

**H1720 Victoria Dock (Central Per)**  
**Harbour Esplanade, Docklands**  
**Permit Application P34345**

**Why is Victoria Dock of cultural heritage significance?**

Victoria Dock is included in the Victorian Heritage Register under the provisions of the *Heritage Act 2017* for its historical, scientific (technical) and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

Victoria Dock is a 37.6-hectare water basin constructed between 1887 and 1892 to accommodate large ships of the time. Designed by the British engineer, Sir John Coode and modified by Melbourne Harbor Trust Engineer Joseph Brady, the dock was constructed by excavation works to the West Melbourne wetlands. The dock is between 8.5 and 9.5m deep, bordered on four sides by linear wharfage, with an entrance at the western end. At the time of its opening in 1892, Victoria Dock was the second largest single dock in the world and by 1950 it was handling over two millions tons of cargo annually; in the mid 1980s this figure had increased to 20 million revenue tons annually. The dock features several large cargo sheds, the earliest of which date from 1913.

Central Pier was constructed in 1916-17 to increase the cargo handling capacity of the dock.

**What was the permit application for?**

In December 2020, Heritage Victoria received a permit application from Development Victoria to demolish a section of Central Pier known as the 'western tip'. The section is in fact a mid-section of the original pier footprint, but now remains the most westerly tip of the pier structure.

The permit application was advertised between 24 March and 7 April 2021. One public submission was received. The submission raised concerns associated with the cumulative impacts on the cultural heritage significance on the whole of the Victoria Dock registration and about the future of Victoria Dock and expressed a strong desire for a public consultation process in relation to future plans for Victoria Dock.

**Why has the permit been approved?**

The Heritage Act 2017 requires the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria to consider various matters in determining a permit application including the extent that the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the place; the extent that refusal would affect the reasonable or economic use of the place; any submissions received in response to public notice of the permit application; and the extent that refusal would unreasonably detrimentally affect the ability of a public authority to perform a statutory duty.

Engineering reports submitted with the application indicate the western tip of the pier is in poor condition and poses a public safety risk. In the assessment process, Heritage Victoria considered options for rehabilitation of the western tip of the pier, demolition and reconstruction of the western tip and demolition without the requirement to rebuild the pier.

It was considered that demolition of the western tip was an acceptable option as the substantial costs associated with rehabilitation or rebuilding would not necessarily result in a good heritage outcome. In either case, no original fabric would be retained. Additionally, retention of this section of the pier would not adequately convey the full extent of the pier as it was built in 1916-17.

The Executive Director determined that a more effective strategy would be to allow demolition of the western tip to address issues of public safety but to require a Heritage Interpretation Strategy

that includes a physical installation to 'mark' the full length of the pier, as built in 1916-17, within the body of water. Implementation of an approved Heritage Interpretation Strategy, including a physical representation of the original footprint of the pier, is a condition of the permit.

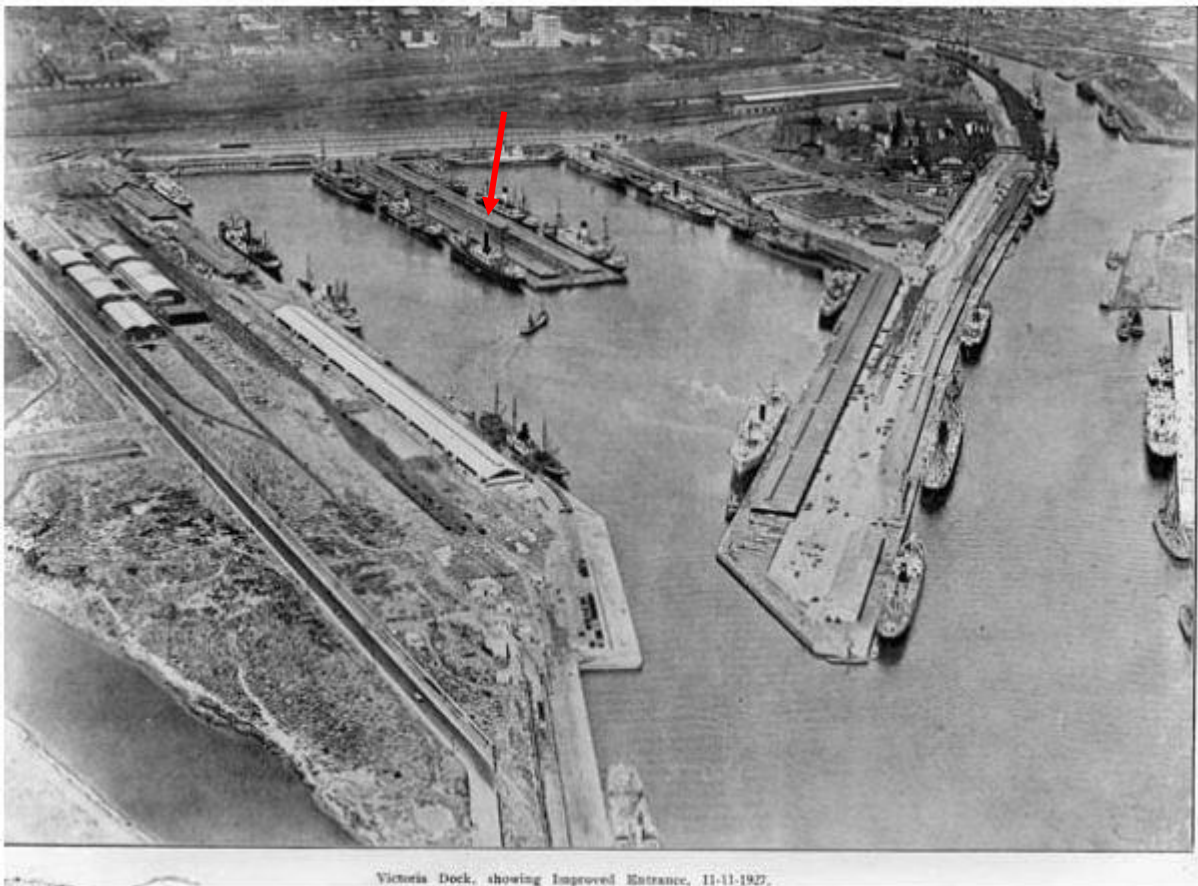
Heritage Victoria continues to engage with Development Victoria in relation to future plans for Victoria Dock with the intention that the heritage interpretation response required by this permit will contribute to a strong and engaging heritage outcome for the whole of Victoria Dock.

The permit to allow demolition of the 'western tip' of Central Pier was determined by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria on 7 June 2021.

### **Can the applicant appeal the decision?**

The applicant can choose to apply to the Heritage Council of Victoria for a review of the Executive Director's decision within 60 days of receiving the approved permit. The Heritage Council is an independent statutory authority established under the Heritage Act 2017

### **Historic image of Central Pier**



Aerial view of Victoria Dock in 1927 following the widening of the entrance, with the 1916 Central Pier (indicated by red arrow) in operation. (Source: *Victoria Harbour, Docklands - Conservation Management Plan*, Lovell Chen, June 2012 with image source quoted as Public Records Office Victoria.)