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## **Heritage Impact Statement**

Elim House (H0651) – verandah restoration works

29 Erin Street, Richmond

Prepared for



**Date:** 15/04/2026

**Revision:** A

## Document Information

Revision	Date	Comments
A	15/04/2026	Revision A

## Document Control

Internal Project Number	Approval
25054	DB

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# 1. Project Overview

## 1.1 Introduction

This Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) has been prepared on behalf of Programmed, and forms part of a Permit Application for works to Elim House.

Elim House is included on the Victorian Heritage Register as H0651.

### 1.1.1 Background

In the mid-1980s, Elim was converted into a rehabilitation centre. As part of this conversion, the verandah was reconstructed. Since then, there have been no conservation works undertaken on the verandah.

The verandah is now reaching the end of its lifespan. Scaffolding was recently erected to conduct a condition assessment of the verandah by Intrax Forensic. This assessment highlighted the extensive and general state of decay across the various verandah components, including the cast iron components, the timber work, and the roofing. Most importantly, the assessment observed severe damage and degradation with timber having lost all structural bearing capacity, evident by the timber being ‘squashed’. Given the severity of the degradation of the structural elements, they will require removal and replacement.

### 1.1.2 Documentation for endorsement

The following architectural drawings are submitted together with this HIS for endorsement.

*Architectural drawings prepared by Conservation Studio.*

**Day** 02  
**Month** 03  
**Year** 2026

Dwg. No.	Drawing Title	Issue
25054.0.01	Aerial View, Drawing Register and General Notes	B
25054.1.01	Ground Floor and First Floor Plan	B
25054.1.02	Roof Plan	B
25054.1.03	Ground Floor and First Floor RCP	B
25054.1.04	North and South Elevations	B
25054.1.05	East Elevation	B
25054.1.06	Un-folded Verandah Elevations	B
25054.1.07	Un-folded Verandah Elevations	B
25054.2.01	Ground Floor and First Floor Plan	B
25054.2.02	First Floor and Roof Framing Plan	B
25054.2.03	Roof Plan	B
25054.2.04	Ground Floor and First Floor RCP	B
25054.2.05	North and South Elevations	B
25054.2.06	East Elevation	B
25054.2.07	Un-folded Verandah Elevations	B
25054.2.08	Un-folded Verandah Elevations	B
25054.2.09	Verandah Sections	B
25054.2.10	Structural Details	B
25054.2.11	Typical Details	B
25054.2.12	Typical Details	B
<b>Specifications</b>		
	Specification	A

Structural drawings by SH Engineering.

**Month** 03  
**Year** 2026

Dwg. No.	Drawing Title	Issue
S-00	Cover sheet	P1
S-01	Project notes	P2
S-04	Safety in design register	P1
S-10	Ground floor framing plan	P2
S-20	First floor framing plan	P2
S-30	Roof framing plan	P2
S-40	Details	P2

### 1.1.3 Supporting documentation

The Engineering report produced by Intrax Forensic was referenced during the preparation of this HIS and is included in Appendix A for reference.



**Figure 1**  
Aerial view of the site (Yellow) with the position of Elim House (Pink). | Source: Nearthmaps.

## 1.2 Subject Site

Elim is located at 29 Erin Street, Richmond. The house forms part of the Epworth Hospital Rehabilitation Centre.

The historic house, which faces east, sits at the centre of the large allotment. The site is bounded by Erin Street to the south and Freeman Street to the north. Two small alleys run partially along the eastern and western boundaries. The Epworth Hospital is located on the opposite side of Erin Street.

### 1.2.1 Description

Elim consists of a two-storey rendered residence with a central tower. Typical of a late nineteenth-century Italianate villa, the tower is surmounted by a balustraded parapet, a deep cornice, and a series of decorative orbs.

