corner of the courtyard of the 1928 School Building, via steps and a walkway. The front entrance of the building faces south, to the driveway (F3) and Rose Fountain (F1). To the front façade of the School Administration building is a central portico or porch, marked on the roof by a small cupola capped in tiles.



Figure 23: Front façade of the School Administration building as seen from the south. Source: NBRS, 2023.



Figure 24: View towards western elevation of the School Administration building (R), showing the connection with the 1928 School Building (L). Source: NBRS, 2023.



Figure 25: Existing Science room, proposed Junior Girls room in School Administration building. Source: NBRS, 2023.

3.5 TEMPORARY CLASSROOMS

The temporary classrooms are portable buildings that were brought to the site post-1990. They are located to the north-west of the site, behind the bluestone building.



Figure 26: Rear (east) elevation of the temporary classrooms. Source: NBRS, 2023.



Figure 27: Front (west) façade of the temporary classrooms.
Source: NBRS, 2023.



Figure 28: Entrance to one of the temporary classrooms.
Source: NBRS, 2023.



Figure 29: View towards courtyard between temporary classroom (L) and Bluestone Building (R) as seen from the north. Source NBRS, 2024



Figure 30: View towards courtyard between Bluestone Building (L) and temporary classrooms (R) as seen from the south. Source NBRS, 2024

4.0 ESTABLISHED HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER

The subject site is included on the Victorian Heritage Register as place ID H2122, Deaf Children Australia (Former Victorian Deaf and Dumb Institution).

4.2 VICTORIAN HERITAGE INVENTORY

The subject site is not included in Victorian Heritage Inventory.

A Due Diligence Assessment on the archaeological heritage at the site was undertaken by TerraCulture Heritage Consultants in May 2022 and was included in the Conservation Management Plan prepared for the Victorian College for the Deaf by NBRs dated 2022.

The report by TerraCulture noted that *"the desktop assessment demonstrates prior out-buildings including a 19th C. cess pit within the footprint of the proposed development and therefore the potential for historical archaeological heritage to be harmed by the works."*¹³ The Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works plan for the site, dated 1895, indicates that the area mainly comprised a girl's playground and a shed, with two cisterns or closets.

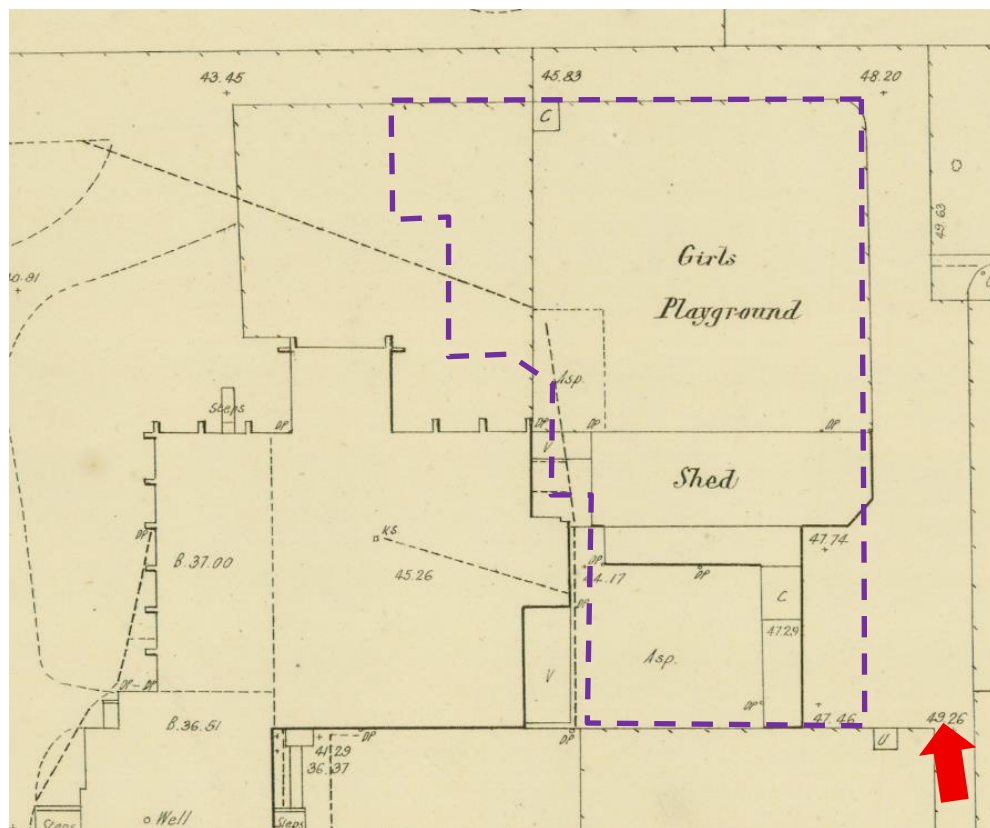


Figure 31: 1895 Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works plan, with the approximate location of the area of proposed works, including landscaping, in dashed purple. (Source: SLV with NBRS overlay)

