

Heritage Impact Statement

1. Project details

1.1. Heritage Impact Statement for:

Ripponlea Railway Station Complex, 11-13 Glen Eira Road, Ripponlea.

1.2. Victorian Heritage Register Number:

H1588

1.3. This Heritage Impact Statement forms part of a permit application for:

The project to upgrade the playground within the Burnett Gray Gardens (the Gardens) on the west side of the Ripponlea Railway Station adjacent to Morres Street.

The playground is located at the northern end of the Gardens and currently comprises a junior multi-play unit and two-seat swing set. The existing equipment is outdated, provides limited play opportunities and primarily caters to preschool-aged children.

The proposed works seek to sensitively upgrade the playgrounds to provide a safe, accessible and engaging recreational space for a broader range of children while respecting and retaining the heritage significance and landscape character of the Gardens.

Please refer to Attachment 1, which contains images of current playground and Gardens.

1.4. Heritage Victoria advice:

Jessica Hood provided the following advice:

Burnett Grey Gardens forms a key part of the cultural landscape setting of the station complex and is recognised for its maintained formal character and the use of exotic plantings. These plantings reflect late 19th and early 20th-century public garden design trends and contribute to the aesthetic and historical significance of the registered place. The garden's ongoing care suggests both community and heritage value, with the exotic plant palette and structure reinforcing the historical context of the site.

Given this significance, any changes within the garden, particularly those involving the path network, hedging, or layout, must be approached with caution. The established paths and hedges form part of the designed character and layout of the gardens and are considered significant elements unless evidence clearly demonstrates they are later additions or do not contribute to the original intent.

While there may be merit in selectively developing a more consolidated open lawn area for passive recreation, proposals to remove original paths and hedges or expand the play space, introducing arbors and feature planting to the war memorial may pose concerns from a heritage perspective. Similarly, proposals for surface artworks or interpretive elements should be subject to further development and heritage assessment to ensure they do not compromise or detract the integrity of the place.

At this stage it is considered that further consideration of the heritage significance of the Burnett Grey Gardens as part of the Ripponlea Railway Station needs to be undertaken to inform the proposed changes. The proposed works should acknowledge and respect the

heritage values of the setting, including the original garden layout, path network, and significant plantings. You are encouraged to seek further advice from your heritage advisor to ensure that any future design revisions are appropriately informed by the heritage significance of the place.

1.5. Address and location description:

The playground is the west side of the Ripponlea Railway Station in the north section of the Gardens adjacent to Morres Street.

1.6. Prepared by:

David Helms, Heritage Advisor, City of Port Phillip: david.helms@portphillip.vic.gov.au.

1.7. Prepared for:

Courtney Gaze, Project Manager – Open Space Projects, Project Delivery.

1.8. Date:

10 September 2026.

2. Significance of the place or object

2.1. The cultural heritage significance of the place

History and context

The railway to Brighton and later extended to Sandringham was opened as far as North Brighton in 1859. The Melbourne and Hobson's Bay United Railway Co. purchased the line in September 1865.

The railway was sold to the Government in July 1878. In 1881 the Minister of Railway requested an inspection of the condition of bridges along the railway in anticipation of the construction of a 'second line of way' between Windsor and Elsternwick. A contract for these works was subsequently let on 25 November 1882, to Sharp and Campbell.

The original railway included stations at Balaclava and Elsternwick, and it appears a station at 'Glen Eira Road' was proposed but did not eventuate at the time. As Ripponlea began to develop in the early twentieth century the decision was made in 1911 to provide the long-awaited station. The news of the station opening coincided with the October 1911 subdivisional sale of the Erindale and Quat Quatta estates surrounding the site of the station and naturally generated much interest, with the majority of the over 60 allotments offered sold. The new station was opened for passengers in May 1912, although the present station buildings were not completed until the following year.

It appears the Railways Department wished to develop the land on either side of the station for commercial purposes. However, in 1923 St Kilda Council obtained a lease for the land on the west side at a rental of £1 per year for 10 years (*Herald* 2 October 1923:13). With the support of the St Kilda Parks and Gardens Committee the land was 'beautified with gardens' originally known as the Ripponlea Reserve, later renamed as Burnett Gray Gardens in honour of Burnett Gray who was the South Ward Councillor for the City of St Kilda for many years, and MLA for five years from 1927 to 1932.

