Recommendation of the Executive Director and assessment of cultural heritage significance under Division 3 of the Heritage Act 2017

Name: Festival Hall (also known as West Melbourne Stadium)
Location: 272-306 Dudley Street, West Melbourne
Provisional VHR Number: H2386
Provisional VHR Category: Registered Place
Hermes Number: 201568
Heritage Overlay: City of Melbourne HO1183 (Interim Controls expire 1 March 2019)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE HERITAGE COUNCIL:

• That Festival Hall be included as a Registered Place in the Victorian Heritage Register under the Heritage Act 2017 [Section 37(1)(a)].

This report contains names of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are now deceased.

STEVEN AVERY
Executive Director
Recommendation Date: 10 May 2018

This recommendation report has been issued by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria under s.37 of the Heritage Act 2017. It has not been considered or endorsed by the Heritage Council of Victoria.
EXTENT OF NOMINATION

Date that the nomination was accepted by the Executive Director

24 January 2018

Extent of nomination

Festival Hall, 300 Dudley St, West Melbourne (whole of cadastral parcel), including Dudley Street canopy.

Nomination extent diagram

Is the extent of nomination the same as the recommended extent?

Yes, however the property address has been altered to reflect the correct street number, 272-306 Dudley Street, West Melbourne.
RECOMMENDED REGISTRATION
All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 2386 encompassing all of Lot 1 on Title Plan 743078 and part of the road reserve for Dudley Street.

The extent of registration of Festival Hall in the Victorian Heritage Register affects the whole place shown on Diagram 2386 including the land and all of the building (including the exteriors and interiors).

RATIONALE FOR EXTENT
The extent of registration of Festival Hall comprises the cadastral block, which includes all of the building fabric as well as the canopy extending into the Dudley Street road reserve.
AERIAL PHOTO OF THE PLACE SHOWING PROPOSED REGISTRATION
BACKGROUND

WHAT IS AT THE PLACE?
Festival Hall is a large, unadorned, rectangular indoor sporting and entertainment stadium in West Melbourne. The building is constructed of a steel frame infilled with brick and precast concrete panels. Internally, the stadium comprises a central timber floor with a simple stage to the north, tiers of seating to the west and east, and a balcony to the south.

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THE PLACE?
Festival Hall, also known as West Melbourne Stadium, was constructed in 1955, replacing the 1913 West Melbourne Stadium. Festival Hall and its predecessor were the principal boxing and wrestling venues in Victoria from 1913 until at least the late 1970s. Festival Hall was a principal live music venue in Victoria from the late 1950s until the 1980s and hosted some of the most important national and international musicians of that era.

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT?
Festival Hall at 272-306 Dudley Street, West Melbourne, including the external form and fabric and the following internal features:

- The volume of the internal space
- The central timber floor
- The tiered seating to the west and east, including the early rows of steel-framed timber bleachers to the east and west and rows of theatre-like balcony seating to the south
- The location of the northern stage
- The balcony to the south
- Highly intact original amenity areas.

HOW IS IT SIGNIFICANT?
Festival Hall is of historical and social significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A
Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria’s cultural history.

Criterion G
Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT?
Festival Hall is significant at the State level for the following reasons:

Festival Hall is historically significant as Victoria’s principal purpose-built boxing and wrestling venue. Since the late nineteenth century, boxing has been a highly popular spectator sport in Australia attracting crowds in the thousands with many more watching televised matches since the 1960s. Festival Hall – and the 1913 West Melbourne Stadium that it replaced – was the home of Victorian boxing throughout much of the twentieth century, earning it the name “The House of Stoush”. Festival Hall hosted the boxing and gymnastics for the 1956 Olympic Games and was the venue for bouts of key national and international athletes including Lionel Rose, Johnny Famechon, Anthony Mundine, Lester Ellis and Barry Michaels. Festival Hall was the venue for the televised ‘TV Ringside’ (1966-75)
and ‘World Championship Wrestling’ (1964-78) and hosted Lionel Rose’s State Funeral in 2011. Festival Hall remains as the only purpose-built boxing and wrestling venue in Victoria. [Criterion A]

Festival Hall is historically significant as one of Victoria’s primary live music venues since its opening in 1955 and as the principal venue in Victoria for large-scale live music performances from the late 1950s until the 1980s. Festival Hall played a key role in the social evolution of Victorian society in the post-war period by exposing thousands of patrons to the “new wave” of big production live music. Festival Hall hosted some of the biggest national and international acts of the day including the Beatles, Buddy Holly, Neil Young, The Kinks and Frank Sinatra. [Criterion A]

Festival Hall is socially significant for its association with the live music industry in Victoria. The association between Festival Hall and the Victorian live music community is particularly strong due to the length of the association and the close relationship between the place, the live music community and the establishment and growth of the live music industry in the State. [Criterion G]

Festival Hall is socially significant for its association with the boxing and wrestling community in Victoria. As the site of Victoria’s principal boxing and wrestling venue since 1913, the association between Festival Hall and the boxing and wrestling communities in Victoria is particularly strong. While the use of the place for boxing and wrestling has declined since the late 1970s, it remains affectionately known as “The House of Stoush” and continues to be used by the wrestling community for events. The association between the place and the boxing community has more recently been celebrated with Festival Hall being the venue for champion boxer Lionel Rose’s State Funeral (in 2011). [Criterion G]
RECOMMENDATION REASONS

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDING INCLUSION IN THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER [s.40]
Following is the Executive Director’s assessment of the place against the tests set out in The Victorian Heritage Register Criteria and Thresholds Guidelines (2014).

CRITERION A
Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria’s cultural history.

STEP 1: A BASIC TEST FOR SATISFYING CRITERION A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The place/object has a CLEAR ASSOCIATION with an event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life in Victoria’s cultural history.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The association of the place/object to the event, phase, etc IS EVIDENT in the physical fabric of the place/object and/or in documentary resources or oral history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The EVENT, PHASE, etc is of HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE, having made a strong or influential contribution to Victoria.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Executive Director’s Response
Festival Hall and its predecessor on the site, the West Melbourne Stadium, were purpose-built sporting stadia for boxing and wrestling. When re-built in 1955, Festival Hall was specifically designed to be able to accommodate both sporting and other forms of entertainment and it has been used increasingly for live music performance since its construction. Festival Hall has clear and long-term associations with both the sporting (particularly boxing and wrestling) and music industries in Victoria.

The association of the place with both the sporting (in particular boxing and wrestling) and music industries is evident in the fabric of Festival Hall and is well documented in primary and secondary sources.

Both the sporting and music industries have played important cultural roles in Victoria and have made strong social, historical and economic contributions to the State. Festival Hall illustrates the popularity of sports such as boxing and wrestling throughout much of the twentieth century and the popularity of big production live music in the post-war period, coinciding with the construction of the replacement stadium in 1955. Festival Hall also has a specific association with the Olympic Games which were held in Melbourne in 1956.

Criterion A is likely to be satisfied.

STEP 2: A BASIC TEST FOR DETERMINING STATE LEVEL SIGNIFICANCE FOR CRITERION A

The place/object allows the clear association with the event, phase etc. of historical importance to be UNDERSTOOD BETTER THAN MOST OTHER PLACES OR OBJECTS IN VICTORIA WITH SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME ASSOCIATION.

Executive Director’s Response
Sporting venues are well represented in the Victorian Heritage Register with at least twenty-four places already included. The majority of these places have long-term use as well-patronised sporting venues and their history and function are clearly demonstrated in the fabric of the place. There also remains a number of places that were used for the 1956 Olympic Games and four of these are included in the Victorian Heritage Register, including two swimming pools purpose-built for the games.

Notwithstanding the existing level of representation of sporting venues in the Victorian Heritage Register, no sporting venue with a specific association with the history of boxing and wrestling in the
State is included. Since the late nineteenth century, boxing has been a highly popular spectator sport in Australia attracting crowds in the thousands with many more watching televised matches since the 1960s. The West Melbourne Stadium was specifically built as the principal boxing and wrestling venue in Victoria in 1913 and this building – and its 1955 replacement – were routinely and consistently used for this purpose until at least the mid-1970s, including for the bouts of key national and international athletes such as Lionel Rose, Johnny Famechon, Anthony Mundine, Lester Ellis and Barry Michaels.

Festival Hall remains as the only purpose-built boxing and wrestling venue in Victoria to physically demonstrate the long-term history of these sports in the State.