The Due Diligence Assessment prepared by TerraCulture Heritage Consultants should be referred to in relation to the archaeological potential to the area of the proposed works.

¹³ TerraCulture Heritage Consultants, *Victorian College for the Deaf Due Diligence Assessment Archaeological Heritage*, May 2022, in NBRs, *Conservation Management Plan Victorian College for the Deaf*, May 2022

4.3 MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

The subject site is included in the Melbourne Planning Scheme Schedule to the Heritage Overlay as an individual site:

- H0949, Former Victorian Deaf and Dumb Institution, at 583-597 St Kilda Road, Melbourne.

Under the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay the site has the following permit controls:

- Prohibited uses permitted – Yes.

4.4 NATIONAL TRUST

The Victorian School for Deaf Children (Former Deaf and Dumb Institution, Former Deaf Children Australia, and Royal Institute for the Deaf) is included on the National Trust Register as property No. B2451

4.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUBJECT SITE

The Victorian Heritage Database contains the following Statement of Significance for the Deaf Children Australia (Former Victorian Deaf and Dumb Institution) at 583-597 St Kilda Road, Melbourne, place ID 4438:

What is significant?

The Victorian College for the Deaf (formerly known as the Victorian Deaf and Dumb Institution) was built in 1866 to provide a home, education and vocational training for deaf and dumb children. The first school for deaf and dumb children in Victoria had been established in 1860 in Prahran by Frederick Rose, and this moved into larger premises as enrolments increased. In 1864 a committee of prominent citizens obtained a grant of land for the new institution, as well as £3000, from the government, raised £1654 more by public subscription, and commissioned the architects Crouch and Wilson to design the building, the first part of which was built in 1866, and the remainder in 1871. Rose was the first Superintendent and his wife the first Matron. The grounds were enhanced in the 1860s by gifts of plants and seeds from Baron von Mueller. Various additions have been made over the years, including bluestone extensions to the north and south of the main building, and the red brick Fenton Memorial Hall (c1950). In 1913 the school was taken over by the Department of Education as State School no 3774, and a new school building was constructed in the front garden in 1928. A brick trade block for teaching trades to the boys was added in c1940. The Institution was used by the RAAF in 1942-44. Enrolments peaked in the 1950s following a rubella epidemic in 1941-2, and a number of new buildings were added between 1949 and 1985. However with more schools for the deaf and dumb opening and advances in the treatment of the deaf, enrolments decreased. The name was changed in 1949 to the Victorian School for Deaf Children, and is now known as Deaf Children Australia. The main building is now used for administration, with the school in the newer buildings in front. The institution has an extensive collection of objects relating to the history of the place, including furniture, artefacts, architectural drawings, photographs and other archival material.

The Victorian College for the Deaf lies at the corner of St Kilda Road and High Street with the main building set back behind extensive gardens with mature trees and a curved tree-lined driveway. The nineteenth century block is an imposing symmetrical Gothic Revival building, forming a U-shape around a rear courtyard with a mature camphor laurel tree. It has a central three storey section surmounted by a tower and spire above the main entrance, subsidiary towers behind the gabled flanking pavilions, and recessed two storey L-shaped wings to the south and north, all above a semi-basement. The walls are of tuckpointed bluestone, and there are decorative red and cream brick and cement dressings around the door and window openings. The walls are decorated with Greek cross-shaped ceramic blocks with quatrefoil openings. The roofs are slate and chimneys are patterned bichrome brick. The trade block at the rear is a single storey building of

clinker bricks with two large arched metal-framed windows. The 1928 school building in the front garden is a single storey rendered brick building set around an internal courtyard.

How is it significant?