Figure 1 is an aerial photograph from 1942. While poor quality, it appears that the layout of the gardens was generally established by then, and many of the now mature trees (including most of the palms) appear to be in place. It also appears that some of the triangular corner garden beds at the intersection of paths were established by then.

Meanwhile, the Railways Department resisted calls for land on the eastern side of the station to become gardens, and around c.1925 built a shop on part of the land, despite protests by local traders. Apart from the shop, the east side appears to be otherwise vacant in 1942 with no visible trees or landscaping.

The Gardens experienced little change in the second half of the twentieth century. Recent changes include:

- The establishment of the playground at the north end c.2002
- The Victorian Jewish War Memorial, which was added in the southwest corner in 2015.
- The removal of one of the original Butia or Jelly palm on the north side of the central pathway adjacent to Morres Street (see section 2.2).

Additional trees have been planted in recent years.



Figure 1: 1942 aerial. (Source: City of Port Phillip Intramaps)

Significance

Attachment 2 contains the VHR statement of significance for the Ripponlea Railway Station Complex.

The Gardens contribute to the State-level architectural (representative), aesthetic, social and historical significance of the Ripponlea Railway Station. The contributory elements within the Gardens are:

- The mature trees, which include Canary Island palms (*Phoenix canariensis*), Butia palms (*Butia capitata*) and two Pittosporums (See note below in section 2.2).
- The Golden privet hedges on either side of the east-west path between the station building and Morres Street.
- Built elements including the path network, and the two stone seats facing Glen Eira Road.

Although not specified in the statement of significance, it is understood that views of the principal facades of the railway station within the 'picturesque' setting provided by the Gardens also contribute to the significance of the place.

2.2. Existing condition of the place

Overall, the condition of the Gardens is good, and it has good integrity. As part of the project, Council commissioned an aboricultural assessment of all the trees within the Gardens. This assessment found that most of the mature trees were in fair condition with long useful life expectancy.

The aboricultural assessment has identified a potential error with one of the trees identified in the VHR extent of registration (see Figure 2). Tree 12 on the VHR extent of registration is situated at the north end of the Gardens adjacent to the current playground. The extent of registration identifies this as a *Pittosporum crassifolium* or Karo. The aboricultural report, however, identifies three small trees in this location: Two Pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*) and a Golden Rain tree (*Koelruteria paniculata*).

The other features (paths, seats) are in good condition.

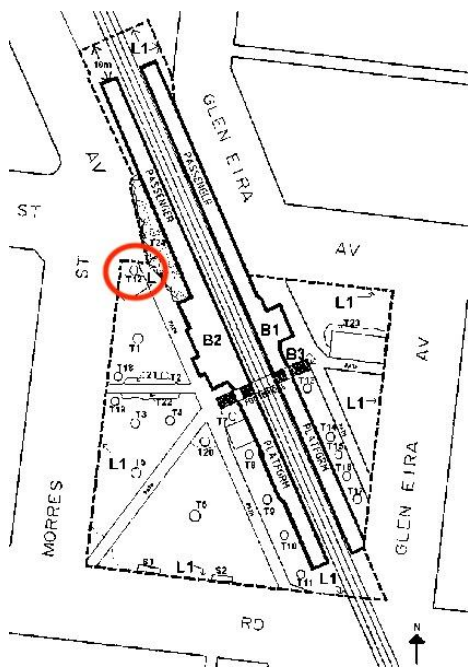


Figure 2: Tree 12, which may have been mis-identified (or replaced?) is circled in red.

2.3. Constraints and opportunities resulting from the significance of the place

The relatively high degree of intactness of the Gardens contributes to the setting and significance of the Ripponlea Railway Station complex. This includes the path layout and the predominant landscape character created by the mature trees (especially the dominant Canary Island palms) set within lawns and the Golden privet hedge.

Any new development within the Garden must avoid adversely impacting these contributory features. This includes direct impacts (removal of or change to elements) or indirect impacts (such as intrusion into tree protection zones that could affect the health and viability of the tree). Impacts upon less tangible elements such as views to the station must also be considered.

Against this, the existing playground has introduced a degree of change into the northern section of the Gardens and provides an opportunity for new development.

3. Proposal

3.1. The proposed works

The proposed works include:

Elements proposed to be removed (see Figure 3):

- All existing play equipment, the surrounding mulch, and the adjoining fence.
- Low-level shrubs surrounding and underneath the trees at the end of the gardens, and the non-significant hedge adjacent to the fence parallel to Morres Street.
- Two small sections of lawn: one of which will become part of the extended playground and seating area. This will be replaced in part by timber mulch and concrete paving as described below, and other to be replaced by a new garden bed adjacent to Morres Street.