Entertainment venues are also well represented in the Victorian Heritage Register by a range of facilities including outdoor venues such as the Sidney Myer Music Bowl, theatres and cinemas. Designed specifically as a sporting venue, but with an entertainment function in mind, Festival Hall does not demonstrate the architectural, design or technical features of other purpose-built entertainment venues on the Victorian Heritage Register.

Notwithstanding this, Festival Hall was the principal venue in Victoria for large-scale live music performances from the late 1950s until the 1980s and it played a key role in the social evolution of Victorian society in the post-war period by exposing thousands of patrons to the “new wave” of big production live music.

Festival Hall was unrivalled for almost thirty years as the place for popular music performance, hosting the biggest national and international acts of the day including the Beatles, Buddy Holly, Neil Young, The Kinks and Frank Sinatra.

Criterion A is likely to be satisfied at the State level.

CRITERION B
Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria’s cultural history.

STEP 1: A BASIC TEST FOR SATISFYING CRITERION B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The place/object has a clear ASSOCIATION with an event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life of importance in Victoria’s cultural history.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plus</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The association of the place/object to the event, phase, etc IS EVIDENT in the physical fabric of the place/object and/or in documentary resources or oral history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plus</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The place/object is RARE OR UNCOMMON, being one of a small number of places/objects remaining that demonstrates the important event, phase etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The place/object is RARE OR UNCOMMON, containing unusual features of note that were not widely replicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The existence of the class of place/object that demonstrates the important event, phase etc is ENDANGERED to the point of rarity due to threats and pressures on such places/objects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Executive Director’s Response

Large numbers of venues remain in Victoria to demonstrate the sporting and entertainment industries in Victoria. These types of place are well represented in the Victorian Heritage Register and are not rare or uncommon.

Criterion B is **not** likely to be satisfied.
CRITERION C
Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria’s cultural history.

STEP 1: A BASIC TEST FOR SATISFYING CRITERION C

The:
- visible physical fabric; &/or
- documentary evidence; &/or
- oral history,

relating to the place/object indicates a likelihood that the place/object contains PHYSICAL EVIDENCE of historical interest that is NOT CURRENTLY VISIBLE OR UNDERSTOOD.

Plus
From what we know of the place/object, the physical evidence is likely to be of an INTEGRITY and/or CONDITION that it COULD YIELD INFORMATION through detailed investigation.

Executive Director’s Response
Festival Hall does not contain physical evidence of historical interest that is not currently visible or understood.
Criterion C is not likely to be satisfied.

CRITERION D
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

STEP 1: A BASIC TEST FOR SATISFYING CRITERION D

The place/object is one of a CLASS of places/objects that has a clear ASSOCIATION with an event, phase, period, process, function, movement, important person(s), custom or way of life in Victoria’s history.

Plus
The EVENT, PHASE, etc is of HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE, having made a strong or influential contribution to Victoria.

Plus
The principal characteristics of the class are EVIDENT in the physical fabric of the place/object.

Executive Director’s Response
Festival Hall and its predecessor on the site, the West Melbourne Stadium, were purpose-built sporting stadia for boxing and wrestling. When re-built in 1955, Festival Hall was specifically designed to be able to accommodate both sporting and other forms of entertainment and it has been used increasingly for live music performance since its construction. Festival Hall therefore falls within the general ‘class’ of both ‘sporting venues’ and ‘entertainment venues’.

Festival Hall has clear and long-term associations with both the sporting (particularly boxing and wrestling) and music industries in Victoria and both industries have played important cultural roles in Victoria and have made strong social, historical and economic contributions to the State.

The association of the place with both the sporting (in particular boxing and wrestling) and music industries is evident in the fabric of Festival Hall.
Criterion D is likely to be satisfied.
STEP 2: A BASIC TEST FOR DETERMINING STATE LEVEL SIGNIFICANCE FOR CRITERION D

The place/object is a **NOTABLE EXAMPLE** of the class in Victoria (refer to Reference Tool D).

_Executive Director’s Response_
Festival Hall is not considered to be a notable example of the class of ‘sporting venues’ or ‘entertainment venues’. As a large, simple, multi-purpose space, it does not display any particular features that could classify this building as a fine, influential or pivotal example of either a sporting venue or an entertainment venue, particularly when compared to other technically or artistically accomplished examples of places within these classes in Victoria already included in the Victorian Heritage Register.

Criterion D is **not** likely to be satisfied at the State level.

**CRITERION E**
Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

STEP 1: A BASIC TEST FOR SATISFYING CRITERION E

The **PHYSICAL FABRIC** of the place/object clearly exhibits particular aesthetic characteristics.

_Executive Director’s Response_
Festival Hall does not display any aesthetic characteristics.

Criterion E is **not** likely to be satisfied.

**CRITERION F**
Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

STEP 1: A BASIC TEST FOR SATISFYING CRITERION F

The place/object contains **PHYSICAL EVIDENCE** that clearly demonstrates creative or technical **ACHIEVEMENT** for the time in which it was created.

Plus

The physical evidence demonstrates a **HIGH DEGREE OF INTEGRITY**.

_Executive Director’s Response_
Festival Hall does not contain physical evidence that demonstrates any creative or technical achievement.

Reference made to concrete wall panels being ‘prestressed’ cannot be substantiated and is not evident in other documentation or demonstrated in the existing fabric. It cannot be assumed that the concrete panels used were prestressed. The use of prestressed concrete does not appear to have been recorded in any contemporary publications and does not appear to have received acclaim at the time of construction as an early example of ‘prestressed concrete’.

Criterion F is **not** likely to be satisfied.
CRITERION G
Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to indigenous people as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

STEP 1: A BASIC TEST FOR SATISFYING CRITERION G
Evidence exists of a DIRECT ASSOCIATION between the place/object and a PARTICULAR COMMUNITY OR CULTURAL GROUP.

(For the purpose of these guidelines, ‘COMMUNITY or CULTURAL GROUP’ is defined as a sizable group of persons who share a common and long-standing interest or identity).

Plus

The ASSOCIATION between the place/object and the community or cultural group is STRONG OR SPECIAL, as evidenced by the regular or long-term use of/engagement with the place/object or the enduring ceremonial, ritual, commemorative, spiritual or celebratory use of the place/object.

Executive Director’s Response
There has been a direct association between the place and the live music community in Victoria (including artists, promoters and patrons) since the mid-1950s. This association has been – and continues to be – particularly strong, as evidenced by the regular, long-term use of the place for live music.

There has been a direct association between the place and the boxing and wrestling communities since construction of the first West Melbourne Stadium in 1913. This association has been strong, as evidenced by the regular, long-term use of the place for boxing and wrestling events since 1913. It is understood that the place continues to be used for wrestling events but that it is no longer used for boxing.

Criterion G is likely to be satisfied.

STEP 2: A BASIC TEST FOR DETERMINING STATE LEVEL SIGNIFICANCE FOR CRITERION G
The place/object represents a PARTICULARLY STRONG EXAMPLE of the association between it and the community or cultural group by reason of its RELATIONSHIP TO IMPORTANT HISTORICAL EVENTS in Victoria and/or its ABILITY TO INTERPRET EXPERIENCES to the broader Victorian community.

Executive Director’s Response
Festival Hall has been one of Victoria’s primary live music venues since its reopening in 1955 and was unrivalled as the principal venue in Victoria for large-scale live music performances from the late 1950s until the 1980s. The association between Festival Hall and the Victorian live music community is particularly strong due to the length of the association and the relationship between the place, the community and the establishment and growth of the live music industry in the State.

As the site of Victoria’s principal boxing and wrestling venue since 1913, the association between Festival Hall and the boxing and wrestling communities in Victoria is particularly strong. While the use of the place for boxing and wrestling has declined since the late 1970s, it remains affectionately known as “The House of Stoush” and continues to be used by the wrestling community for events. The association between the place and the boxing community has more recently been celebrated with Festival Hall being the venue for champion boxer Lionel Rose’s State Funeral in 2011.

Criterion G is likely to be satisfied at the State level.
CRITERION H
Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria’s history.

STEP 1: A BASIC TEST FOR SATISFYING CRITERION H

The place/object has a **DIRECT ASSOCIATION** with a person or group of persons who have made a strong or influential **CONTRIBUTION** to the course of Victoria’s history.

Plus

The **ASSOCIATION** of the place/object to the person(s) is **EVIDENT** in the physical fabric of the place/object and/or in documentary resources and/or oral history.

Plus

The **ASSOCIATION**:
- directly relates to **ACHIEVEMENTS** of the person(s) at, or relating to, the place/object; or
- relates to an **ENDURING** and/or close **INTERACTION** between the person(s) and the place/object.