The Victorian College for the Deaf is of historical, architectural and social significance to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Victorian College for the Deaf is historically significant for its role as the first major institution in Australia built for the teaching and care of deaf children. It pioneered the teaching of Victorian children with substantial hearing problems, has been at the forefront of developments in the teaching of the deaf, and has played an important role in the history of education in Victoria. It is historically significant for its association with the prosperous and confident post gold rush period, when many of Melbourne's major educational, health and social welfare institutions were established in response to the public desire to assist disadvantaged groups.

The Victorian College for the Deaf is architecturally significant as an imposing and intact example of a major Gothic Revival style institutional building, which when built was of a scale and style unmatched by earlier Melbourne institutions. It is an important example of the work of the prominent Melbourne architectural practice of Crouch & Wilson. The practice designed a number of important public buildings in Victoria, including Methodist Ladies' College, the Prahran Town Hall, The Homeopathic (later Prince Henry's) Hospital, the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind, and numerous churches, as well as major buildings in Tasmania, Queensland and New Zealand. The large site with its tree lined drive and circular garden provide a picturesque setting for the building. Together with the Victorian School for the Blind and Wesley College, all of which have extensive grounds facing St Kilda Road, it forms a significant part of the St Kilda Road streetscape, and part of one of Melbourne's most important institutional precincts.

The Victorian College for the Deaf is of social significance for its continuing association with the teaching of deaf children in Victoria, an association which has continued up to the present day. As deafness can be hereditary, sometimes several generations of the same family have attended the school, and it is held in fond regard by past students, whose education and training in the school has allowed them to enter the workforce and more easily communicate with the wider community.

4.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUBJECT SITE DIAGRAM

The following diagram indicates the relative significance of individual elements and spaces of the site and buildings, as per the CMP prepared by NBRS in 2022.

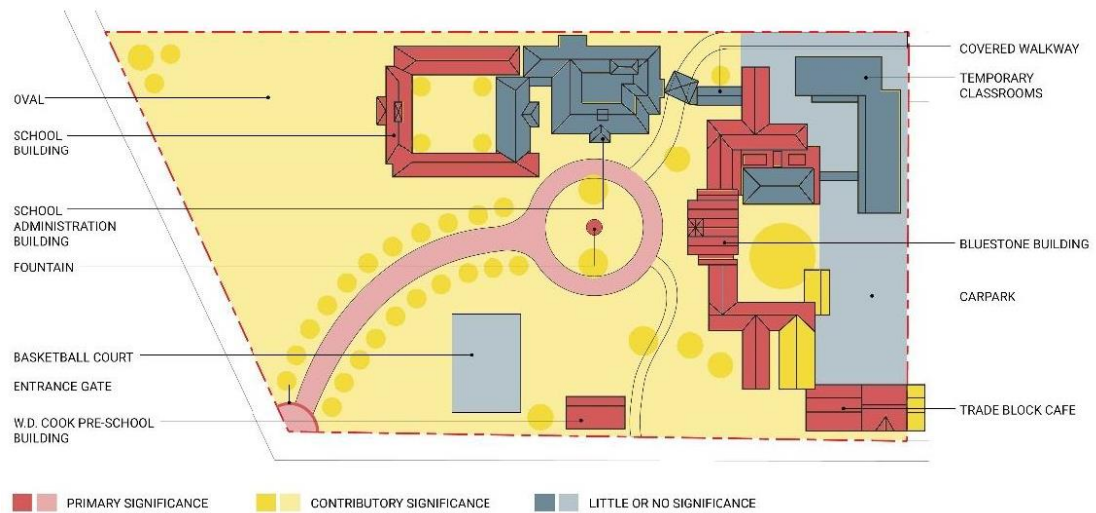


Figure 32: Significance grading diagram. Source: NBRS, 2022

5.0 THE PROPOSAL

The proposed works are mainly to the 1928 School Building (B2) and the 1990s School Administration Building. The proposed works also include landscaping works, including to the playground to the southwest of the site and fencing. Works to the Temporary Classrooms, located to the north and northeast corner of the site, are included in a separate permit exemption application (P45283).

The proposed works comprise the first stage of a three-stage plan to upgrade the teaching facilities and spaces used by the Victorian College for the Deaf at the subject site. In Stage 2, it is planned that refurbishment works would occur to the 1990s Administration Building. In Stage 3, minor internal refurbishments would be proposed to the 1928 School Building. Later stages of work will be subject to future permit applications, and do not form part of the current proposed scope. The staged work approach was discussed with Heritage Victoria at the pre-application meeting, at which a general level of comfort was expressed.

Proposed works that are eligible under the General Permit Exemption process are identified in the below table.