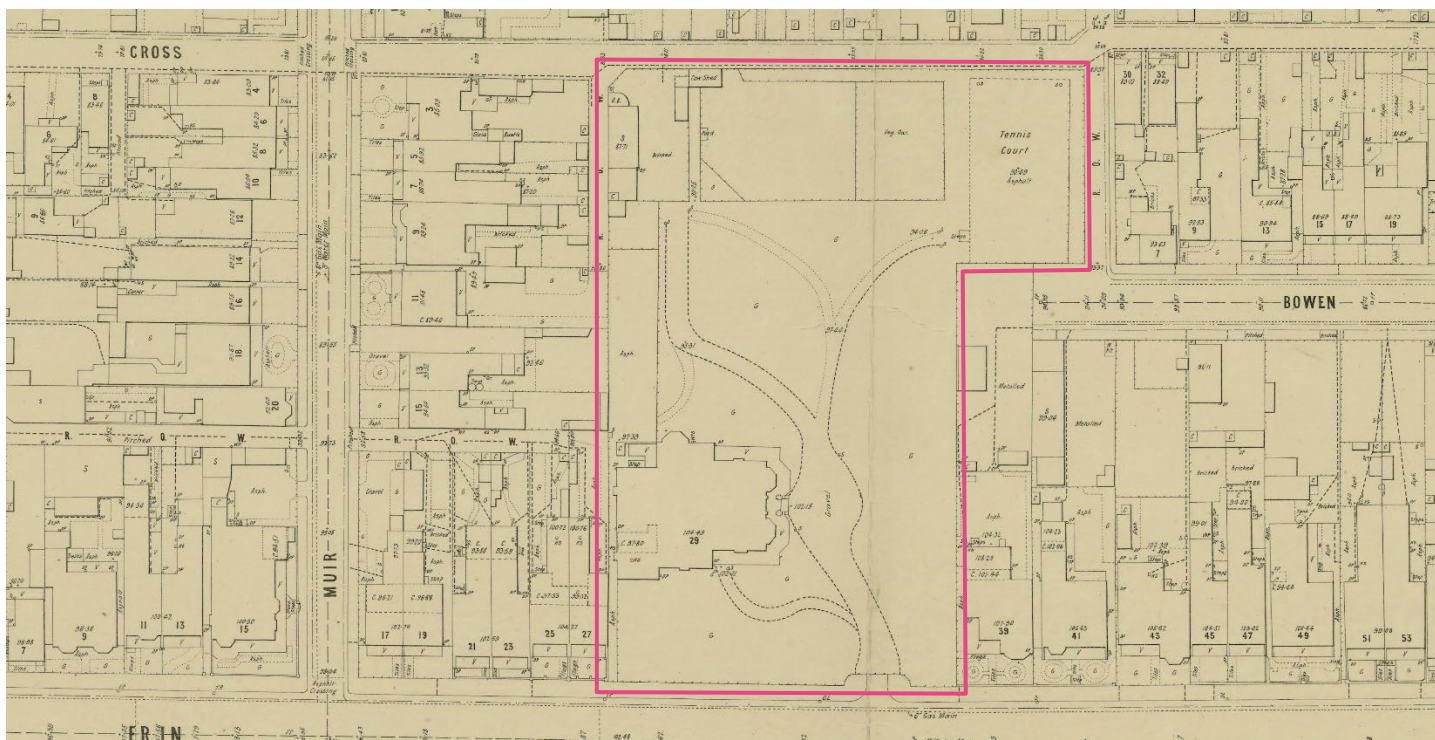
The house is arranged symmetrically, with projecting bay windows and a two-storey cast-iron cankered verandah. The entrance is defined by a pedimented portico, itself supported by iconic columns and pilasters. The ground floor and first floor of the verandah have been partially infilled, while the floor of the ground floor verandah is decorated

with tessellated tiles. The multi-hipped roof is surmounted by four rendered, decorative chimney stacks.

A long-two storey wing sits to the west of the original residence. Running along the western boundary of the site, the rendered wing mimics the original residence, with a matching cornice and hipped roof. An external vernadah defines the northern end of the wing. The balustrade of the verandah differs from the cast-iron balustrade of the original residence. The date of this wing is unknown.

The grounds retain remnants of the original layout, including the position and arrangement of the curved driveway.