**Executive Director’s Response**

Festival Hall was acquired in 1915 by the company Stadiums Ltd, which was established by John Wren and Richard Lean in 1899 and registered in 1914. The place has a direct association with both these men. John Wren is a well-known Melbourne identity who made a strong contribution to the course of Victoria’s history, particularly as a sporting entrepreneur and businessman. This association is well documented in both primary and secondary sources.

Festival Hall remains in Wren family ownership and therefore has an enduring association with the family.

Criterion H is likely to be satisfied.

STEP 2: A BASIC TEST FOR DETERMINING STATE LEVEL SIGNIFICANCE FOR CRITERION H

The place/object allows the clear association with the person or group of persons to be **READILY APPRECIATED BETTER THAN MOST OTHER PLACES OR OBJECTS IN VICTORIA**.

**Executive Director’s Response**

Festival Hall is one of a number of places in Victoria with clear associations with John Wren. These include his family house, Studley House, Kew (VHR H0789) and Victoria Park, Abbotsford (VHR H0075), both of which have been assessed as having State significance. Wren died in 1953, two years before the present Festival Hall building was constructed and the present building does not allow the clear association with Wren to be readily appreciated better than most other places in Victoria.

Criterion H is **not** likely to be satisfied at the State level.
PROPOSED PERMIT POLICY

Preamble
The purpose of the Permit Policy is to assist when considering or making decisions regarding works to a registered place. It is recommended that any proposed works be discussed with an officer of Heritage Victoria prior to making a permit application. Discussing proposed works will assist in answering questions the owner may have and aid any decisions regarding works to the place.

The extent of registration of Festival Hall in the Victorian Heritage Register affects the whole place shown on Diagram 2386 including the land and all of the building (exteriors and interiors) as well as the canopy extending into the Dudley Street road reserve. Under the Heritage Act 2017 a person must not remove or demolish, damage or despoil, develop or alter or excavate, relocate or disturb the position of any part of a registered place or object without approval. It is acknowledged, however, that alterations and other works may be required to keep places and objects in good repair and adapt them for use into the future.

If a person wishes to undertake works or activities in relation to a registered place or registered object, they must apply to the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria for a permit. The purpose of a permit is to enable appropriate change to a place and to effectively manage adverse impacts on the cultural heritage significance of a place as a consequence of change. If an owner is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that Heritage Victoria be contacted.

Permits are required for anything which alters the place or object, unless a permit exemption is granted. Permit exemptions usually cover routine maintenance and upkeep issues faced by owners as well as minor works or works to the elements of the place or object that are not significant. They may include appropriate works that are specified in a conservation management plan. Permit exemptions can be granted at the time of registration (under s.38 of the Heritage Act) or after registration (under s.92 of the Heritage Act). It should be noted that the addition of new buildings to the registered place, as well as alterations to the interior and exterior of existing buildings requires a permit, unless a specific permit exemption is granted.

Conservation management plans
It is recommended that a Conservation Management Plan is developed to manage the place in a manner which respects its cultural heritage significance.

Aboriginal cultural heritage
If works are proposed which have the potential to disturb or have an impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage it is necessary to contact Aboriginal Victoria to ascertain any requirements under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006. If any Aboriginal cultural heritage is discovered or exposed at any time it is necessary to immediately contact Aboriginal Victoria to ascertain requirements under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.

Other approvals
Please be aware that approval from other authorities (such as local government) may be required to undertake works.

Archaeology
Any works that may affect historical archaeological features, deposits or artefacts at the place is likely to require a permit, permit exemption or consent. Advice should be sought from the Archaeology Team at Heritage Victoria.
Cultural heritage significance

Overview of significance
The cultural heritage significance of Festival Hall lies in its historical and social significance as Victoria’s principal boxing, wrestling and live music venue in the 20th century. The significance of the place is embodied in the external and internal form and fabric of the place.

a) All of the features listed here are of primary cultural heritage significance in the context of the place. A permit is required for most works or alterations. See Permit Exemptions section for specific permit exempt activities:
- Original external form and fabric.
- Volume of the internal space.
- Central timber floor.
- Tiered seating to the west and east, including the early rows of steel-framed timber bleachers to the east and west and rows of theatre-like balcony seating to the south.
- Location of the northern stage.
- Balcony to the south.
- Highly intact original amenity areas (being the bathroom to the south of the stage on the Rosslyn Street side of the building and the male bathroom to the left of the entrance doors to Dudley Street).

b) The features of no cultural heritage significance include the following:
- The fabric of the northern stage.
- Bar fit outs.
- Suspended ceiling.
- Partitions and fit outs in the areas under the tiered seating.
- Bathroom and amenity area fit outs not included in a) above.
- Non-original partitions and seating.
- The external and internal colour scheme.
- Lighting, audio-visual systems, security systems, air-conditioning systems and the like.
- Signage from 1980 onwards (internal and external).

Specific permit exemptions are provided for these items.

PROPOSED PERMIT EXEMPTIONS (UNDER SECTION 38 OF THE HERITAGE ACT)
It should be noted that Permit Exemptions can be granted at the time of registration (under s.38 of the Heritage Act). Permit Exemptions can also be applied for and granted after registration (under s.92 of the Heritage Act).

General Condition 1
All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.

General Condition 2
Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible.

General Condition 3
All works should ideally be informed by Conservation Management Plans prepared for the place. The Executive Director is not bound by any Conservation Management Plan, and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Conservation Management Plan.
General Condition 4
Nothing in this determination prevents the Heritage Council from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

General Condition 5
Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the relevant responsible authority, where applicable.

Specific Permit Exemptions

Building Exteriors
- Minor patching, repair and maintenance which replaces like with like.
- Replacement or upgrading of air conditioning systems, water and sewerage systems, security systems, ducting, wiring, antennae, aerials etc.
- Removal of redundant external services such as hot water services and wiring.
- Installation or repair of damp-proofing.
- Painting of previously painted surfaces.
- Replacement of roof sheeting on a like for like basis.
- Removal of signage from 1980 onwards.
- Removal or replacement of non-original doors and windows.
- Installation, removal or replacement of public address systems, detectors, alarms, emergency lights, exit signs, luminaires and the like.
- Installation of new fire hydrant services including sprinklers and fire doors.

Building Interiors
- Minor repairs and maintenance which replaces like with like.
- Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings.
- Installation, removal or replacement of carpets and/or flexible floor coverings.
- Installation, removal or replacement of curtains, curtain tracks, rods and blinds.
- Installation, removal or replacement of devices for wall or ceiling hangings.
- Demolition or removal of non-original or early stud/partition walls, suspended ceilings, wall linings or doors.
- Removal or replacement of non-original door and window furniture and glazing.
- Demolition or refurbishment of existing bar areas.
- Replacement of the northern stage with a new stage with proportions similar to the existing or original stage.
- Removal or replacement of existing signage.
- Installation of removable stud/partition walls in areas under the tiered seating provided that installation does not damage/remove original fabric.
- Refurbishment of bathrooms, toilets and kitchens including removal, installation or replacement of non-original sanitary fixtures and associated piping, mirrors, wall and floor coverings, excluding works to highly intact early bathrooms.
- Installation, removal or replacement of audio-visual equipment, security systems, air-conditioning systems and the like.
- Installation, removal or replacement of public address systems, detectors, alarms, emergency lights, exit signs, luminaires and the like.
- Installation of new fire hydrant services including sprinklers and fire doors.
RELEVANT INFORMATION

Local Government Authority: City of Melbourne
Heritage Overlay: HO1183 (Interim Control, expires 1 March 2019)
Heritage Overlay Controls: No controls triggered in the Schedule
Other Overlays: Design and Development Overlay (DDO29), Environmental Audit Overlay
Other Listings: No
Other Names: West Melbourne Stadium

HISTORY

Contextual History
Boxing and wrestling were popular spectator sports in Victoria from the 1880s and bouts were often held at various theatres and halls in Melbourne and in country towns. At the beginning of the twentieth century professional boxing was gaining popularity in Britain and the United States and in 1904 it was introduced as an Olympic sport in London. As boxing grew in popularity in Melbourne, a number of existing venues were used for competitions from 1900 to 1912, including the Gaiety Theatre, Bourke Street; Lyceum Club, Lonsdale Street; Democratic Club, Swanston Street; the Exhibition Building; Richmond Racecourse; the Melbourne Athletic Club, Exhibition Street; and the Cyclorama building in Fitzroy which was renamed the Melbourne Athletic Pavilion and used as a boxing venue from 1906 to c1912.