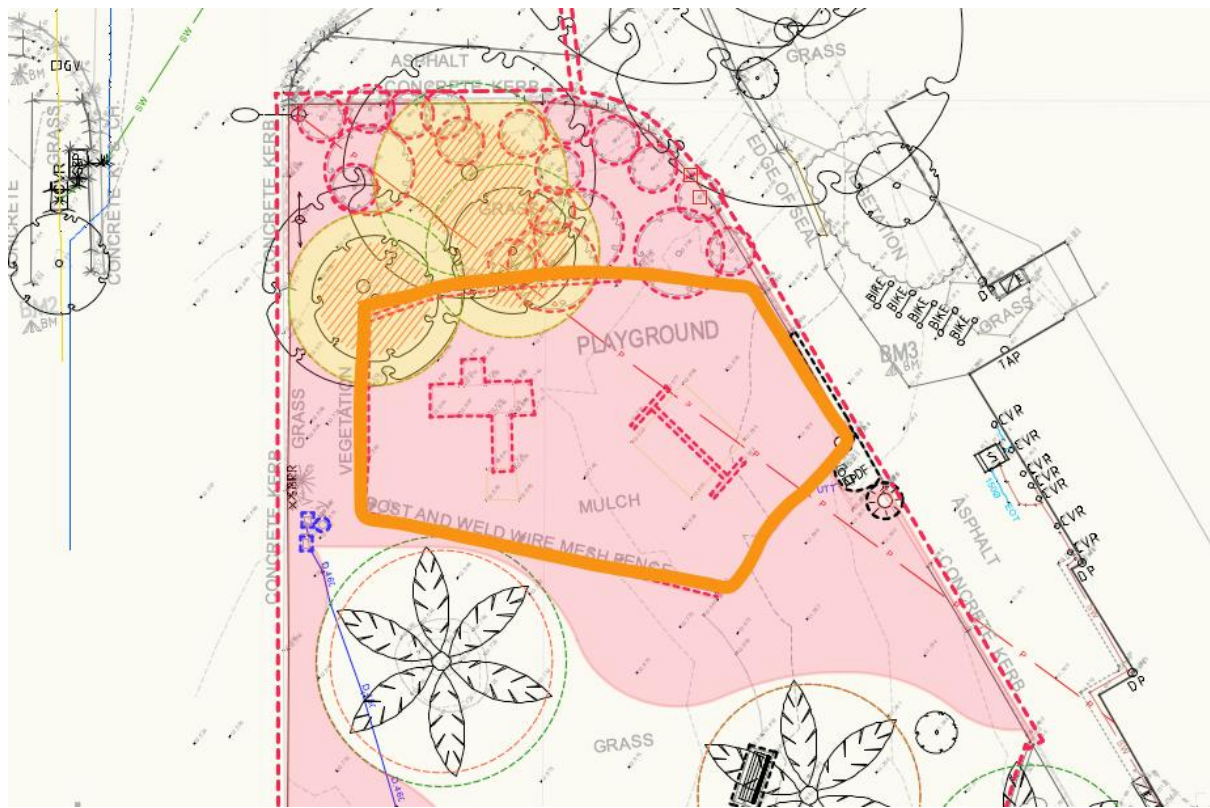


Figure 3: Elements proposed to be removed. The orange outline indicates the current boundary of the playground. The area shaded pink below this line identifies the area of lawn proposed to be removed. (Source: Pollen Studio PL Landscape Documentation Package, Issue 2 10.07.2026 with annotation)

Proposed new elements (see Figure 4)

- New play equipment surrounded by a variety of new surface finishes including rubber 'softfall' in three different colours and timber mulch, and concrete paving in two different colours around the seating area. The southern border of the play area will be defined by a raised concrete edge.
- A shade sail over the western section of the play area adjacent to Morres Street.
- A new fence along the Morres Street boundary extending from the central pathway (following the line of the angled garden bed) and wrapping around the northern boundary

of the Gardens. This will have timber posts with a metal balustrade in a similar design to the current fence.

- Other landscaping and play elements including natural rock borders and habitat logs. These will be contained within the playground and seating area, and under the trees at north end
- A new garden bed along the Morres Street boundary between the playground and the central pathway, which will be planted with native shrubs and trees.