The rear of the site includes more recent additions, including a two-storey carpark along the northern boundary.



**Figure 2**  
MMBW Map, c.1890, with property highlighted. | Source: State Library of Victoria

### 1.2.2 History

For tens of thousands of years prior to European colonisation, the subject site fell within the lands of the Wurundjeri people, who maintain a distinct relationship to country.

Following European colonisation, the land which encompasses Richmond was subdivided and sold in a series of sales. At the first sale of Richmond Crown Land (1839), Allotment 37 was purchased by William Highett, an English-born bank manager and financier, who constructed his own residence, 'Yalcowinna'.<sup>1</sup> In the ensuing years, Highett subdivided the allotment, and in the process, created Erin Street and the residential site which front it.

During the 1850s, the subject site contained two, semi-detached residences, both of which sat on large block of land. These were demolished in c.1865, and two new semi-

detached residences constructed. Known as 'Moncrieff Place' these residences were themselves demolished c.1888.<sup>2</sup>

In 1889, William Harper constructed the current residence, originally known as 'Kooralbyn'. The architect for the project is unknown. Harper also laid out the grounds, including the sweeping driveway whose remnants have survived to this day.

Harper sold the property in 1911, and it was subsequently turned into a boarding house operated by Mrs. Sealy. The house retained its palatial character, advertised as set in 'beautiful grounds', containing 'luxuriously furnished and appointed' rooms, as well as billiard, smoking, and lounge rooms.<sup>3</sup>

The Salvation Army purchased the property in 1919, with the intention of using the property as a 'mothers' hospital'.<sup>4</sup> However, this did not eventuate, and for the next two

<sup>1</sup> See 'VPRS 8168/P0002, SYDNEYR1; RICHMOND; HODDLE;', 1843, Public Records Office Victoria; J. Anne Hone, 'William Highett (1807-1880)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol 4, 1972.  
<https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/highett-william-3765>

<sup>2</sup> See 'Plan shewing the Honble. William Highett's Richmond property subdivided into lots for sale', 1872, State Library of Victoria, MAPEF 912.945 S14 Box 1 pg.13-14.

<sup>3</sup> 'Auctions', Age, 8 November 1911; 'Board and Lodging', Argus, 9 August 1913.

<sup>4</sup> 'Erin Street House Bought by Salvation Army', Richmond Guardian, 10 January 1920.

decades the property was leased. Throughout the 1930s, the property continued to operate as a guest house, under the directorship of Albert Murcott.<sup>5</sup> The Salvation Army finally converted the property into a home for nurses for the Bethesda Hospital in 1940, renaming the property 'Elim'.<sup>6</sup>

'Elim' remained nurses' quarters until the 1980s, at which point Perrott Lyon Mathieson were commissioned to convert the building into a rehabilitation centre. During these works, the verandah was also reconstructed.

Today, the building remains a rehabilitation centre overseen by Epworth Healthcare.

### 1.2.3 Existing Conditions

The non-original verandah is in a state of decay, with the timber, cast iron, and steel components degraded.

The roof is in generally poor condition. Large seams have formed between the galvanised sheets. Simultaneously, the rainwater system is functioning inadequately. The gutters and downpipes are full of debris and no longer shedding sufficient water.

The verandah posts are similarly degraded. The cast iron column heads and bases are splitting, providing an opportunity for water and debris to become internally embedded. Dentils and timber works is missing along the verandah frieze, while there is extensive paint loss along the verandah handrail. As such, the handrail has rotten.

Finally, the floor of the upper level is currently covered in a waterproof membrane. This conceals the timber floor and detracts from understanding the building.