Figure 1. Former Cyclorama building, renamed the Melbourne Athletic Pavilion (Yarra Libraries)

Australian sportsman Reginald L ‘Snowy’ Baker (1884-1953) began to box in 1902 and competed as an amateur boxer at the London Olympic Games in 1908. On his return to Australia, Baker turned to promoting boxing events and in December 1912 he purchased a large stadium in Sydney which had been constructed for boxing in 1908. Unlike many popular spectator sports, such as football, cricket and horse racing, the sports of boxing and wrestling were best suited to indoor venues and Baker established boxing stadia in both Brisbane and Melbourne in 1910 and 1913 respectively. All three stadia were designed to accommodate large numbers of spectators - approximately 11,000 at Sydney, 5,000 in Brisbane and 12,000 in Melbourne.

These three stadia were the principal boxing and wrestling venues in the respective cities and enabled local and overseas sportsmen to travel and compete in multiple Australian states, particularly during the first half of the twentieth century. Entertainment was provided to thousands of Australians at these stadia and at smaller suburban stadia such as the Fitzroy Stadium (1930-c1944, demolished).

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1 ADB entry, Reginald Leslie (Snowy) Baker
2 Sporting Globe, 6 August 1930, p 13; The Age, 1 November 1947, p 2
Brunswick Stadium (c1914-1916, demolished)\(^3\) and country venues such as the Coliseum, Ballarat\(^4\); Her Majesty’s Theatre, Ballarat\(^5\), the Old Lyric Theatre, Bendigo\(^6\) and the Paramount Theatre, Shepparton\(^7\).

\[\text{Figure 2. Sydney Stadium 1955 (http://sydney-eye.blogspot.com.au)}\]

\[\text{Figure 3. Brisbane Stadium, c1925 (State Library of Queensland)}\]

\[\text{Figure 4. Fitzroy Stadium, undated, c1930s? (Victorian Heritage Database)}\]

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\(^3\) Leader, 22 August 1914, p 24; The Age, 4 December 1916, p 6

\(^4\) Sporting Globe, 16 July 1930, p 11

\(^5\) The Argus, 22 December 1908, p 8

\(^6\) The Argus, 12 June 1914, p 10

\(^7\) Sporting Globe, 31 January 1923, p 14
The company Stadiums Ltd, established by John Wren and Richard Lean in 1899 and registered in 1914, acquired Baker’s interests in the Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne stadia in 1915. As Stadiums Pty Ltd from 1937, this company continued to be run by both the Wren and Lean families until at least the 1960s, despite Wren’s death in 1953. John Wren, businessman and sporting promoter, had a particular interest in sport. In addition to his interests in boxing stadia, he owned three Melbourne racecourses, established the Victorian Trotting Association in 1907 and opened the 70,000-seat capacity Motordrome on the north bank of the Yarra River in 1924.

A decline in the popularity of boxing and wrestling in the mid to late twentieth century coincided with the rise of popular music from the 1950s and the associated promotion of major music acts of all genres from Britain and the United States. Stadia which had been built as sporting venues for thousands of spectators were promoted as suitable venues for a myriad of music performers from the mid-1950s.

The boxing stadia in Brisbane and Melbourne were rebuilt in the 1950s and by the 1960s both had been renamed Festival Hall to reflect their increasing use as entertainment venues. The Royal Festival Hall in London, opened as a 2,500-seat entertainment venue in 1951, presumably inspired the renaming of these two Australian stadia.

Figure 5. Brisbane Festival Hall, undated (State Library of Queensland)

Site History
Festival Hall, and its predecessor the West Melbourne Stadium, were constructed in Dudley Street, West Melbourne on land that was subdivided between 1855 and 1869 (Figures 6 & 7). As part of this subdivision, existing streets, including Dudley and Rosslyn Streets, were extended westward to the newly formed Railway Place along the existing railway line through West Melbourne. The nearby West Melbourne Swamp was drained and filled from the 1870s to the 1900s and the resumed land to the east was progressively made available for rail yards and other development.

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8 University of Melbourne Archives, Stadiums Pty Ltd Company Records
9 University of Melbourne Archives, Stadiums Pty Ltd Company Records
The first boxing stadium in West Melbourne was built at the western end of Dudley Street in 1913. Originally built as Baker’s Stadium, the building was located on a large allotment of land, adjacent to the railway line, with frontages to Dudley and Rosslyn Streets and Railway Place. Ground conditions delayed construction of the building, requiring construction of 12-foot-deep (3.7 metres) concrete rafts, however it was reportedly erected in about six weeks at a cost of £10,000. Frank Stapley was the architect and the builder was J D McBride. The first fight was scheduled to take place on Melbourne Cup Eve and many boxing and wrestling displays were to follow, featuring both local and overseas competitors.

10 *The Age*, 27 October 1913, p 14
11 *The Age*, 27 October 1913, p 14
12 MCC Registration no 4334, 11 September 1913 (Burchett Index), from M. Lewis, ‘Australian Architectural Index’
13 *Leader*, 11 October 1913, p 23
Built as an unroofed brick structure to accommodate 12,000 spectators, the stadium was rectangular in form - 165 feet (50.1 metres) x 300 feet (91.4 metres). It contained a central arena with concrete floor - 100 feet (30.5 metres) x 80 feet (24.4 metres), ring platform - 22 feet (6.7 metres) x 22 feet (6.7 metres) and tiered seating on four sides. It was proposed that a single span louvered roof would cover the stadium.\(^{14}\) The building was described in *The Herald* as an athletic stadium largely based on the Sydney Stadium (1908), with arena, offices, dressing rooms etc and eleven exits to the three streets and an extra private street.\(^{15}\) No images of the exterior of the 1913 building have been found, except an oblique view of part of the Dudley Street façade (Figure 8).

In 1915, John Wren and Richard Lean’s company Stadiums Ltd acquired the West Melbourne Stadium and it was temporarily closed to enable construction of the proposed roof (Figure 9). The covered stadium was re-opened on Saturday 13 February 1915.\(^{16}\) Combined vaudeville performances and boxing contests were staged at the newly roofed stadium\(^{17}\) and a number of fundraising events were held from 1915 to 1917.

![Figure 8. The Dudley Street Bridge with the façade of the West Melbourne Stadium visible to the right of the photograph, undated (PROV)](image)

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\(^{14}\) *The Age*, 27 October 1913, p 14

\(^{15}\) *The Herald*, 4 September 1913, p 4

\(^{16}\) *Winner*, 3 February 1915, p 5

\(^{17}\) *The Argus*, 16 April 1915, p 12
World War I impacted on the popularity of boxing and by January 1918 the West Melbourne Stadium was temporarily closed and used by the Australian Mercantile Loan Company as a storeroom for grain and wool.\(^8\) The stadium was reopened in March 1921 after some renovation of the building\(^9\) and a regular weekly pattern was adopted, with boxing on Friday nights, wrestling on Saturdays and a mixture of vaudeville and boxing on Wednesdays.\(^{20}\) Known as the ‘House of Stoush’, this stadium continued to draw crowds to boxing and wrestling events.

\(^8\) *Australasian*, 16 February 1918, p 8
\(^9\) *The Age*, 24 March 1921, p 8
\(^{20}\) J Griffin, *John Wren, a life reconsidered*, p 186
The West Melbourne Stadium was destroyed by fire on 24 January 1955\textsuperscript{21}, with little remaining of the large structure (Figure 11). The General Manager of Stadiums Pty Ltd, Richard Lean, reported that the 42-year-old building would be immediately replaced with a new stadium for boxing, other sports and theatrical productions, to be constructed in time for the Olympic Games in Melbourne in late 1956. Lean stated that the intention was to accommodate 15,000 spectators in air-conditioned, sound-proof comfort in a stadium closer to the city centre\textsuperscript{22} however the new stadium was built on the same site in Dudley Street, West Melbourne with a capacity for 8,000 spectators.