The proposed works include:

PROPOSED WORK	PERMIT EXEMPT (Y/N)
B2 – 1928 School Building (Building Registered)	
Removal of non-contributory ceilings, finishes and joinery, and refurbishment of rooms B.R.001, B.R.014, B.R.013, B.R.008, B.R.029 and B.R.030.	Y – Category 4
Removal of all existing internal lining and fixtures to male and female WCs (B.R.015, B.R.028 and B.R.024), for refurbishment.	Y – Category 4
Conservation and repair of existing metal-framed windows to B.R.001 and B.R.008.	Y – Category 1 and 2
Conservation and repair of timber sliding doors in B.R.001 and B.R.008.	Y- Category 1 and 2
Repair of damp damage in B.R.029.	Y- Category 2
Repair of part of the timber floor in B.R.030.	Y- Category 2
New openings in heritage fabric, between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> B.R.013 and B.R.015 B.R.030 and B.R.028 	N
Change of historic use of B.R.015, B.R.024, and B.R.028	N
Possible removal of existing services, depending on salvageability, in above mentioned rooms only.	Y – Category 6
School Building addition (1990s) (Building Not Registered)	

Removal of existing internal lining and fixtures to existing storeroom (B.R.009) for construction of 6 new WCs.	Y – site permit exemption
Removal of security gate at southern wall of 1990's eastern wing addition (between B.R.009 and B.R.0027) for replacement.	N
Administration Building (1990s) (Building Not Registered)	
Demolition of southern wall to link between School Building and Administration Building, for construction of a new platform lift and wall.	N
Demolition of western porch wall at entrance (A.R.001) to accommodate new ramp.	N
Demolition of internal walls and refurbishment of room A.R.029.	Y – site permit exemption
Demolition of one door with infill wall between A.R.029 and A.R.024.	Y – site permit exemption
New opening to A.R.029.	Y – site permit exemption
Temporary Classrooms (Buildings Not Registered)	
Construction of proposed Block N, with bus shelter and secure fencing.	N
Landscaping	
Removal of existing timber ramp, asphalt and brick paths, and landscaping between 1990s School Building addition (east wing of School Building) and Administration Building.	N
Removal of existing timber-framed and chain wire perimeter fence to the west and south, to be replaced with new 1.5m perimeter palisade fence with concrete plinth. New sliding gate on High Street with intercom for VCD and DCA.	N
Removal of VCD Playground equipment, located southwest of the circular drive, to be replaced with upgraded playground equipment and landscaping.	N
Removal of existing entry forecourt asphalt.	N
Removal of three trees that impact the proposed building work.	N
Construction of new ramp and landscaped area to entrance (south) of Administration Building.	N
New entry landscaping, footpath, pavement, wayfinding and fencing north of circular drive (F3), including a new crossing to the west.	N
New paths and shade sails located north of the Block A Admin.	N

New palisade fence being 1m to the south of circular drive.	N
Repair works to the paling of the existing timber fence and the introduction of palings to the gate at the corner of St Kilda Road and High Street, consistent with the existing timber fence.	N
New landscaping around Block N including security fence, being 1.8m palisade fence around the new building.	N
New CCTV and sensor security lights.	N

5.1 DOCUMENTATION EVALUATED

Details of the proposed works are outlined in the architectural drawings prepared by NBRS Architecture.

- NBRS, *Victorian College for the Deaf*, Issue 14, 12.06.2025

Further details are included in the following supporting documents attached to this application:

- NBRS, *Technical Reference Sheet 1 Victorian College for the Deaf*, Issue 5, 27.06.2025
- Erbas, *VCD 597 St Kilda Rd, Melbourne, Vic 3004 Electrical Services*, Issue P2, 15.05.24
- Erbas, *VCD 597 St Kilda Rd, Melbourne, Vic 3004 Fire Services*, Issue P3, 15.05.24
- Erbas, *VCD 597 St Kilda Rd, Melbourne, Vic 3004 Hydraulic Services*, Issue P2, 15.05.24
- Northrop, *Structural Drawings, Victorian College for the Deaf*, Rev 2, 09.05.24
- Northrop, *Civil Drawings, Victorian College for the Deaf*, Rev 1, 15.05.24
- 3 Acres Landscape Architects, *Victorian College for the Deaf*, Issue 2, 14.05.24
- NBRS, *Conservation Management Plan Victorian College for the Deaf*, May 2022

6.0 ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This Heritage Impact Statement has been prepared in relation to the following impact assessment criteria: the *Heritage Victoria Guidelines for preparing heritage impact statements* (2021). The assessment also considers guidance provided in the Heritage Victoria document *General Permit Exemptions* (August 2024)

6.2 EVALUATION AGAINST HERITAGE VICTORIA GUIDELINES

The following assessment is based on the assessment criteria set out in the *Heritage Victoria Guidelines for preparing heritage impact statements* (2021).