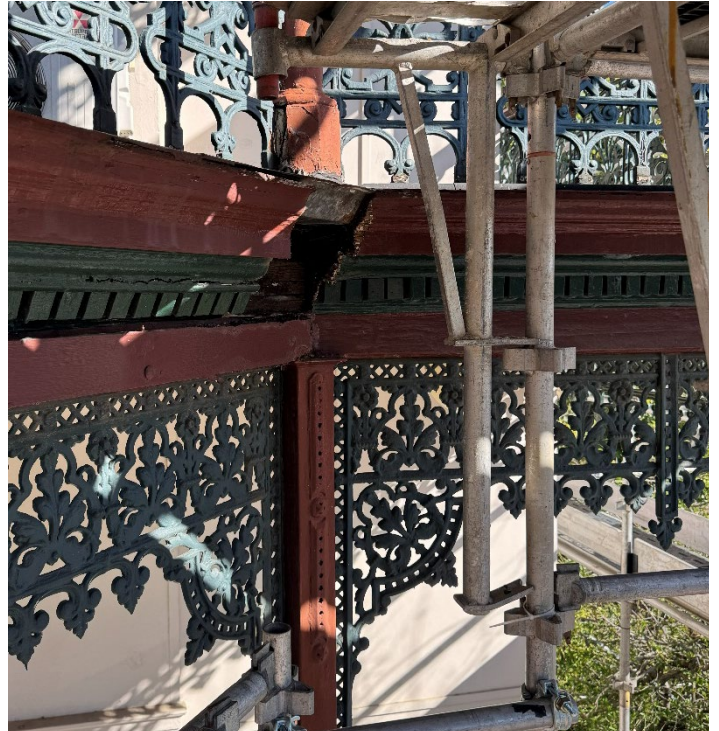


Figure 3  
Missing timber dentils.



Figure 4  
Damaged and degraded column post

<sup>5</sup> Sands and McDougall Directories, 1935, pg 1588.

<sup>6</sup> 'Bethesda Nurses', Age, 26 August 1940.



**Figure 5**  
Misaligned roof timbers and detached capping



**Figure 6**  
Rotten roof timbers and detached steel sheeting.



**Figure 7**  
Split column base, rainwater system full of debris.



**Figure 8**  
Splits in the first-floor soffit (indicated).

## 2. Heritage Considerations

### 2.1 Overview

Name	Authority	Identifier	Statutory Controls
<b>Statutory Listings</b>			
Elim	Victorian Heritage Register	H0651	Yes
29 Erin Street Richmond Elim	City of Yarra	HO257	Yes, superseded by inclusion on the VHR
<b>Non-Statutory Listings</b>			
Former Yooralbyn	National Trust (Victoria)	B5757	No

### 2.2 Statutory Controls

The following statutory controls apply to the subject site.

#### 2.2.1 Victorian Heritage Register

Elim is included on the Victorian Heritage Register, identified as property H0651.

The Extent of Registration includes the following statement:

*AMENDMENT OF REGISTER OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS*

*Historic Building No. 651 - "Elim", 29 Erin Street, Richmond (to the extent of the whole of the building but excluding the interior of the south-west service wing), the stables and the whole of the land (Certificates of Title, Vol. 3255, Fol 951, Vol. 3665 Fol. 876 and Vol. 3721 Fol. 091).*

*[Victoria Government Gazette No. G11 18 March 1987 p. 632]*

#### 2.2.2 City of Yarra Planning Scheme

Elim is included on the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay in the City of Yarra Planning Scheme as HO257.

The provisions of Clause 43.01 – Heritage Overlay in the City of Yarra Planning Scheme is superseded by the inclusion of the Heritage Place on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Heritage Act 2017 in accordance with Clause 43.01-2 of the Planning Scheme. The Executive Director, Heritage Victoria may refer the application to the responsible municipality.

### 2.3 Non-Statutory Listings

#### 2.3.1 National Trust of Australia (Victoria)

Elim is included on the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Register as property B5757. Elim is graded by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) as being of state significance.

Inclusion on the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Register imparts no statutory controls.