Architects Cowper, Murphy & Associates invited tenders for the construction of the new stadium in Dudley Street, West Melbourne in August 1955\textsuperscript{23} and two months later, on 12 October 1955, the completed building, with portable ring and ringside seats, was opened with the 8,000-seat stadium at capacity.\textsuperscript{24} A level central floor enabled the venue to be used for boxing (with a 7,000-seat capacity) and for gymnastics at the Olympic Games in November and December 1956 (with a further reduced capacity of 5,000).\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{21} The Argus, 25 January 1955, p 7
\textsuperscript{22} The Argus, 25 January 1955, p 7
\textsuperscript{23} The Argus, 27 August 1955, p 13
\textsuperscript{24} The Argus, 13 October 1955, p 1
\textsuperscript{25} 1956 Summer Olympics Official Report, p 43
Figure 13. Plan of upper level of the Stadium, 1955 (VPRS 11200-P7-1072 Type T9)

Figure 14. Elevations of the Stadium, 1955 (VPRS 11200-P7-1072 Type T9)

Figures 15. Section of the Stadium, 1955 (VPRS 11200-P7-1072 Type T9)
The plan of the new stadium generally replicated the layout and form of the original stadium, except the footprint was extended to the east to incorporate a former lane. The estimated cost for the new stadium was £150,000. Steelwork was designed by engineer C S Steele, fabricated by Vickers Ruwolt and constructed in late September 1955. Drawings for the building indicate that pre-stressed, precast concrete panels were used for walling and newspaper reports note that the intention was to retain some surviving brickwork from the earlier stadium.

Drawings for the building indicate that some existing footings were reused however, from documentary and visual evidence, it appears unlikely that any existing brickwork was reused. Early images of the completed structure show an unadorned building with brick piers and base, upper

26 The Argus, 7 May 1955, p 20
27 The Argus, 21 September 1955, p 24
28 The Argus, 21 September 1955, p 24
29 PROV, VPRS 7882, P1, 179, 1955-75, computations state ‘2” precast prestressed concrete wall panels 16’ x 2’
parapeted concrete wall panels, a horizontal cantilevered entrance canopy, simple window openings and large signage ‘STADIUM’ clearly displayed on the upper Dudley Street façade.

Figure 20. Interior of (West) Melbourne Stadium, nearing completion in 1956 (Melbourne University Archives, Stadiums Pty Ltd Collection, Unit 34, Item 29)

Figure 21. The new West Melbourne Stadium soon after completion (Young Victor Boxing website)

Figure 22. View of Dudley Street façade of Festival Hall, c1957. (Harold Paynting Collection, State Library of Victoria, photographer, Lyle Fowler)
As stated by Lean, the rebuilt stadium was constructed as a multi-purpose venue and its use as a music venue was predicted before construction. In April 1955 it was noted that the new Melbourne Stadium was to have ‘less accent on boxing and wrestling, more on the music stage for US “gravy train” stars, & provision for tennis, basketball and exhibition dancing’. The new building incorporated a stage with seating along the north side (Figure 20), indicating the anticipated use as a performance venue. Named the ‘Stadium’ when constructed in 1955 (Figures 21 & 22), the venue had been renamed Festival Hall by 1960, clearly reflecting its primary use in this period. The newly remodelled Brisbane Stadium was named Festival Hall in 1958 and the Melbourne Stadium was renamed soon after.

Figure 23. View of interior of Festival Hall, c1957. (Harold Paynting Collection, State Library of Victoria, photographer, Lyle Fowler)

Figure 24. West Melbourne Stadium showing portable ring which was removed for gymnastics at the Olympic Games (1956 Summer Olympics Official Report, p 42)

30 Cross-Section, Issue No 30, 1 April 1955, p 2
31 PROV, VPRS 7882, Sketch Plan labelled as Festival Hall
32 Cross-Section Issue No 74, 1 December 1958, p 4
Figure 25. West Melbourne Stadium set up for the gymnastics at the Olympic Games (1956 Summer Olympics Official Report, p 479)

Figure 26. Gymnasts competing at West Melbourne Stadium, Olympic Games (1956 Summer Olympics Official Report, p 479)
Richard Lean Junior joined Stadiums Pty Ltd in the 1960s and, under his direction, Festival Hall became a truly multi-purpose venue. Whilst continuing to regularly host boxing and wrestling competitions – including great names such as Lionel Rose, Johnny Famechon, Anthony Mundine, Lester Ellis and Barry Michaels – Festival Hall provided a venue for a diverse range of events including tennis, woodchopping,
ballroom dancing championships, religious gatherings, variety acts and television shows. Seating configurations on the main floor were altered to accommodate the variety of events at the stadium. Televising of both boxing and wrestling at Festival Hall in the 1960s and 1970s - TV Ringside (1966-75) and World Championship Wrestling (1964-1978) - ensured regular competition continued at Festival Hall and considerably broadened the sporting audience.

As the only large indoor performance venue in Melbourne at the time, Festival Hall was unrivalled for almost thirty years as the place for popular music performance. Hundreds of music acts performed at this venue, including many of the best-known national and international acts of the time, such as the Beatles, AC/DC, Bob Dylan, Buddy Holly, Elton John, Frank Sinatra, Jackson 5, Jerry Lee Lewis, Metallica, Neil Young, Oasis, Pink Floyd, Queen, Radiohead, Roy Orbison, The Bee Gees, The Kinks, The Police, The Ramones, Tina Turner and Ella Fitzgerald.

![Figure 29. Undated image of the interior of Festival Hall](Stadiums Pty Ltd Collection, University of Melbourne Archives)

![Figure 30. Crowds outside Festival Hall, 1971](Sydney Morning Herald)
It was not until the Olympic Swimming Stadium was converted into the ‘Melbourne Sports and Entertainment Centre’ in 1982 (with a capacity to seat 7,200 patrons) and the construction of tennis stadia at the National Tennis Centre (renamed Melbourne Park) in the mid-1980s, that alternative indoor venues were provided for larger-scale live music performance in Melbourne. Centre Court (renamed Rod Laver Arena) was constructed with a retractable roof and, when opened in 1987, provided a very large stadium (c14,000 to 16,000 patrons) for a wide range of sports and entertainment, while Show Court 1 (renamed Margaret Court Arena) provided an unroofed venue, similar in size to Festival Hall (6,000 patrons). The roofing and increase in capacity of the latter (7,500 people) in 2010 increased the popularity of this venue as a mid-sized venue for music performance. When constructed at Melbourne Park in 2000, Hisense Arena provided a multi-purpose venue with retractable roof for 10,500 patrons, and larger venues included Docklands Stadium with retractable roof, constructed principally for AFL football in 2000 (c50,000 patrons) and the Melbourne Rectangular Stadium in 2007 (30,050 patrons).

Often criticised for its acoustic qualities and patron amenity, Festival Hall has decreased in popularity since the provision of alternative mid-sized roofed venues for live music in Melbourne. Festival Hall remains in the ownership of the Wren family and is currently used intermittently for music performance and sporting displays.

**CONSTRUCTION DETAILS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Architect name</th>
<th>Cowper, Murphy &amp; Associates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Architectural style name</td>
<td>Post-War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction started date</td>
<td>August 1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction ended date</td>
<td>October 1955</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
VICTORIAN HISTORICAL THEMES

09  Shaping cultural and creative life
   9.1  Participating in sport and recreation
   9.2  Nurturing a vibrant arts scene
   9.4  Creating popular culture

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION
Festival Hall is a large building located on a slightly wedge-shaped site in West Melbourne. Fronting Dudley Street to the south, the site is bounded by Rosslyn Street to the north, Railway Place and a railway line to the west and an adjacent property to the east.

The main building is of simple rectangular form, with rear wall parallel to Rosslyn Street. This is situated behind a lower section of building which infills a triangular piece of land facing Dudley Street. The large rectangular structure has a steelwork frame with open-web gabled roof trusses supported on steel ‘I’ section columns. Encased in brick, these columns are expressed externally as tall piers which divide the otherwise plain facades of the building. Face brickwork infills the base of the building and precast concrete panels infill the upper facade. Reference has been made to these panels being ‘prestressed’ however this is inconclusive. Research has identified one documentary reference to this in ‘Computations for 2” Precast Prestressed Concrete Wall Panels’ dated November 1955. Architectural drawings however describe these panels as ‘precast concrete slabs, rebated and bolted, 6” thick’, with no reference to them being ‘prestressed’.

The main rectangular building is roofed with a broad corrugated iron clad Dutch-hipped gable, surrounded by a reinforced concrete parapet and gutter and simple metal safety roof balustrade. The lower section of building, facing Dudley Street, has a partly rendered upper façade and flat roof.

The building is undecorated and the majority of openings are frameless with brick sills. Thick rendered bands surround a small number of openings on the front façade and a similar rendered band encircles the building, defining the junction between the brick and concrete walls. A cantilevered horizontal canopy, with pressed metal lining, projects from the main façade, providing protection for the former ticket window and two large banks of panelled timber entrance doors.