6.2.1 REASONS FOR THE ACTIVITY

Currently, Victorian College for the Deaf (VCD) occupy and lease some spaces in the Bluestone Building (B1) for art and food technology classes, being Rooms 202, 153, and 201 for Art, and Rooms 225, 224, and 236 for Food Tech, with the Hall used by the school for indoor assemblies. VCD has raised concerns regarding the condition of the leased spaces, noting lighting issues and rising damp, which present as occupational health and safety concerns for the children and staff who use these rooms. Deaf Children Australia also lease out other portions of the Bluestone Building to external businesses, which is also a child safety concern for VCD. The proposed works are required to allow VCD to vacate the Bluestone Building for occupation by Deaf Children Australia, and to improve teaching logistics across the VCD campus. The relocation is intended to improve student and staff safety at VCD.

New art teaching spaces will be accommodated in the 1928 School Building (B2), whilst Food Tech and new spaces will be accommodated in the proposed new build. Science classes, currently held in the 1990s Administration Building, will be relocated into the 1928 School Building (B2). New bathrooms will be provided as part of the refurbishment and upgrade of the 1990s eastern wing addition.

The proposed ramp and platform lift are required to improve universal and equal access to teaching spaces. Currently, people who require ramps for access are required to enter the school from a side entry, and are made to go outside, unprotected from weather, if they need to move between the 1928 School Building and the Administration Building.

The proposed crossing (south of the 1928 School Building) is required to accommodate a safe crossing location for students who currently exit the Administration Building and walk directly onto the circular drive (F3). The crossing will be linked to new paths associated with the proposed ramp. Similarly, the proposed low-height fence (south of the circular drive) is required to prevent students from wandering onto internal driveways. Proposed shade sails to the north of the Block A Admin building are required for safe outdoor play.

Block N is required to provide:

- A new food tech teaching space
- New classrooms (specialised visual communications)
- Bus shelter
- Gym
- Multipurpose hall
- Media room
- Production studio; and

- Associated facilities (WCs, plantroom, storage etc.)

6.2.2 THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE OR OBJECT IS AFFECTED BY THE PROPOSAL [S 101(2)(A)].

1928 School Building (B2) and Administration Building

The CMP prepared by NBRS graded the 1990s Administration Building, including its interiors, and the eastern wing of the 1928 School Building as being of little to no significance to the site; these elements have not been registered as part of the site's listing on the Victorian Heritage Register. The CMP graded the three original wings of the 1928 School Building, being its north, west, and south wings, as being of primary significance.

The proposed internal alterations to the 1928 School Building (B3) and later additions (1990s) will have limited adverse impact on the cultural heritage significance of the place. The existing rooms within the 1928 School Building have been significantly refurbished and contain little historic fabric beyond windows, walls and doors. The proposal includes conservation and repair of existing windows, walls and doors (in keeping with General Permit Exemption Categories 1 and 2, and associated conditions). Minimal removal of early or original fabric is proposed within the 1928 School Building to allow for two openings, which will facilitate the adaptive reuse and improve access to these rooms; the openings will retain nibs, which allow for the interpretation of the original wall.

The majority of proposed works to the 1990s eastern wing (later addition) will not be visible from the exterior, being the removal of the existing internal lining and fixtures to a storeroom for the construction of 6 new water closets, and accordingly would have no adverse impact on the cultural heritage significance of the place.

A change of historic use is proposed for B.R.015, B.R.024, and B.R.028. While the individual use of the rooms would be changed, this change in use would support the ongoing and continued use of the site overall as a place of education for deaf children, which is the original purpose of the site.

Internal refurbishment works and signage to the 1990s Administration Building would have no adverse impact on the cultural heritage significance of the place, nor would the removal and replacement of the security gate at the southern wall of the 1990s eastern wing addition (between B.R.009 and B.R.0027), which has not been identified as significant.

