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CONSERVATION STRATEGY for the

Traill Fountain, Geelong Botanic Gardens **H2095 Eastern Park and Geelong Botanic Gardens [S2 Traill Fountain]**



Traill Fountain (April 2026)

This document forms part of a Heritage Permit Application to be made to Heritage Victoria for the conservation works to the Traill Fountain.

Date: 10 June 2026 (updated 22 July 2026)

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1.0 Introduction

Frontier Heritage has been commissioned by the City of Greater Geelong to assist with preparing a Conservation Strategy and establishing an appropriate method for dismantling the Traill Fountain, currently within the Geelong Botanic Gardens, and placing it in storage for a time during which the necessary restoration works can be documented and funding is sourced for its conservation and reconstruction.

The process undertaken in developing the strategy, and more specifically the dismantling procedure has included some limited historical research, a detailed inspection of the Traill Fountain and a review of previous reports about the fountains condition and recommended conservation works that have been prepared by others.

The requirements outlined by Heritage Victoria in relation to developing a conservation strategy and undertaking comprehensive restoration works is addressed in this report.



Figure 1 – partial map of Eastern Gardens with approximate extent of Geelong Botanic Gardens identified by red line.



Figure 2 – Geelong Botanic Gardens map with entrances identified and location of Traill Fountain

2.0 Background

In late 2025, representatives from the City of Greater Geelong met with Heritage Victoria officers to discuss the extant condition of the Traill fountain and the current lack of funding required for the extensive conservation works that are required.

Heritage Victoria officers were open to the consideration of staging the conservation works and possibly dismantling the fountain rather than installing temporary bracing which would leave it in a poor state and exposed to further dilapidation.

A formal pre-application response (P41849, dated 28 April 2026) was received. The advice given is summarised as follows:

- the Traill Fountain is in an advanced state of structural instability and will require significant works to achieve a safe condition,
- P J Yttrup & Associates undertook a preliminary structural condition assessment in 2023,
- Andrew Patience prepared a *Condition and Remedial Works Report* in December 2023 outlining a conservation approach for the restoration works required,
- concerns were expressed regarding the intended bracing of the fountain for the short term, as the underlying structure and foundation issues which are contributing to the deterioration will not be addressed,
- HV would be open to considering more substantive intervention, including dismantling where this would support a more meaningful and enduring conservation outcome,
- recommendation that Council develop a conservation strategy including appropriately budgeting for potential reconstruction, remediation, and long-term structural stabilisation works which could be undertaken in a staged process.

This report is being prepared in response to Heritage Victoria's advice. It will provide a conservation strategy consisting of a recommended staged program of works to be undertaken to immediately address safety concerns and arrest the current accelerated deterioration of the fountain followed by stages including identifying and documenting required conservations works and implementation when funding becomes available. This report will also provide details of the City of Geelong's commitment to funding the conservation works required, including intended time frames.

It is noted that the existing location of the Traill Fountain in the Geelong Botanic Gardens is problematic for a number of reasons. In consultation with staff from the Geelong Botanic Gardens and the City of Geelong representatives, an alternate location within the Geelong Botanic Gardens, for the fully conserved Traill Fountain, will be presented in this report.

3.0 Historical Reference

To address the current safety concerns and ongoing rapid deterioration of the heritage fabric, the first stage of the conservation strategy is to dismantle the fountain. In establishing an appropriate dismantling methodology, it has been important to understand the history of the fountain. Therefore, a brief summary of the important historical facts regarding the fountain are provided here.