A vast stadium space dominates the interior of the building, with a number of associated amenity spaces located below the west end and around the periphery. The stadium comprises a central timber floored area with simple stage to the north and tiers of seating to the west and east and balcony to the south. Exposed north-south gabled roof trusses are partially visible above acoustic ceiling panels which have been installed below the once-exposed gabled trusses. Double tiers of raked seating are situated to the east and west ends of the flat floored central space and a tiered balcony to the south. Early seating includes rows of steel-framed, timber bleachers at the rear to the east and west, and rows of theatre-like balcony seating to the south. Rows of plastic seating are located in front of the side bleachers.

Private facilities for entertainers utilise space under the tiered western seating. The land slopes to the west enabling the formation of an extensive area below the stadium seating which is partitioned into a number of private amenity rooms and offices. Public bathrooms, access stairs and additional public exit doors are located under the extremity of the tiered eastern seating and additional public amenities, including entrance foyers, access stairs, bathrooms and bars (later installation), are located along the south side of the building. A small private area for performers is located to the north, behind the stage. This has a pressed metal ceiling similar to the external front canopy.

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33 Health Department Victoria file, PROV VPRS 7882/P1/Unit 179
34 Building Application Plans, PROV VPRS 11200/P7/Unit 1072
INTERIORS
Early seating has been retained in the building including rows of steel-framed, timber bleachers at the rear to the east and west, and rows of theatre-like balcony seating to the south.

LANDSCAPES, TREES & GARDENS
There are no landscapes, trees or gardens associated with the place.

ARCHAEOLOGY
There is no identified archaeology of State level significance at this place.

INTEGRITY/INTACTNESS
The building remains intact to its original form and has a high degree of integrity. Alterations include:

Exterior (identified from visual inspection)
- Overpainting of the brickwork, concrete panels and concrete detailing
- Creation of new openings in existing external fabric, including the west facade
- Various additions, including services, to the lower roof of the Dudley Street frontage
- Removal of large lettering from Dudley Street facade ('Stadium')
- Removal or concealment of clerestory windows to the south
- Addition of perimeter roof balustrading

Exterior (recorded in primary and secondary sources)
- 1978 - new roof and ceiling (Butler, West Melbourne Heritage Review)
- 1979 - access tunnel (Butler, West Melbourne Heritage Review)
- 1980-81 - various alterations including new loading bay (The Sun, 21 June 1981)
- 1982 - partial reroofing (Building Permit Application, Butler, West Melbourne Heritage Review)
- 1993 - new bar (Building Permit Application, Butler, West Melbourne Heritage Review)

Interior (identified from visual inspection)
- Addition of acoustic ceiling panels to the interior. These have been suspended from the original gabled, open-web trusses and form a canted ceiling.
- Alterations to the stage. The original stage, with cantilevered canopy, has been heavily modified or replaced but remains in the original location.
- General alterations and reconfiguration to interior spaces including amenity rooms to the west and insertion of bars.

Interior (recorded in primary and secondary sources)
- 1959 - new stage (Butler, West Melbourne Heritage Review)
- 1993 - proposed new sloping stage (architects: Sofarnos Monsbourgh & Associates, Health Department Victoria file, PROV VPRS 7882/P1/Unit 179)

CONDITION
The place is in good condition (April 2018).

COMPARISONS
Festival Hall, and its predecessor the West Melbourne Stadium, were built as large sporting and entertainment venues. Both structures were purpose-built sporting stadia for boxing and wrestling, however Festival Hall was used increasingly for live music performance following its construction in 1955.
A variety of purpose-built sporting venues and purpose-built entertainment venues have been constructed in Victoria which, in a broad sense, provide comparison with Festival Hall. Many of these have been assessed to be of cultural heritage significance to the State of Victoria and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR).

It should be noted that the places that follow were included in the VHR prior to the adoption of the Victorian Heritage Register Criteria and Threshold Guidelines (2014) and references to the various criteria should be understood in this context. It should also be noted that the Statements of Significance that are considered below may refer to fabric that has been altered or removed under a Heritage Permit since registration of the place.

**Sporting Venues in Victoria**

Sport has played an important role in Victoria’s cultural history and a vast array of spectator and participatory sporting facilities have been constructed throughout the state. These include large outdoor sporting grounds, racecourses, velodromes, swimming pools, motor raceways, lawn bowling greens, golf courses and many associated grandstands.

**Olympic Venues**

After fire destroyed the West Melbourne Stadium in 1955, it was quickly rebuilt to provide a venue for the Olympic Games in Melbourne the following year. Other sporting facilities were constructed for the 1956 Olympic Games including the Beaurepaire Centre, University of Melbourne and facilities at Olympic Park, including a Swimming Stadium, venues for cycling and hockey and a main stadium.

The majority of Olympic Games events were held in existing, upgraded facilities. The main venue for ceremonies and athletic events was the Melbourne Cricket Ground which, despite more recent demolition of many of the specific Olympic facilities, has strong associations with the events which occurred there at the time. Other places used for competition included the Royal Exhibition Building, Carlton (VHR H1501) and St Kilda Town Hall and outdoor venues such as Lake Wendouree, Ballarat.

The venues that most directly compare with Festival Hall are the two 1950s indoor swimming stadia.

**Beaurepaire Centre, University of Melbourne (VHR H1045)**

The Beaurepaire Centre, comprising a pool, gymnasium and trophy hall, was designed by architects Eggleston, MacDonald and Secomb as a training facility for athletes during the 1956 Olympic Games. Funded by former Olympic swimmer Frank Beaurepaire, the centre is a simple steel portal framed building with walls of cream brick and aluminium-framed glass curtain walls. It contains a large mural frieze by artist Leonard French.

The Beaurepaire Centre is considered to have historical, architectural, social and aesthetic significance at a state level for the following reasons:

- For its associations with Frank Beaurepaire, Olympic swimmer, businessman, civic leader and chairman of the Olympic Games promotional committee (historical)
- For its association with the Melbourne Olympic Games in 1956 (historical)
- For its unpretentious, elegant and influential design in the International Style in the late 1950s (architectural).
Olympic Swimming Stadium (VHR H1977)

The Olympic Swimming Stadium was the result of a competition won by architects Kevin Borland, Peter McIntyre, John & Phyllis Murphy and engineer Bill Irwin. Construction began in 1954 and the building was completed in 1956.

The stadium is considered to be of historical, architectural and scientific (technological) significance at a state level for the following reasons:

- As the only major stadium structure remaining from the 1956 Olympic Games (historical),
- As a major focus of activity during the games (historical)
- As an early and influential landmark in the development of Structuralist architecture in Australia in the post-war period (architectural)
- As an early example of pretensioned steel frame construction (scientific – technological).

It is notable that when the pool tank failed, the architectural partnership Borland Brown were commissioned to convert the building into a performance venue (in 1980). These works were carried out in 1980-82, transforming the stadium into a multi-purpose sports and entertainment venue with a capacity to seat 7,200. Between 1983 and 1998 the stadium served as the Melbourne Sports and Entertainment Centre, or ‘The Glasshouse’. The venue was used for live music, indoor sports and

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36 National Trust of Australia (Victoria), citation for ‘Former Olympic Swimming Stadium, 10-30 Olympic Boulevard Melbourne’ accessed via Victorian Heritage Database; Evans, Doug, & Borland, Huan Chen, (eds.) & Hamann, Conrad, (eds.) (2006), Kevin Borland : architecture from the heart, Melbourne, 76.
became the main stadium for NBL basketball. National and international acts who played at the venue included Elton John, Queen, Rod Stewart, Engelbert Humperdinck, Shirley Bassey, Australian Crawl, Midnight Oil, Cold Chisel, INXS, and the Little River Band. In c2002 the 1980s additions were removed and the building converted back into a sports centre.

**Major sporting venues included in the VHR**

A number of other major sporting venues are considered to have cultural heritage significance at a state level and are included in the VHR. These include the Melbourne Cricket Ground, East Melbourne; Victoria Park, Abbotsford; Waverley Park, Mulgrave and Flemington Racecourse, Flemington.

**Melbourne Cricket Ground, East Melbourne (VHR H1928)**

The Melbourne Cricket Ground was established in 1853 and was initially a simple ground with modest pavilion and limited grandstand and facilities. It has evolved and expanded through redevelopment phases with four principal stands – MCC Members Pavilion (1927), Northern Olympic Stand (1956, since demolished), Western Stand (1968) and the Great Southern Stand (1992).