The proposed platform lift and wall within the link between the School Building and the Administration Building would not require removal or impact on original heritage fabric. The proposed works would have a minor visual impact on the area between the 1990s eastern wing addition and 1990s Administration Building. The proposed southern wall to this area has been detailed in height and materiality to ensure it remains visually recessive. Combined with the deep setback from the southern wall of the 1928 School Building, the proposed new platform lift and wall would not have a visual impact on the broader historic setting.

The demolition of the western porch wall to the 1990s Administration Building, which is a non-registered building and has not been identified as significant to the site, would have a minor impact and would facilitate the construct of a new ramp. The proposed ramp at the entrance of the Administration Building has been carefully designed as a high-quality, sympathetic addition to the entrance of the non-contributory building. The proposed ramp is to be curved with a concrete base and perforated metal balustrades in a Surfmist colour. The intent is for the ramp to be semi-transparent, matte finished, lightweight and visually recessive against the building.

Conservation and repair works are proposed for the 1928 School Building (B2), including repair of damp damage, a portion of timber flooring, and metal-framed windows and timber-sliding doors to B.R.001 and B.R.008. These works will assist in preserving the extant heritage fabric of the building and will have a positive outcome.

Proposed Block N

The proposal seeks to remove existing portable classrooms (removal sought under separate General Permit Exemption) and construct a double-storey multipurpose building, referred to herein as proposed Block N. The location for Block N was selected on the basis that removal of the temporary classrooms would not affect the cultural heritage significance of the subject site, and construction of a relatively substantial structure would best be accommodated to the northeast, behind all registered buildings on the site, therefore being largely concealed by contributory fabric from most significant view lines.

Early in the design phase, a “no build” curtilage was established around the significant Bluestone Building (B1) to ensure sufficient separation between the existing building and any new development. Accordingly, Block N has proposed setbacks of between 4 metres to 17 metres from the eastern elevation of the Bluestone Building.

The overall height of the new build has been kept between 3.6 metres and 10.6 metres, significantly lower than the Bluestone Building. View analyses generated by 3D modelling show that the proposed new build would not be visible from significant view lines taken from St. Kilda Road or High Street.

The form of the proposed building has been articulated to complement the surrounding contributory buildings by introducing arched openings, as seen on fenestrations within the immediately surrounding Bluestone Building (B1) and Trade Block Building (B3). Similarly, materials have been selected to complement surrounding significant fabric, without being mock heritage. The base of the building is proposed to be constructed of red and white-cream bricks, colours and materials which are extant on all significant buildings on site (B1, B2, B3 and B4). The upper level of the structure is proposed to be a polycarbonate panel, providing a lightweight material to the upper level of the structure and thus reducing the bulk of the form. All other materials have been selected to be visually recessive and complementary to the surrounding bluestone and brick materials.

Landscaping

Landscaping around the proposed Administration Building ramp, and between the School Building and Administration Building (south of the proposed platform lift), will be exposed aggregate concrete paving, exfoliated stone cobbles, and garden beds. The proposed landscaping for the Administration Building is simple and sympathetic in design and will harmonise with the extant fabric yet remain readable as new fabric. The proposed works would not change the delineation of circular drive (F3), which is currently demarcated by red brick channels. The proposed crossing would simply be painted onto the driveway, as per existing traffic markers. The proposed wayfinding signage has been placed to reduce its impact on views and sited to existing signage on site.

The removal of the existing entry forecourt asphalt will not impact the heritage significance of the site. Three trees are proposed for removal, two of which are located to the north boundary of the site and the other to the playground area. These trees are required for removal to facilitate the construction of the proposed works and will overall have a minor visual impact on the site. The trees and gardens to the west of the Bluestone Building,

including those to the boundaries of the site, have been identified in the CMP by NBRS as being of contributory significance.

The removal of the contemporary playground would have no adverse impact on the cultural heritage significance of the place. The playground is proposed for replacement with upgraded playground equipment and landscaping. The landscaping would include exposed aggregate concrete paving, exfoliated stone cobbles, soft fall mulch, lawn, and garden beds. The simple circle design of the landscaping echoes the form of circular drive without detracting from the drive's central prominence. The siting of the proposed landscaping away from the circular drive and other identified heritage fabric on site, coupled with its low scale, will ensure that the upgraded playground and landscaping will not impact significant heritage fabric on site nor interrupt significant views.

The proposed shade sails to the north of the Administration Building would not conceal or detract from any significant or contributory fabric due to their location north of the Administration Building. Paths associated with the sails would be asphalt to match the existing.