In early 1904, the Market Square [Geelong] Improvement Committee were seeking funds to carry out the 'scheme of ornamentation proposed' and a cheque for £100 was received from a former Geelong resident, John Traill, for the purchase of a fountain.¹ The Traill fountain, designed by Mr E Murphy, City Road, South Melbourne² was constructed in Market Square later that year. John Traill was invited to 'perform the ceremony of turning the water on'.³

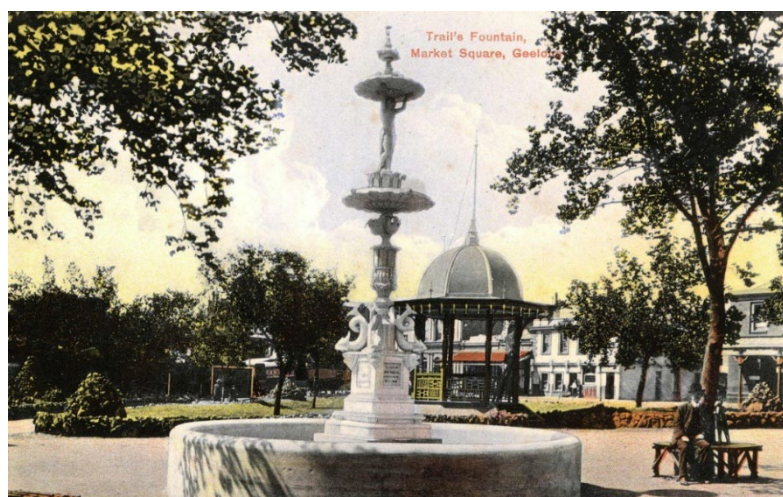


Figure 3 – 1906 Postcard showing the Traill Fountain in Market Square, Geelong (SLV H96.90/53)

The fountain clearly had problems from the start. By February 1905 it was reported that the fountain required a little improvement which could be done by 'raising the height of the pedestal and altering the play of the water' as it 'was somewhat defective'. The committee who arranged the construction of the fountain 'had found out that it was one thing to make a fountain and another thing to arrange a water display'.⁴ In early 1906, just 18 months after the fountain was constructed, the chairperson of the committee implored the Council to take steps to 'renovate the Traill fountain in the Market Square reserve'.⁵ It is not known what was actually undertaken but it can be assumed that the pedestal height was altered and perhaps some of the water features modified.

¹ Age, 11 June 1904, p12 and the Ballarat Star, 11 June 1904, p1

² Geelong Advertiser, 18 June 1904 p2.

³ Geelong Advertiser, 20 August 1904, p2

⁴ Geelong Advertiser, 8 February 1905, p2

⁵ Geelong Advertiser, 13 February 1906, p2

Early in 1912, plans commenced to relocate the Traill fountain from Market Square to Eastern Park (Geelong Botanic Gardens). By April, contractors were ready to undertake the removal of the Traill fountain which was described as a ‘rather delicate piece of casting’. Concerns about its dismantling included the fact that it was ‘traversed by a water pipe for its entire height’ yet ‘if the pipe [could] be severed about the middle of the fountain pillar, its removal in two pieces should be accomplished without difficulty’.⁶ It was reported that ‘there has been much speculation whether it will survive removal, but an experienced mason has been secured to carry out the work, and the top portion was removed without mishap’.⁷ By May 20th the Traill fountain had been re-erected ‘as good as ever’ on the south side of the fernery at the Geelong Botanic Gardens, and ‘beyond a little chipping, which will be filled with cement, [it has] sustained no damage and when painted afresh will look as good as new’.⁸

It is assumed that various works have been undertaken to the Traill fountain since its relocation to the Botanic Gardens 114 years ago, although details are not known. At some stage, the very top section of the fountain (square plate or bowl with moulded shaft above) was removed as can be seen comparing the existing fountain top and the image when the fountain was in Market Square in figures 4 and 5 below.

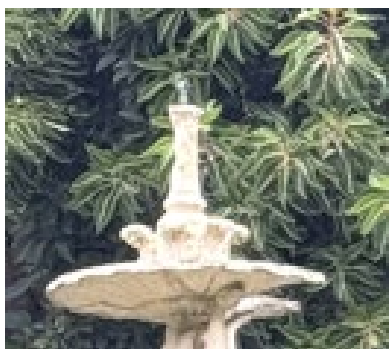


figure 4 – detail of top of Traill fountain



figure 5 – detail of top of Traill fountain from 1906 postcard (SLV H96.90/53) – red arrow indicates current top of the fountain, section above is missing.