Figure 4: Proposed new elements. The purple outline indicates the new playground (the red arrow identifies the location of the shade sail), the blue outline is nature play area, the brown outline is the paved seating area, and the new garden beds are outlined in green. (Source: Pollen Studio PL Landscape Documentation Package, Issue 2 10.07.2026 with annotations)

All mature trees, the Golden privet hedge, the original paths, and the existing angled garden beds at the corners of the paths will be retained.

3.2. Options considered

The current playground is the only one within Ripponlea, and there is no other public open space in the local area where a new playground could be located. Due to budget and other constraints, relocating the playground to the east side of the station was not feasible.

Simply put, there is no other suitable location for a playground within the Ripponlea neighbourhood.

An initial concept design was submitted to Heritage Victoria as a pre-application and the submitted design has been modified in response to the feedback provided.

4. Information to support an assessment against sections 101(2) and 101(3) of the *Heritage Act 2017*

4.1. Impact of the proposal on the cultural heritage significance of the place

The proposed works will have some impacts upon the intactness of the Gardens.

The key impacts will be:

- The replacement of sections of lawn with the extended playground and seating area, and the proposed new garden bed adjacent to Morres Street, which will impact upon the intactness of the original layout.
- Visual impacts of the new play equipment, seating and surface materials, which will impact upon the setting of the railway station.

In consultation with Heritage Victoria the following steps have been taken to minimise and mitigate potential impacts:

- Retaining, and avoiding changes to or impacts upon, all the significant features identified in the extent of registration (path network, trees, Golden privet hedge and original or early garden beds).
- The design and layout of the new playground was informed by an aboricultural report, which ensures that almost all new elements avoid the tree protection zones of the contributory trees. The exception is one section of the southern concrete border to the play area, which intrudes slightly into the TPZ for one of the mature Canary Island palms. This is not expected to have an adverse impact upon the health or viability of this tree.
- Amending the concept design to:
 - remove lawn mounding.
 - ensure artistic elements are contained within the playground boundary.
 - site the shade sail in an unobtrusive position that does not interfere with viewlines to the station building. This will be in the location of the current slide play structure, which is of a similar height.
 - maintain a visual and physical connection between the playground and the adjoining lawn.
 - Ensuring the new fence is an unobtrusive element by siting it along the boundary.
 - use elements such as the concrete edge treatment along the playground boundary that complements the existing concrete borders in the Gardens.

In conclusion, it is considered the proposed works will not result in adverse impacts upon the cultural heritage significance of the Ripponlea Railway Station. While there will be some impacts upon intactness the proposed approach will ensure that the overall *integrity* of the Gardens is maintained as there will be no impacts on the path network and other built features, significant trees, hedging or views to the station.

Importantly, there will be no impact upon the ability to understand the Gardens as a railway reserve developed soon after the railway station was opened, and the picturesque setting of the station buildings will be maintained.

It is also noted that much of the proposed work is readily reversible. The play equipment, and the 'sofffall' and mulch surface treatments could be removed and the lawn area reinstated, if required.

4.2. Provide reasons why the proposed works should be supported. Reasons must address the matters which the Executive Director is to consider under s101(2) including:

The existing playspace in the Gardens was installed c.2002. During Council's annual playground audit in December 2024, a range of compliance risks associated with the age of the infrastructure were identified, including head and finger entrapment hazards. While there is no statutory requirement to upgrade the playground, the project will support an important strategic objective by delivering a meaningful and improved playspace in Ripponlea's only public open space. The proposed design has been developed in response to Heritage Victoria and Community feedback.

The suburbs of Elwood and Ripponlea contain 22 open spaces, comprising 13% of the total neighbourhood, which is lower than the municipality average of 17%. This shortfall is more acute in Ripponlea where the Gardens is the only local open space serving the neighbourhood. Ripponlea and Elwood also contain a higher proportion of family households with children when compared to the rest of the municipality.

The proposed playground upgrade implements recommendations contained within the *City of Port Phillip Playground Strategy*, which identified Burnett Gray Gardens as a medium-priority site for improvement. The strategy recommends enhancing the character, usability and accessibility of the playground while retaining the heritage and green landscape character of the Gardens and considering opportunities for informal and nature-based play experiences.