### 2.4 Statements of Significance

#### 2.4.1 Victorian Heritage Register:

The following Statement of Significance is taken from the Victorian Heritage Register:

*What is significant?*

*Elim, formerly called Yooralbyn, was built in 1889 for William Harper, a partner in a leading Melbourne merchant and manufacturing firm. The house was one of the many great mansions and elegant terraces built in Richmond by local merchants and manufacturers during the 1880s boom period. The mansion, substantially intact, still stands on its original allotment and retains some of its 19th century garden layout and planting, as well as its stables. It now forms part of the Salvation Army Bethesda Hospital complex.*

*How is it significant?*

*Elim is of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria.*

*Why is it Significant?*

*Elim is of architectural significance as perhaps the best surviving intact mansion from 19th century Richmond. The exterior of the building is particularly impressive, with its central tower, Ionic portico and flanking verandahs. The expansive stair hall and elaborate plaster work are features of the interior. The house is a rare example of a 19th century boom-style mansion in largely working class Richmond.*

*Elim is of historical significance to the State of Victoria for the evidence that its imposing facade, elaborate interiors and fine garden setting provide of the opulent lifestyle of Richmond's (and Melbourne's) elite during the late Victorian era.*

#### **2.4.2 National Trust of Australia (Victoria)**

The following Statement of Significance is taken from the National Trust of Australia Register:

*Elim is of considerable historical and architectural interest, as the best survivor of the many great mansions and elegant terraces which were built in Richmond by local merchants and manufacturers during the 1880's boom period.*

*Built in 1889 for William Harper (brother of Robert Harper MLA, founder of a leading firm of merchants & manufacturers), Elim is substantially intact, still stands on its original allotment and retains some of its 19th century garden layout and plantings.*

*Through the pretension of its architecture the mansion, with its imposing facade, elaborate interiors and fine garden setting, illustrates the opulent lifestyle of Richmond's (and Melbourne's) elite during the late Victorian era.*

*It now forms part of the Salvation Army Bethesda Hospital complex.*

*Classified: 27/10/1986*

## 3. Assessment of Impact

### 3.1 Proposed Works

The proposed works include the deconstruction and reconstruction of the verandah.

As part of the proposed works, the non-original verandah will be temporarily deconstructed. Deconstruction will provide an opportunity to address all the necessary conservation works and rectify the myriads of issues affecting the verandah. During the works, the cooling systems currently mounted on the verandah will be temporarily removed or propped. The ground floor tiles will be protected, as these are beyond the scope of works. Likewise, the timber lining boards and floorboards will be carefully removed and stored for later reinstatement.

With the verandah disassembled, damaged cast iron columns and frieze panels can be recast, with the existing panels used as templates for the mould. Once damaged components have been recast, the panels will be reinstated.

The proposed works also include the reconstruction of the roof and associated roof beams. Following the demolition of the existing roof, the roof will be reconstructed, with replacement steel gutters installed along the ground floor and first floor of the verandah. The gutter will have an ogee profile to match existing, with a timber scotia below. A new downpipe will be installed along the south side of the verandah. Replacement roof beams, galvanised steel roofing, and flashing will also be installed.

During the reconstruction works, new structural timbers will be installed to support the floor of the upper level. Per conventional practice, the waterproof membrane will be installed below the timber floorboards. Due to the structural requirement, the depth of the floor will be increased. As a result, the cast iron columns along the upper level will be shortened to accommodate the difference in height. Following the reconstruction of the floor, a new rubber membrane will be installed.

### 3.2 Reasons for Works

As previously noted, the non-original verandah has deteriorated severely. There are major splits along the seams in the roof, with rotten roof timbers and dislodged flashing. Likewise, the cast iron components have begun to split, and the rainwater system is full of debris and unfit for purpose. Sections of the timber dentils are missing, and there is concern over the structural stability of the upper-level floor and the roof beams. Taken together, these issues represent a serious threat to the ongoing stability of the verandah, and the heritage significance of the place.