4.0 Inspection findings

A detailed inspection of the Traill Fountain was undertaken on Wednesday 15th April 2026 from the vantage of an 11m boom lift. The precarious condition of the fountain was clearly evident as a slight touch of the top of the fountain caused the whole shaft to move.

The purpose of the inspection was not to detail the condition of the fountain (that has been undertaken previously by P J Yttrup & Associates and Andrew Patience in December 2023), but to understand the construction and ascertain feasible locations for separating the fountain into sections for dismantling and storage.

⁶ *Geelong Advertiser*, 26 May 1912, p2

⁷ *Geelong Advertiser*, 10 April 1912, p2

⁸ *Geelong Advertiser*, 20 May 1912, p2

The fabrication (or perhaps previous dismantling points) of the two main dishes of the fountain can be clearly seen on the top of each dish and in section of the smaller dish where a piece has fallen off.



*figure 6 – smaller dish of fountain (2026)
note the circle line of infill cement*



*figure 7 – larger dish of the fountain (2026)
note the similar circle of infill cement*



*figure 8 – smaller dish section (2026)
note the infill cement*

Below the larger (lower) dish are the birds sitting atop a ring of acanthus leaves below which is the ornate fluted urn. The birds are in poor condition but are protected by the dish above. The base of the urn sits on a wider decorative moulding below which is a simple circular ring. Given the simple moulding of the circular ring, it is potentially a logical point at which to cut through the shaft for the dismantling.



figure 9 – elaborate fluted urn with acanthus leaves and birds above (2026)



figure 10 – detail of one of the birds with the beak missing but the water pipe extant (2026)

The next section below the urn widens out with a fish on each corner of the plinth below. The tails of the fish are curled around and fan out at the top like a trumpet. The shaft on which the fish lean appears to be solid.



figure 11 – trumpet tailed fish on each corner of pedestal (2026)

The base of the fountain consists of two main sections of pedestal. The upper pedestal on which the fish sit consists of 4 pressed cement panels (approx. 13mm thick) partially held together by the decorative corner mouldings below the fish. Each face of the pedestal has an inset panel with the front panel displaying black lettering stating ‘The

gift of John Traill Esq. A citizen of Geelong 1855 – 1888'. This hollow square section of the pedestal sits on a wider, curved mouldings solid base.

The lower of the two sections of pedestal is an unadorned square section, 900mm high constructed of rendered brickwork. It is probable that this base was newly constructed in the gardens when the fountain was relocated from Market Square, rather than the original base having been moved. Similarly, the walls of the surrounding pond are of the same construction and although it appears to be visually similar to the pond when the fountain was in Market Square, it is more likely that a new pond was constructed when the fountain was moved.



figure 12 – lower rendered brickwork section of pedestal and pond wall (2026)

5.0 Proposed New Site for the fountain within Geelong Botanic Gardens

In the process of preparing this Conservation Strategy and from discussions with Geelong Botanic Gardens staff, it is clear that the existing location of the Traill Fountain within the Botanic Gardens is problematic for various reasons.

Not only is access to the fountain for maintenance and works difficult, as noted in the previous section, but the surrounding landscape conditions are likely to be a significant contributing factor in the deteriorated structural condition of the fountain. The fountain pond and footings are structurally unsound which may be partially due to nearby large tree roots. Leaves and garden debris within the fountain pond has been an ongoing issue.

The growth of a number of large trees and bushes in the near vicinity of the fountain has changed the setting substantially. Views to the fountain from a distance from which to appreciate the full extent of the garden feature are no longer possible and to some extent, the fountain now appears to be hidden by the close proximity of the mature landscape.

The opportunity to review the location of the fountain within the Botanic Gardens has arisen due to the restoration of the fountain requiring it to be dismantled and reconstructed.

In consultation with Geelong Botanic Garden staff and Geelong City Council representatives, a new location within the gardens for the restored Traill Fountain is proposed (refer to figures 13 & 14 below).