Works are proposed for the angled timber entrance and gate located at the intersection of St Kilda Road and High Street. The CMP prepared by NBRS graded the entrance gate (F2) as being of primary significance, including its gates and curved fencing. The gate to the entrance is not original and was introduced to the site in the early 2020s following the issue of a permit exemption from Heritage Victoria for the installation of new timber gates, gateposts, and associated repairs to the adjacent picket fence in April 2021. The current gate is not compliant with the Victorian School Building Authority and is a safety risk, as there are large openings in the gate that children can climb through. Currently, there is metal safety fencing located to the gate to prevent children from climbing through, however, this is not a viable long-term solution. The proposed works include the introduction of white timber palings to the existing gate to match the timber palings in the fence located on either side of the gateway; the proposed timber palings to the gate will be of a similar height and width to the fence palings. The palings are simple and sympathetic in design to the existing fabric at the angled entrance and will not detract from the heritage significance nor impact current views of the site, whilst preventing children from climbing through the gate. Repair works are proposed to the existing timber palings at the angled entrance to remedy inconsistencies in the gaps of the picket fence (see Figure 33), which would improve the appearance of the existing timber fence.



Figure 33 : Image of the angled gateway to the intersection of St Kilda Road and High Street, with the inconsistent gaps between palings indicated by an arrow. Source: NBRS 2025

The proposed low height fence, south of the circular drive, would be a simple 1m high, black vertical metal batten fence. The intent of the design is to be visually recessive and identifiable as new fabric, yet sympathetic to the historic setting. The proposed low-height fence is visually permeable in design due to the spacing of its battens and so will allow for key views through the landscape to be retained.

The proposed fencing to the west and south perimeter of the site would be a simple 1.5m high, black palisade fence with vertical metal battens on a 200mm concrete plinth. The fencing to the perimeter of the site has been graded in the CMP prepared by NBRS as being of little to no significance. The fence is designed to be visually recessive, simple, and sympathetic to the site, yet easily identifiable as new fabric. The proposed fence is permeable and will allow for views to the site to be retained. The proposed fence is consistent with pre-application advice received by Heritage Victoria regarding new landscaping (P35220). The proposed palisade fence is a modern interpretation of the likely original or early iron fences at the site, which in mid-nineteenth century urban contexts was likely to be a cast-iron palisade fence.¹⁴ A new fence is proposed to increase safety at the site; students are able to jump over the current fencing to these perimeters, which front major roads in the area, and as such present as a safety risk.

Black palisade fencing measuring 1.8m high is also proposed around Block N, to the east (rear) elevation of the Bluestone Building (B1). This fencing is intended to ensure separation between Deaf Children Australia, who will continue to operate from the Bluestone Building, and the proposed Block N to be used by the Victorian College for the Deaf. This proposed fencing will be permeable, which, coupled with its rear location, will not block public realm views to the Bluestone Building. The fencing will be freestanding, setback from the bluestone façades, and will not be affixed to the Bluestone Building, reducing its physical impact on the significant building.

Landscaping around proposed Block N would consist mainly of exposed aggregate concrete paving, exfoliated stone cobbles, feature paving, and garden beds. The rear location of this landscaping, behind the significant buildings at the site, will ensure that it does not impact views at the site. The proposed landscaping to Block N will be simple and sympathetic in design, consisting mainly of low-scale hard and soft landscaping.

New CCTV and sensor security lights are proposed to improve security and safety at the site. The CCTV and lights have been positioned to reduce their visual impact on the site.

6.2.3 THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE APPLICATION, IF REFUSED, WOULD AFFECT THE REASONABLE OR ECONOMIC USE OF THE REGISTERED PLACE OR REGISTERED OBJECT [S 101(2)(B)].

If the application for the proposed works were refused, it would have a considerable impact on the reasonable use of the subject site by the Victorian College for the Deaf.

The heritage place is significant, in part, for its continuing association with the teaching of deaf children. This association commenced in 1866 and continues to the present day, at times including multiple generations of the same families. The ongoing and historic use of the site provides evidence of improvements in teaching and training that have supported deaf people to access employment, build connections within their community, and to engage with the wider public.

¹⁴ Richard Peterson, National Trust Technical Bulletin 8.1, A Guide to the Identification, Conservation & Restoration of Historic Fences & Gates c.1840-1925, Fences & Gates, 1988, p.18

It is reasonable for the subject site to continue its historic use and connection with the education of deaf children. As the educational needs of deaf children have changed, so has the way the heritage place is used. It is reasonable to make adaptations to the place in order to facilitate its ongoing use and ensure that it can continue to be used into the future.