### 3.3 Impact Assessment

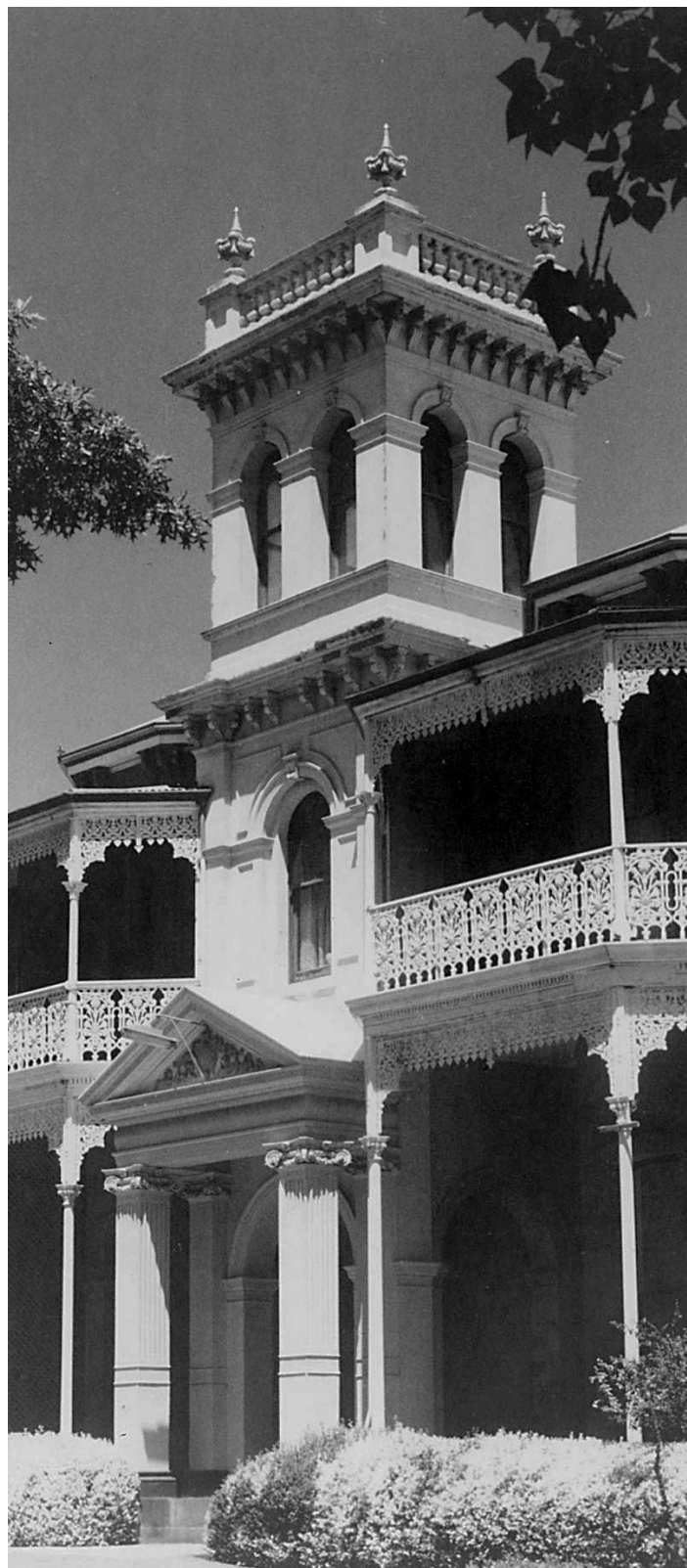
#### 3.3.1 Impacts on cultural heritage significance

This Section assesses the proposed works against Section 101(2)(a) of the Heritage Act 2017 – the extent to which the application affects the cultural heritage significance of the place or object.

The heritage value of Elim lies in its architectural and historical significance, which are embodied in its heritage fabric. The works are confined to the dismantling and reconstruction of non-original fabric. Photos of Elim taken during the 1970s (Figure 9) suggest that the current verandah, while not original, is visually similar to the original. Recasting damaged cast iron components based on the existing fabric will, therefore, maintain the visual consistency of the verandah. As a public institution, it is vital that the verandah is structurally sound. The proposed works will address the ongoing degradation, decay, and structural instability of the verandah.