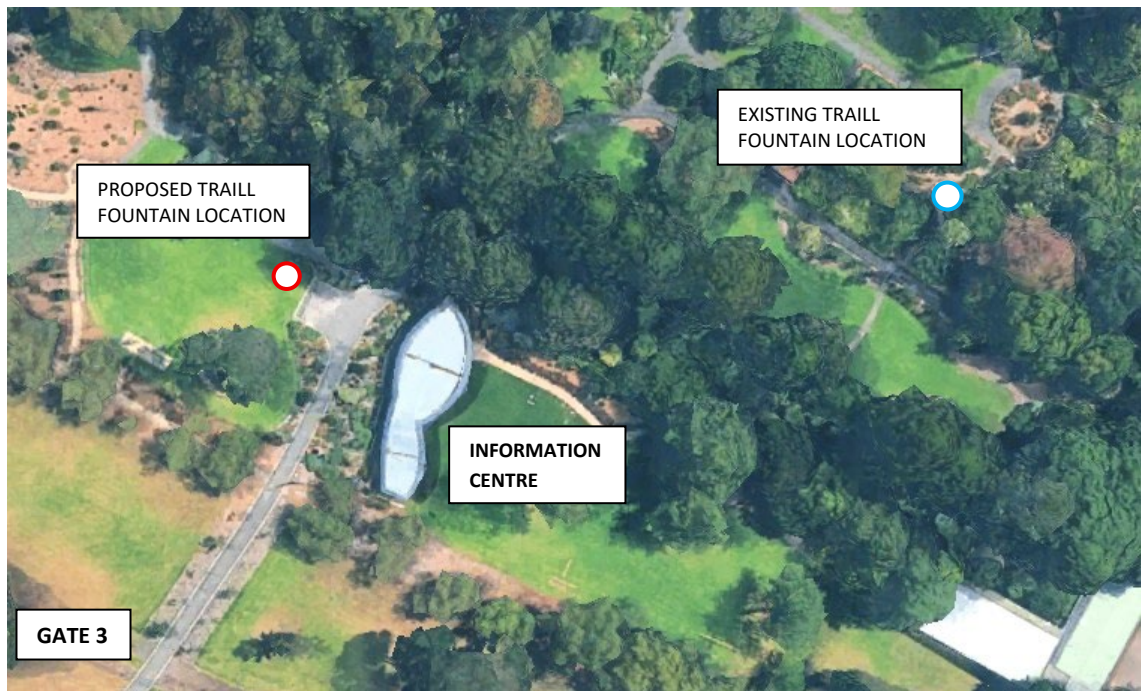


figure 13 – partial aerial map of the Botanic Gardens with the existing location of the Traill Fountain identified by the white circle with blue border and the proposed new location of the Traill Fountain identified by the white circle with the red border (adjacent to the Gate 3 carpark and opposite the information centre)



figure 14 – view from the west of the proposed new location (white circle with red border) for the Traill Fountain when reinstated following restoration works. Note carpark and information centre behind the proposed new location for the Traill Fountain.

The proposed new location for the Traill Fountain is considered appropriate from a heritage perspective as it will provide for ease of access to the fountain for ongoing care and maintenance and it will present the fountain in a more appropriate setting with clear vistas and views to the structure – principally from the arrival point of Gate 3 and path leading into the gardens from the Gate 3 carpark, as well as from the information centre

and the pathways from the gardens to the north. It is also noted that the Traill Fountain is not on its original site; the fountain was moved in 1912 from Market Square, Geelong to the current location in the Botanic Gardens.

Both power and water are available at the proposed new site and access for future maintenance etc. is straightforward utilising Gate 3 from the exterior and nearby internal paths from the works area.

6.0 Staged Restoration Program

The Geelong City Council is committed to a 5 year program of staged actions with the ultimate objective of reinstating a functional, restored Traill Fountain in a new location within the Geelong Botanic Gardens.

The existing condition of the fountain is poor, and there will need to be substantial works undertaken to restore the structure and to render it operable and structurally sound. The cost of these works is not known. There are assessments and structural designs to be undertaken before the cost can be established. Geelong City Council is committed to funding the immediate protection (dismantling and temporary storage) of the fountain now. The subsequent stages of the project will be progressively funded over the 5 year time frame.

