

**Submission  
No 125**

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROTECTIONS WITHIN THE VICTORIAN  
PLANNING FRAMEWORK**

**Organisation:** Victorian Heritage Restoration Fund

**Date Received:** 31 January 2022



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## **Inquiry into the Protections within the Victorian Planning Framework Victorian Heritage Restoration Fund Submission**

The following submission responds to Item 4, Part f of the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry.

Victoria's local heritage places contribute to the identity and quality of our cities, suburbs, towns and regions. The social and broad community benefits of cultural heritage are well recognised (see UNESCO World Heritage Convention and Sustainable Development Policy 2015). Local Councils play a crucial role in heritage protection that goes beyond implementing the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*; they also provide support (information and advice) and financial incentives for property owners to care for their heritage places, which in turn helps to foster positive perceptions towards heritage in the community. In particular financial incentives for the care of heritage places provide a tangible and necessary demonstration that heritage is valued by local government and communities and contributes to greater support for heritage protection by property owners.

Victoria's Heritage Restoration Fund (VHRF), established in 2013, is a Committee of Management providing a program of restoration grants to local government Councils for heritage places in private or public ownership. It is one of the few grant giving bodies providing funding to private property owners of locally significant places, focused on increasing social amenity through streetscape improvement.

Over the last three years the VHRF has partnered with four Councils - Melbourne City Council, Yarra City Council, Ballarat City Council and Casey City Council to deliver their grants programs for restoration projects to places included in the Heritage Overlay. A total of \$720,00 in grants funding has been awarded to over 60 projects, contributing to over \$2.5 million worth of conservation works to heritage properties across Victoria. These projects have had positive economic and social impacts for communities, creating employment for skilled tradespeople, and contributing to local economies.

The funds are overseen by a Committee of Management comprising representatives of the four participating Councils, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), the Victorian Heritage Council Victoria, the MAV and the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). VHRF was formerly known as the Melbourne Heritage Restoration Fund, which has been successfully operating in Melbourne for the past 25 years, and was developed in 1988 and originally subsidised by the State Government.

While a number of individual Councils independently operate heritage funding programs, the VHRF, which currently administers the fund for a four Councils offers cost savings for administration (as these are shared across a number of Councils), transparency and consistency with decision making and independent assessment away from individual Council politics.

The ongoing sustainability of the VHRF however is dependent on annual budget bids made by the individual participating Councils each year. This leads to a hand to mouth existence that can sometimes impact on the positive momentum that is being gained by the fund each year. Programs such as the VHRF would benefit from support from State and/or Federal Government for ongoing administration costs and potentially project funding so they have more security going into each year and can continue providing the positive heritage stories in the local community that in turn help the property owners and community realise the benefits of heritage protection and regulation.



Using the current model, and with ongoing support for administration of the fund from State and/or Federal government, there is the potential to expand the reach of the VHRF, providing a consistent approach to heritage assistance funding across Victoria and forming a program that sits alongside the heritage planning controls into the future.



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VHRF Committee Chair

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