The Melbourne Cricket Ground is considered to have historical, architectural, social and aesthetic significance at a state level for the following reasons:

- As one of the oldest and largest capacity sporting venues both in Australia and overseas. It has been the pre-eminent venue for top-level cricket since the mid to late nineteenth century and the main venue for Australian Rules Football in Victoria since the late nineteenth century (historical and social)
- As the main venue and ceremonial focus for the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games (historical and social)
- For its associations with a variety of other sports and events (historical and social)
- For its association with the Melbourne Cricket Club, the oldest club in Victoria and a major force in the development of cricket and other sports in Victoria from the nineteenth century (historical and social)
- For its egalitarian image as the 'people's ground' and its long tradition of serving the people of Victoria (historical and social)
- For the Members Pavilion (Stephenson and Meldrum, 1927) which is a large and relatively intact grandstand from the interwar period (architectural)
- For the Great Southern Stand (Daryl Jackson in association with Tompkins Shaw and Evans, 1992) which has been the recipient of a wide range of design awards and has generally been received with acclaim by architectural critics (architectural)
- As a living icon, a focus of attention in which importance lies in participating in events as well as experiencing the place itself (social significance)
- For its overall form and scale and its traditional parkland setting (aesthetic significance)

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40 Melbourne & Olympic Parks, ‘Holden Centre’.
Victoria Park, Abbotsford (VHR H0075)

Victoria Park is a ground which was acquired for municipal use by Collingwood Council in 1882 with Australian Rules football played there for a long period from 1892 to 1999. It provided the base for the Collingwood Football Club until 2005 and the Collingwood Cricket Club from 1906 to 1996. The Collingwood Football Club has been one of the most successful, popular and influential league football clubs in Victoria.

Victoria Park is considered to have historical, architectural and social significance at a state level for the following reasons:

- For its associations with notable figures in Victorian sporting history and businessman and Collingwood supporter John Wren, who provided financial help to many players particularly through the Depression (historical)
- For associations with the Depression era (historical)
- For associations with the local working-class area (historical and social)
- As representative examples of large and extensive facilities at a suburban league ground (stands and walls) (architectural).

Waverley Park, Mulgrave (VHR H1883)

Waverley Park was opened in 1970 and operated as a stadium for AFL football until 1999. Designed by architect Reginald Padey and engineer John Connell as a sunken oval with high cantilevered grandstand, the stadium was located in the fast-growing outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne on land owned and controlled by the Victorian Football League. The original vision of a stadium of enormous capacity (157,000) was only partly realised with the construction in 1974 of a segment of the encircling stand with its unusual ‘scissor’ trusses. The ground has hosted other sports and functions.
Waverley Park (formerly VFL Park) is considered to have historical, architectural and social significance at a state level for the following reasons:

- As a manifestation of the importance of the game of Australian Rules football to Victorians and as the first major venue to be designed specifically for this football code (historical and social)
- For its pivotal role in the Victorian Football League's wresting of control of venues from local cricket clubs and municipal ground managers, to maximise revenue and independence for football (historical and social)
- For its associations with the greatest changes in football in Australia (historical and social)
- As a display of suburban expansion in Melbourne to the east and south-east (historical)
- For the innovative and advanced design approach to stadium design in the early 1960s and construction of its overseas-influenced structure (architectural)
- For the size of the stadium (architectural)
- For the high stand (designed 1963, built 1973-76) as an early example of a reinforced concrete structure on this scale (architectural).

Flemington Racecourse, Flemington (VHR H2220)

Flemington Racecourse has operated continuously on this site since 1840 and the first Melbourne Cup was run at Flemington in 1861. The Victorian Racing Club was formed in 1864 to organise racing at the Flemington Racecourse. Major improvements were made to the grounds in the twentieth century including a radical redevelopment of the course in 1922 which resulted in demolition of earlier structures and construction of a new members’ stand. Further major redevelopment occurred in the 1950s with the construction of new stands, with additional stands constructed in 1978-79, 1984 and 2000.

Flemington Racecourse is considered to have historical, architectural, social and aesthetic significance at a state level for the following reasons:

- As the oldest racecourse in Victoria which has operated continuously since 1840 (historical)
- As the site of the running of the Melbourne Cup since its inception (historical)
- For its collection of structures which relate to racing in Victoria since the nineteenth century and demonstrate the various stages of development of the course (architectural)
- As a venue of Victoria's and Australia's greatest horse races, in particular the Melbourne Cup (social)
- For its associations with one of Australia's major spectator sports (social)
- As one of the finest racecourses in the world, set in an expansive landscape with views towards the City of Melbourne (aesthetic)
- For its many works of art, including murals and statues (aesthetic)
- For its carefully cultivated gardens (aesthetic).
Other sporting venues included in the VHR

A range of other places associated with sport are also included in the VHR, including grandstands, sports grounds, swimming facilities, bowling and golf clubs. These are generally considered to have historical and architectural significance at a state level.

Grandstands, constructed for spectators at sporting venues throughout Victoria, include those at:

- Hamilton Racecourse (VHR H0137)
- Fitzroy Cricket Ground (VHR H0751)
- Glenferrie Oval, Hawthorn (VHR H0890)
- Benalla Grandstand, Showgrounds (VHR H0976)
- Kingston Grandstand, Showgrounds (VHR H1300)
- Memorial Grandstand, Winchelsea (VHR H1525)
- Queen Elizabeth Oval, Bendigo (VHR H0803)
- Camperdown Turf Club (VHR H2093)

Other sporting facilities include:

- St Kilda Cricket Ground VHR H2234
- Prince’s Park, Maryborough VHR H1880
- Central Park, Stawell VHR (location of the Stawell Gift) H2284
- Barwon Heads Golf Club Clubhouse VHR H2258
- St Kilda Bowling Club, St Kilda VHR H1913
- City Baths, Melbourne VHR H0466
- Harold Holt Swim Centre, Glen Iris VHR H0069
- Calembeen Park, Creswick H0210
- Eastern Beach Bathing Complex & Reserve VHR H0929
- Maryborough Municipal Olympic Swimming Complex H1319
- Swimming Pool, Hepburn Springs VHR H1865

Summary

Festival Hall is one of a very large number of sporting venues in Victoria and this place type is well represented in the VHR with at least twenty-four places already included. The majority of these places have long-term use as well-patronised sporting venues and their history and function is clearly demonstrated in the fabric of these various places.

Within this place typology there are a number of places that were used for the 1956 Olympic Games and four of these – including two purpose-built indoor swimming stadia – are included in the VHR to represent this historical theme.
Notwithstanding the existing level of representation of sporting venues in the VHR, no sporting venue with a specific association with boxing and/or wrestling is included. Since the late 1800s, boxing has been a highly popular spectator sport in Australia attracting crowds in the thousands with many more watching televised matches since the 1960s. The West Melbourne Stadium was specifically built as the principal boxing and wrestling venue in Victoria in 1913 and this building – and its 1955 replacement – were routinely and consistently used for this purpose until at least the mid-1970s when TV Ringside and World Championship Wrestling (recorded at Festival Hall) ceased production. It is notable that the State Funeral for champion Australian boxer Lionel Rose was held at Festival Hall in 2011.

Neither of the smaller Fitzroy or Brunswick Stadiums are extant and Festival Hall remains as the only purpose-built boxing and wrestling venue in Victoria to physically demonstrate the long-term history of the sport in the State.

**Entertainment Venues in Victoria**

**1950s and 1960s Entertainment Venues in the VHR**

Festival Hall was quickly constructed in 1955 to fulfil its role as a venue for the Olympic Games boxing the following year, however its use as a venue for live music performance was also anticipated at the time of construction. This was noted in April 1955 when the proposed building was described as having ‘less accent on boxing and wrestling, more on the music stage for US “gravy train” stars, & provision for tennis, basketball and exhibition dancing’. A stage was included in the re-designed building.

The built venue could seat approximately 6,000-8,000 spectators and provided a performance space for increasing numbers of popular local and overseas musicians.

A variety of performance venues were designed and built in the 1950s and 1960s and a small number of these are included in the VHR. These include:

- Sydney Myer Music Bowl (VHR H1772)
- Rosebud Sound Shell, Rosebud (VHR H2299)

**Sidney Myer Music Bowl (VHR H1772)**

The Sidney Myer Music Bowl was designed by Barry Patten of Yuncken, Freeman, Griffiths and Simpson as an outdoor performance venue, funded by the Sidney Myer Charitable Fund. Constructed in the Domain in 1958, the tensile sound shell was designed as an organic structure which integrated harmoniously into the landscape. The venue has a capacity of over 2,000 seated and an additional 12,000 seated on the ground.