STAGE 1 (2026 : current funding)

- Preparation of a Conservation Strategy for the restoration of the Traill fountain,
- Submit a Heritage Permit application to Heritage Victoria for the staged actions as identified in this Conservation Strategy document,
- Dismantle the Traill Fountain and place it in temporary storage (as per Stage 1 procedure described in this Conservation Strategy),
- Manage public expectations (detailed signage on site (existing and proposed) explaining process and timing, communications with Traill descendants (if contactable), CoGG to develop and implement a public communications plan which may include social media.)

STAGE 2 (2027 : future funding)

- Commission Conservation Architect, Structural and possibly Hydraulics Engineer to review previous reports, inspect stored Traill Fountain to determine scope of works, methodology and document for permit approvals and obtaining quotes.

STAGE 3 (2028 : future funding)

- Source funding
- Depending on the availability of funding, consider undertaking the conservation works in two separate packages with the construction of the pond and base of plinth in the new location as the first package.

STAGE 4 (2029/30 : future funding)

- Commission suitably qualified contractor to undertake the remedial structural repairs and documented conservation works to the sections of the fountain.

- Reinstall conserved sections of the fountain along with any additional structural elements and plumbing mechanism onto the plinth in the pond at the new location as prepared in Stage 3.

It is anticipated that STAGE 1 of this Traill Fountain Restoration Project will include Heritage Victoria's approval of this Conservation Strategy, which not only involved full restoration of the fountain, but a proposed new site within the Geelong Botanic Gardens and the dismantling and temporary storage as detailed in Appendix A. The subsequent Stages are likely to be the subject of future submissions of documentation to Heritage Victoria for approval prior to proceeding further.

APPENDIX A

STAGE 1 – TRAILL FOUNTAIN RESTORATION PROJECT

This appendices provides the details in relation to site access, scope and methodology for the dismantling of the fountain and placing it in a temporary storage facility.

Site Access Limitations

Access to the Traill Fountain is difficult due to pathway widths, position of garden bed edgings and overhanging branches. Also, there is no turn around circles along the access paths so reversing vehicles and equipment in to the fountain will be necessary.



Access to Traill Fountain map (Geelong Botanic Gardens 2026)

Geelong Botanic Gardens staff have provided the above map indicating access points to the fountain and recommended location for crane set up during the dismantling procedure.

Yellow path access

The yellow dashed line indicates pathway access to the fountain from the depot entrance. This may be used for machinery access (crane, boom lift etc) or vehicle (maximum size is a ute).

For access on this path, machinery and vehicles would need to be reversed from the depot entrance to the fountain with the smallest part of the pathway being 2.5m wide between the old Customs House and the garden edging. The height clearance along this path is approximately 3.5m.



2.5m min width of path between old Customs House and the garden edging (Geelong Botanic Gardens 2026)

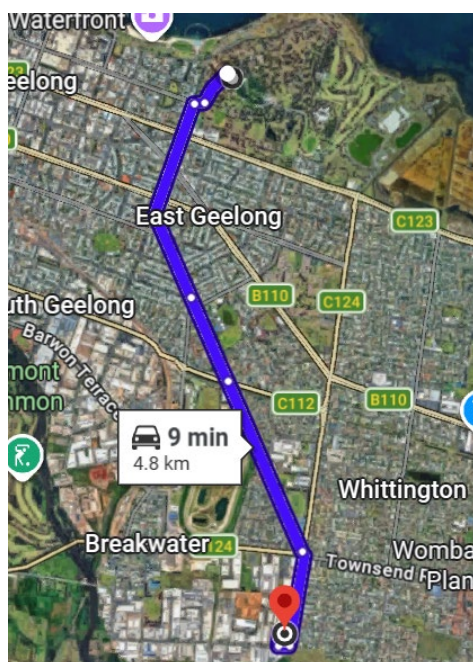
Red path access

The red dashed line indicates road and pathway access to the fountain from Gate 3 off Eastern Park Circuit. Gate 3 entrance is wide enough for truck access however there is no turn around circle and therefore a truck would need to reverse in to the Gate 3 carpark location from Gate 3 entrance.