The Victorian College for the Deaf currently lease some spaces in the Bluestone Building (B1), which are no longer adequate for the needs of the school as they present health and safety concerns for the children and staff, which is outlined in more detail in Section 6.2.1. The proposed works and the construction of Block N will allow for the Victorian College for the Deaf to vacate the Bluestone Building, which would improve teaching logistics across the campus and improve student and staff safety.

Generally, the proposed works will occur to areas of previous refurbishment or unregistered buildings in the Victorian Heritage Register and are located to the rear of the site or internally, minimising the impact on the heritage fabric, views, and significance of the site.

Some intervention will be required into heritage fabric as two internal openings are proposed and the historic use of three rooms altered in the 1928 Building. The change in the historic use of these rooms is required to provide the up-to-date educational spaces needed by the school and would support the ongoing and historic use of the site as a school for deaf children. The openings are required to improve internal access and flow between educational spaces and would further support the current use of the site. The walls and nibs will be retained, which will allow for the original walls to remain interpretable and will reduce the physical impact of the proposed openings on the heritage significance of the site.

A refusal of the application would negatively impact the reasonable use of the site as an educational facility for deaf children, which is significant to the site. If the proposed works are refused, the Victorian College for the Deaf may be required to consider alternative sites from which to operate. Should this occur, it would profoundly impact the identified social significance of the site as a site for the education of deaf children.

6.2.4 MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The Victorian School Building Authority, Victorian College for the Deaf and NBRS Architects have been cognisant of the heritage significance of the place since the inception of the project. Prior to any design work being undertaken, a Heritage Site Analysis and Conservation Management Plan were produced by NBRS Heritage to inform the project from inception, ensuring that a 'light touch' was applied for the scheme.

Internal refurbishment of rooms in the significant 1928 School Building will require repair of some original walls and the scope of works also includes conservation of existing metal windows and timber sliding doors. These works are permit exempt under the General Permit Exemptions (GPEs) and in keeping with conditions of the GPEs, only suitably qualified tradespeople with proven experience of working on historic buildings, and with metal windows and timber sliding doors, will be selected to undertake these works. Additionally, NBRS heritage consultants will be appointed to review specifications and inspect the works as carried out.

Similarly, as in-house heritage consultants to the architects, NBRS Heritage will be consulted throughout all phases of the project to ensure all works are carried out in keeping with heritage best practice as according to the Burra Charter and Heritage Victoria technical

guidelines. Where required, NBRS will seek clarifications or provide notice to Heritage Victoria in accordance with the requirements of the *Heritage Act 2017*.

6.2.5 REASONS WHY THE PROPOSED WORKS SHOULD BE SUPPORTED.

For over 160 years the Victorian College for the Deaf has provided specialised education for deaf children from Foundation through to Year 12. The school provides an environment where children are empowered by their deafness and provided the opportunity to leave the college as autonomous young adults with viable pathways. Like any school, particularly those which operate from historic and aging sites, upgrades are required to continue providing best practice, universally accessible pedagogy and experiences. The proposed works would enable the continued and ongoing use of the site as a place of education for deaf children, the purpose of which the site was originally established.

Heritage advice was sought and integrated into the project from the feasibility stage and early design phase. As a result, whilst the project would provide significant improvement to the functionality of the site for Victorian College for the Deaf, it would not have an adverse impact on the cultural heritage significance of the place. Indeed, improving facilities at the site would support the ongoing use of the place as an educational facility for the deaf, an important element of the site's cultural heritage significance. Where minor impacts have been identified, these have been managed and mitigated in keeping with heritage best practices.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The Victorian School Building Authority and Victorian College of the Deaf have invested time and resources early in the feasibility and concept design phases to ensure the heritage aspects of the site are understood and respected. This is evidenced by the Heritage Site Analysis and Conservation Management Plan commissioned in 2021 and 2022 respectively.

As a result of working closely with NBRS heritage consultants throughout the concept design phase, the proposed works are deemed to have little to no adverse impact on the cultural heritage significance of the place. Most works are associated with non-contributory elements of the site and new works have been carefully and sensitively designed.

NBRS heritage consultants would be involved in all phases of the project, ensuring that heritage best practices are undertaken, and that suitably qualified tradespeople appointed where required.

It is recommended that Heritage Victoria support the application for works at the subject site as outlined in this report.



Dr Elizabeth Offer
Heritage Consultant
NBRS
27 June 2025