Community engagement undertaken as part of the project identified several issues with the existing playground, including:

- Limited play opportunities for children beyond preschool age.
- Safety concerns associated with the proximity of play areas and open lawns to adjacent roads.
- Requests for additional shade to improve comfort and support year-round use.
- A desire for enhanced seating and gathering spaces for families and carers.

The proposed playground design responds to this feedback:

- The playground is fun, safe and accessible and meets practice standards for a broader age range of children.
- The Canary Island palms are an integral element of the Gardens landscape. However, they provide limited shade due to their height and form, and the new shade sail and landscaping along Morres Street is intended to provide additional shade for playground and park users.
- The additional hard-paved areas will improve accessibility to the playground and provide a suitable waiting area for parents and carers that allows easy surveillance of the playground.

5. Summary of impacts and conclusion

The proposed playground upgrade will have a minimal impact on the State-significant heritage values of Ripponlea Railway Station.

The works retain the historic garden layout, path network, hedging, open lawn areas and established landscape character that contribute to the significance of the place. The

playground remains in its existing location, with only a minor increase in footprint, and all new elements, including play equipment, fencing, seating and shade structures, are contemporary additions of a modest scale that remain visually subordinate to the broader heritage landscape. Additional planting and nature play elements are integrated within the existing garden setting and respect and complement the established landscape character.

Overall, the proposal balances the conservation of heritage values with the continued provision of safe, accessible and high-quality recreational opportunities for the community.

Attachment 1 – Place images



View of playground looking toward Morres Street showing existing drinking fountain (to be retained)



View looking toward Glen Eira Road showing mature palms and Golden privet hedge and the section of lawn that would be partially removed for the playground extension and new seating area.



Other views of the playground and the current fence. The proposed shade sail would be in the approximate location of the play structure with the slide.



This shows the 'hedge' beside the playground along Morres Street. This is not significant.



Detail showing the existing timber edge strips



View along Morres Street looking toward Glen Eira Road. The proposed new garden bed would be in this area. The existing triangular bed beside the path will be retained.



View looking toward the playground when standing outside the entrance to the railway station.

Attachment 2 – VHR statement of significance

What is significant?

The railway running to Brighton and later extended to Sandringham was opened as far as North Brighton in 1859. The line was reconstructed after the government acquired it from the Melbourne and Hobson Bay United Railway Co. in 1878. Ripponlea Railway Station, a much later station addition on the Sandringham Line was most probably constructed in 1913. It was with this date that the original drawings for the station are stamped. The Victorian Railways architect of the time was responsible for its design. The rail complex includes two timber station buildings, platforms, and a timber footbridge. Both station buildings are single storey structures with cantilevered platform verandahs. Cladding is weatherboard with roughcast render above door height and half timbered gables. Main roofs are diagonal fibre cement shingles with corrugated iron sheet verandahs faced with a ripple iron valance. Either side of the station is a public park, which is part of the Railway Reserve and titled the Burnett Grey Gardens. This is a maintained garden, which includes exotic plantings.

How is it significant?

The Ripponlea Railway Station Complex is of architectural, aesthetic, social and historical importance to the State of Victoria.

How is it significant?

The Ripponlea Railway Station Complex is of architectural importance as a rare and intact example of a timber Edwardian era railway station. Later changes have been minimal and the ticket offices retain their early fittings, including the pressed metal ceilings. Mentone Railway Station is the only other significant metropolitan station of this design. The Ripponlea complex is of aesthetic importance for its timber footbridge, track-side planting, and surrounding public park which contribute to the picturesque nature of the station. Ripponlea Railway Complex is of architectural importance as it demonstrates many of the characteristics common to the timber Edwardian era railway station buildings. These include the cantilever verandahs, the combination of weather board and roughcast render, dominant roof form with half timbered gable ends and the use of pressed metal on the interiors. The park either side of the station which includes exotic plantings such as Canary Island Palms, is important as one of only a few examples of Railway Reserves which have been used to provide gardens for the public. The other known example is at Footscray Railway Station.

The Ripponlea Railway Station Complex is of social and historical importance, for its ability to demonstrate the expansion of Melbourne and settlement of the inner suburbs after the turn of the century. The area around Glen Eira Road, east of the railway was mostly developed from around the First World War and this was the reason for construction of a station. The complex is important for its potential to yield information on the changing nature of railways, locomotive technology and public transport use in Victoria. The picturesque nature of Ripponlea Railway Station with its fine detailing and surrounding park is indicative of the romantic views held of rail travel in Victoria's early history.