From Gate 3 carpark there is pathway access to the Traill fountain. This pathway is 2.2m wide and there are tight corners to be navigated. The only vehicle access along this pathway is via ATV vehicles.

Temporary Storage Facility

The temporary storage for the dismantled sections of the Traill Fountain is within the City of Geelong storage facility located at 320 Boundary Road, Breakwater.



Google Map showing travel path and distance from Geelong Botanic Gardens to the City of Geelong depot at 320 Boundary Rd, Breakwater.



View of interior of shed for temporary storage of Traill fountain sections and salvaged bricks on pallets. Note this is not a recent photograph and there is less items currently stored in the shed.

The salvaged bricks (from pond wall and base of plinth) and the individual sections of the dismantled pressed cement fountain will be placed in storage in this building on pallets.

Access to the individual sections of the fountain will be required while in storage. A heritage Architect, Structural Engineer and possibly other experts (Hydraulics Engineer) will need access to inspect the sections when the structural and restoration works are established and documented.

The precise location within the storage facility for the Traill fountain sections has not been determined due to some changes to existing storage arrangements within the

facility and the installation of some racking occurring over the next few months. However, it is proposed that the pallets will be located within the facility such that access around each side of each pallet will be provided to facilitate future detailed inspection as required for the assessment and documentation phases. The pallets will be appropriately screened for protection within the facility.

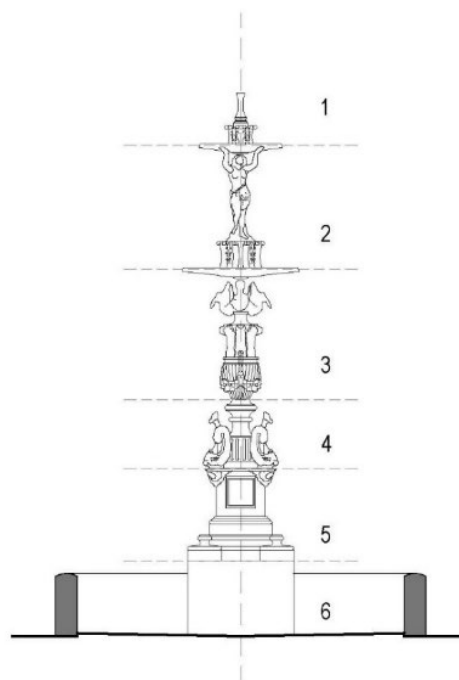
Details of the storage arrangements could be addressed through a permit condition.

Dismantling in Sections

Key considerations that have informed this proposed dismantling into sections of the Traill fountain have been :

- the water pipe extends the full length of the fountain and there is no way of avoiding cutting through the water pipe,
- Historically it seems that the fountain may have been dismantled in two pieces when moved from Market Square to Botanic Gardens, however, the current condition and access constraints suggest smaller sections advisable,
- the fragile condition means that smaller sections will be more manageable
- location of section cuts so that reconstruction without interfering with decorative elements will be possible,
- maintaining height of sections suitable for crate and transport
- evidence of infill cement to dishes suggesting previous sectioning – reuse these locations

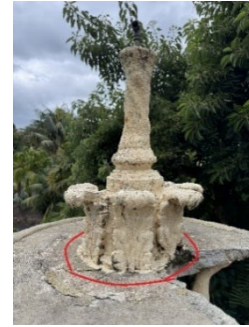
The Traill fountain will therefore be dismantled by cutting the shaft into sections at discrete points around mouldings and placed onto individual pallets and transported to the temporary storage facility.



Proposed cut lines and resultant sections for dismantling the fountain

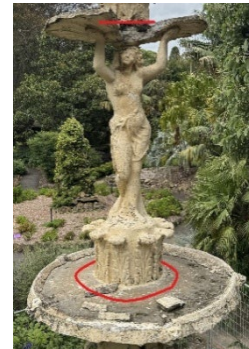
Section 1

Top piece of the fountain. Chip out the ring of infill cement in the top of the dish and cut through the shaft below the dish top line.