The Sidney Myer Music Bowl is considered to be of historical, architectural, scientific (technological) and social significance at a state level for the following reasons:

- For its association with the Sidney Myer Charitable Trust and more broadly with the Myer family (historical)
- As the largest, purpose-built outdoor performance venue in Victoria (architectural)
- For its experimentation in new forms of construction and complexity of its tensile structural system (architectural)
- For its integration into the landscape (architectural)
- For its contribution to the development of engineering and construction techniques (scientific – technological)
- As a major and long serving venue for a wide range of cultural events and performances (social).
The Rosebud Sound Shell is considered to be of architectural, aesthetic and scientific (technical) significance at a state level for the following reasons:

- As an outstanding example of the dynamic forms which became popular after World War II (architectural)
- As a rare example of a hyperbolic paraboloid form and the only Victorian example executed in reinforced concrete (architectural)
- As an innovative example of a sound shell – a building type that replaced the bandstand in the 1950s and 1960s (architectural)
- For its highly unusual expressionist form (aesthetic)
- As a prominent foreshore landmark (aesthetic)
- As a rare example of a structure with hyperbolic paraboloid shape (scientific - technical)
- As one of the first concrete structures in Australia to be designed with the aid of a computer programme (scientific - technical).

**Theatre Venues in the VHR**

Large numbers of entertainment venues have been constructed throughout Victoria for theatrical and musical performance and the viewing of films in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some of these venues also provided for the occasional viewing of sports such as boxing, particularly in country
towns. A number of these entertainment venues, including theatres, cinemas and drive in theatres are considered to be of state level significance and are included in the VHR. These include:

- Theatre Royal, Castlemaine (1850s, remodelling 1938-39, VHR H0619)
- Star Theatre, Chiltern (1865, VHR H0278)
- Her Majesty’s Theatre, Ballarat (1874, VHR H0648)
- Her Majesty’s Theatre, Exhibition Street (1886, renovated 1934, VHR H0641)
- Melbourne Athenaeum, Collins Street (1886, remodelled as cinema 1924, VHR H0501)
- Princess Theatre, Spring Street (1886, VHR H0093)
- Athenaeum, Sorrento (1894, VHR H2227)
- National Theatre, St Kilda (1921, VHR H2092)
- Former Northcote Theatre, Northcote (1911-12, VHR H2287)
- Former Barkly Theatre, Footscray (1914, VHR H0878)
- National Theatre, St Kilda (1921, VHR H2092)
- Horsham Theatre (1926, VHR H2225)
- Palais Theatre, St Kilda (1927, VHR H0947)
- Globe Theatre, Winchelsea (1926-27, VHR H2226)
- Former State Theatre (later Forum & Rapallo) (1928, VHR H0438)
- Comedy Theatre, Exhibition Street (1928, VHR H2273)
- Regent Theatre, Collins Street (1929, interior re-built 1947, VHR H0690)
- Astor Theatre, St Kilda (1935-36, VHR H1751)
- Lorne Cinema, Lorne (1937, VHR H2230)
- Midland Theatre, Ararat (1938, VHR H2228)
- Sun Theatre, Yarraville (1938, VHR H0679)
- Warracknabeal Town Hall (1939-40, VHR H2223)
- Rivoli Theatre, Camberwell (1940, VHR H1524)
- Memorial Hall, Koroit (1957, VHR H2222)
- Dromana Drive In Theatre (1961, VHR H2219)
- Coburg Drive In Theatre (1965, VHR H2218)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, Bourke Street (1966-69, VHR H2335)
- Victorian Arts Centre, St Kilda Road (Theatre 1973-84 & Concert Hall 1974-82, VHR H1500)

Summary

A large number of purpose-built entertainment venues were designed and constructed in Victoria to provide space for the appreciation of music, live performance and cinema.

Unlike these examples, Festival Hall was constructed with a multi-purpose function in mind that could accommodate both sporting and music events and therefore does not demonstrate many of the architectural or design features of the purpose-built entertainment venues on the VHR.

Notwithstanding this, Festival Hall was the principal venue in Victoria for large-scale live music performances from the late 1950s until the 1980s and it played a key role in the social evolution of Victorian society in the post-war period by exposing thousands of patrons to the “new wave” of big production live music.

Festival Hall was unrivalled for almost thirty years as the place for popular music performance, hosting the biggest national and international acts of the day including the Beatles, Buddy Holly, Neil Young, The Kinks and Frank Sinatra.
Buildings by Architects Cowper, Murphy & Associates

Architects Cowper, Murphy and Associates were responsible for the design of the 1955 stadium, which was largely based on the footprint of the previous building. The venue was designed as a functional and utilitarian building, to be built expeditiously, and displayed no particular architectural qualities.

Cowper, Murphy & Associates were the most prolific cinema architects in Australia and were responsible for at least thirty new designs and major refurbishments of theatres. The firm existed from the later 1920s (mid-1930s to 1948 as Cowper Murphy and Appleford) until at least the 1960s. They were responsible for the design of the Memorial Hall, Koroit (VHR H2222) and the Sun Theatre, Yarraville (VHR H0690).

Memorial Hall, Koroit (VHR H2222)

The Koroit Memorial Hall was built in 1957 as a multi-use complex with full cinema facilities by the Catholic Church and was one of the last single-screen cinemas built in Victoria. It was one of the last works by this firm of prolific cinema architects in Australia, who were well established in this field. The building was a functional design with steel portal frames, cream brick walls and an unadorned, flat-floored auditorium space with exposed frames.

The Memorial Hall, Koroit is considered to be of historical and architectural significance for the following reasons:

- For its association with the Catholic church and for its demonstration of the moral and spiritual influence the church exerted on the lives of Catholics in that period (historical)
- As one of the last purpose-built cinemas in rural Victoria (historical)
- For its retention of original projection and sound equipment and its collection of rare glass slides which add to an understanding of the cinema's operation (historical)
- As a highly intact, late example of the work of Cowper Murphy & Associates, one of the most important and prolific firms of cinema architects in Australia (architectural).

Memorial Hall, Koroit 2009 (VHD)

Sun Theatre, Yarraville (VHR H0679)

They also designed the Sun Theatre, Yarraville VHR H0679 in 1938 in a highly streamlined Moderne style both externally and internally. This highly intact building clearly demonstrates the important role the cinema played in community life, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s.
**Other works**

Cowper, Murphy & Appleford were also responsible for post-fire remodelling works at both the Regent Theatre, Ballarat (VHR H2221) in 1943 and the Regent Theatre, Collins Street (VHR H0690) in 1947, however their work at these theatres is not considered to have significance at a state level.

**Summary**

As the most prolific firm of cinema architects in Australia, Cowper, Murphy & Associates were involved in the design of many theatres throughout the state. The firm’s design for Festival Hall, which exhibits no outstanding or notable architectural qualities, was largely determined by the plan and footprint of the original stadium building on the site, the required functionality and the need for quick construction. Other works by this firm, already included on the VHR, better demonstrate their work as architects for the entertainment industry.
KEY REFERENCES USED TO PREPARE ASSESSMENT
University of Melbourne Archives, Stadiums Pty Ltd Company records
Public Records Office Victoria files, including drawings, image
State Library of Victoria, various images and maps
Summer Olympics Official Report, 1956
Various newspaper references
Cross-Section 1955 & 1958
Graeme Butler & Associates. West Melbourne Heritage Review. 2015
J Griffin, John Wren, a life reconsidered, Melbourne 2004
Australian Dictionary of Biography online, entries for Reginald Baker & John Wren
P Corris. Lords of the Ring. North Ryde 1980
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ADDITIONAL IMAGES (MARCH 2018)

Dudley Street elevation from south-west

Dudley Street elevation from south-east

West end of Dudley Street elevation from south-east

Detail of Dudley Street façade from east

Detail of Dudley Street façade from east

Detail of Dudley Street façade from west
Name: Festival Hall
Hermes Number: 201568

Detail of Dudley Street verandah soffit

Rosslyn Street elevation from north-east

North-west corner of the building

Rosslyn Street elevation from north-west

East elevation from north-east

Detail showing concrete panels
Name: Festival Hall
Hermes Number: 201568

Interior view of stadium

Detail of rear bleachers

Detail of balcony seating

A room located under the western seating