The installation of the new downpipe along the south-side of the building, and the work to floor of the upper storey will each have a minor visual impact. This minor visual impact is however, outweighed by the long-term benefits to the place. The installation of the new downpipe is vital to ensuring that the rainwater system operates as intended. Likewise, the installation of new, wider, structural timbers to the upper-storey floor will result in shortened cast-iron columns along the verandah. The verandah is not original fabric, and the modification will be imperceptible once the verandah is reconstructed. The minor visual impact is therefore necessary to ensure the structural stability and safety of the verandah.

In summary, the proposed works will have a positive impact on the Elim preserving its heritage values, whilst improving the structural stability of the place.



**Figure 9**  
John Collins, 'Richmond. Bethesda Hospital Nurses Home', 1973. |  
Source: State Library of Victoria

### **3.3.2 Alternative proposals**

This Section assesses the proposed works against Section 101(2)(a),(b),(d) and (f) and Section 101(3) of the Heritage Act 2017 – alternative proposals that were considered and reasons why these were dismissed.

- Do nothing and let the verandah continue to deteriorate. This was dismissed as the myriad of issues represent a serious threat to the ongoing stability of the verandah, and the heritage significance of the place. Disassembling and reconstructing the verandah is the best conservation outcome that will preserve the place's cultural values.

### **3.3.3 Management of detrimental impacts**

This section assesses the proposed works against Section 101(2)(f) of the Heritage Act 2017 – measures proposed to avoid, limit, or manage the detrimental impacts.

The proposed works are active conservation works that have been guided by the principles of the Burra Charter and will be carried out by specialist tradespeople. The works address areas of concern to improve structural stability and the overall condition of the place.

While not comprising original significant fabric, the verandah contributes to the significance of the place, its understanding and its interpretation. As such, the conservation works aim to preserve the place's cultural heritage values.

### 3.3.4 Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter

Since 2010 the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria and the Heritage Council Victoria have recognised *The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance* (the Burra Charter) as the document guiding best practice heritage management in Victoria. The following articles are relevant to the works proposed in this HIS and are discussed accordingly.

Article	Comments
<p><i>Article 2 - Conservation and management</i></p> <p><i>2.1 Places of cultural significance should be conserved.</i></p> <p><i>2.2 The aim of conservation is to retain the cultural significance of a place.</i></p> <p><i>2.3 Conservation is an integral part of good management of places of cultural significance.</i></p> <p><i>2.4 Places of cultural significance should be safeguarded and not put at risk or left in a vulnerable state.</i></p>	<p>Although the proposed works are not strictly conservation nature, through reconstruction of the verandah, the cultural significance of the place is retained. Likewise, the works are vital to safeguarding the building, and preventing further deterioration.</p>
<p><i>Article 3 - Cautious approach</i></p> <p><i>3.1 Conservation is based on a respect for the existing fabric, use, associations and meanings. It requires a cautious approach of changing as much as necessary but as little as possible.</i></p> <p><i>3.2 Changes to a place should not distort the physical or other evidence it provides, nor be based on conjecture.</i></p>	<p>The proposed works include replacing the elements which are most degraded. None of the changes will distort the physical evidence of the original building.</p>
<p><i>Article 5 - Values</i></p> <p><i>5.1 Conservation of a place should identify and take into consideration all aspects of cultural and natural significance without unwarranted emphasis on any one value at the expense of others.</i></p> <p><i>5.2 Relative degrees of cultural significance may lead to different conservation actions at a place.</i></p>	<p>The proposed works consider the architectural and historical significance equally. The works do not place emphasis on any one of the values at the expense of others.</p>
<p><i>Article 7 – Use</i></p> <p><i>7.1 Where the use of a place is of cultural significance it should be retained.</i></p> <p><i>7.2 A place should have a compatible use.</i></p>	<p>The proposed works will not alter the existing use of the place.</p>
<p><i>Article 14 – Conservation Process</i></p> <p><i>Conservation may, according to circumstance, include the processes of: retention or reintroduction of a use; retention of associations and meanings; maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, adaptation and interpretation; and will commonly include a combination of more than one of these. Conservation may also include retention of the contribution that related places and related objects make to the cultural significance of a place.</i></p>	<p>The proposed works include the retention of use, as well as the maintenance and reconstruction of non-original fabric.</p>
<p><i>Article 18 - Restoration and reconstruction</i></p> <p><i>Restoration and reconstruction should reveal culturally significant aspects of the place.</i></p>	<p>The reconstruction of the verandah will enhance the cultural significance of the place by restoring a key component of the building's façade.</p>