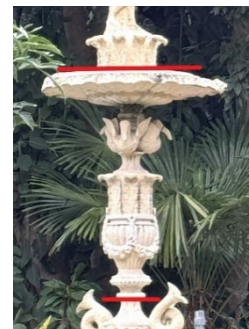
Section 2

This section includes the top dish and ends at the top of the bigger dish below. Follow same methodology as for section 1 at the dish. This section will consist of the smaller dish, the female figure and the acanthus leaf base the figure is standing on. The height of this section is approximately 1200mm.



Section 3

This section includes the large dish at the top protecting the birds below. The cut line will be below the fluted urn under one of the simple band mouldings.



Section 4

A shorter section that is anticipated to be solid and heavy. Fish tails will be vulnerable and will need care. Again the cut will be at a junction below a simple moulding to enable a smooth connection when reconstructed.



Section 5

The last section of decorative mouldings. Will likely need to be braced as the part that is the moulded upper section of the pedestal is hollow and constructed of four plates joining (overlapped) on the corners.



Section 6

This section of the pedestal is rendered brickwork. It is unadorned and may have been constructed as a new plinth when the fountain was relocated. This section could be dismantled and the bricks retained.



The pond walls and base are like Section 6 thought to be a new construction at the time the fountain was relocated to the current site in 1912. The assumed rendered brick walls (it may be concrete) should be demolished and the bricks retained for use when the fountain is reinstated following conservation works.

Dismantling Methodology

The dismantling procedure will be undertaken by a suitably experienced contractor with the Heritage Architect and Geelong Botanic Gardens staff on site during the dismantling works.

On the day of the dismantling, a City of Geelong staff member is to be on site at the temporary storage facility (320 Boundary Rd, Breakwater) to receive the pallets of salvaged bricks and sections of fountain as they are delivered by the contractor on the back of a ute. A forklift will be required to receive the pallets and position them appropriately within the storage shed.

Prior to the contractor commencing on site, Botanic Gardens staff are to disconnect the services (water and power) and remove the pump and associated equipment.

The Contractors procedure will be as follows:

- a) undertake inductions and confirm site access with Botanic Gardens Staff prior to and on the day of dismantling,
- b) dismantle the pond wall (by hand) and stack salvaged bricks on a pallet on the back of a ute for transportation to the temporary storage space,
- c) deliver scaffold to site by ute, erect scaffold with 3 deck levels around fountain,
- d) deliver small crane truck to site and set up,
- e) confirm (with Heritage Architect) cutting locations and prepare for cutting,
- f) assemble tools necessary for cutting – angle grinder, saber saw and concrete saw,
- g) Cut Section 1. Prepare to remove by wrapping in blankets and fitting soft slings. Remove by crane and lower onto a pallet on the back of a ute. Remove sling, strap and secure Section 1 to the pallet for transport and handling. Transport to

the temporary storage depot (320 Boundary Rd Breakwater) to be received by City of Geelong staff via a forklift for relocating the pallet into the shed.

- h) Section 2 will follow the same procedure noted for Section 1 (g) above, with an additional step of installing timber bracing around the cut section before being fitted in soft sling for lifting and/or following placement onto the pallet.
- i) Section 3 will follow the same procedure noted for Section 1 (g) above, with an additional step of installing timber bracing around the cut section once it has been placed onto the pallet.
- j) Section 4 will follow the same procedure noted for Section 1 (g) above, with an additional step of installing timber bracing around the cut section before being fitted in soft sling for lifting and/or following placement onto the pallet.
- k) Section 5 is assumed to be hollow. Prior to cutting install timber bracing around the section to ensure it remains in one piece. Then follow same procedure noted for Section 1 in g) above.
- l) Section 6 is the rendered brickwork base to the plinth. it is to be dismantled by hand and the salvaged bricks placed on a pallet, secured and transported to the temporary storage facility.
- m) Demolish remnant base of pond using mini excavator with breaker. Remove and dispose of all waste material.
- n) Botanic Garden staff to regenerate the vacated site over the following weeks.