Article	Comments
<p><i>Article 19 – Restoration</i></p> <p><i>Restoration is appropriate only if there is sufficient evidence of an earlier state of the fabric.</i></p>	<p>The proposed works does not include restoration works.</p>
<p><i>Article 22 – New work</i></p> <p><i>22.1 New work such as additions or other changes to the place may be acceptable where it respects and does not distort or obscure the cultural significance of the place, or detract from its interpretation and appreciation.</i></p> <p><i>22.2 New work should be readily identifiable as such, but must respect and have minimal impact on the cultural significance of the place.</i></p>	<p>The proposed new work – the inclusion of a new downpipe – does not distort nor obscure the cultural significance of the place. The inclusion of this element does not result in the loss of original fabric. The new element is visually recessive and is important to the ongoing stability of the place.</p>

### 3.3.5 Principles for considering change to places on the Victorian Heritage Register

The Executive Director made and published a set of guiding principles under Section 19(1)(f) of the Heritage Act 2017 in December 2022 to inform statutory decision-making under Part 5 of the Act. The proposed works are consistent with these guidelines and discussed under each principle below.

#### *Principle 1. Understand why the place is significant*

As discussed in Section 2.4 of this HIS, the place is of:

- Architectural significance as rare example of a nineteenth century boom-style mansion in largely working class Richmond.
- Historical significance for the evidence that its imposing facade, elaborate interiors and fine garden setting provide of the opulent lifestyle of Richmond's (and Melbourne's) elite during the late Victorian era.

These values are identified in the place's interior and exterior fabric.

#### *Principle 2. A cautious approach*

The works outlined above are conservation in nature and respect the significant values of the place by following the conservation principles, processes and practices of the Burra Charter (refer to Section 3.3.5).

In accordance with the Burra Charter, the cautious approach of doing as much as necessary but as little as possible has been undertaken by:

- Limiting works to only those elements in need of restoration to safeguard the place's cultural values.
- Salvaging and re-using materials, where possible.
- Recasting the unsalvageable cast iron decorative elements for an authentic restoration of the verandah.
- Including waterproofing and additional rainwater goods into the design as a preventative conservation measure to prolong the place's lifespan.

#### *Principle 3. Protect significant settings and views*

The proposed works protect significant settings and views associated with the place as they aim to remediate the verandah, which is a principal component of the building's impressive facade that contributes to its garden setting.

#### *Principle 4. Respectful change and new built form*

The proposed works are respectful of the place and do not introduce any new built forms. The works:

- Embody the articles of the Burra Charter (refer to Section 3.3.4).
- Are conservation in nature and will improve the condition and appearance of the place.

#### *Principle 5. Provide for upkeep*

As discussed in Section 3.2, the works are necessary conservation and restoration works to enable continued and reasonable use of the place.

The proposed conservation and restoration works are necessary to improve the condition of the place and ensure its longevity. Without the conservation works, there is a serious threat to the ongoing stability of the verandah, and the heritage significance of the place.

## 4. Conclusion

The proposed works are necessary to address the ongoing degradation of the verandah.

The proposed works are confined to the dismantling and reconstruction of the non-original verandah. While the introduction of the new downpipe, and the increased height of the upper-level floor will have a minimal visual impact, these works are important to ensuring the ongoing longevity of Elim. The works will not have a negative impact on the heritage significance of the place and are in keeping with the policies established by the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter.

In summary, it is the find of this Heritage Impact Statement that the works will not have a detrimental impact on the cultural significance of the place. The works to Elim should be allowed proceed.

# Appendix A

