



AT HOME WITH HERITAGE

A CONSIDERED APPROACH TO
RENOVATING YOUR HOUSE



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As a peak Heritage body, the Heritage Council of Victoria is proud to acknowledge Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, and to acknowledge the importance and significance of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria. The Heritage Council honours Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

At Home with Heritage was developed alongside 12 case studies, which demonstrate a broad range of approaches to renovating a heritage property.

The guide and case studies were prepared by Justine Clark.

The project was guided by a steering committee chaired by Louise Honman, with Heritage Council members Rueben Berg, Natica Schmeder and Penelope Smith, as well as Jude Doyle (Australian Institute of Architects [Vic] Heritage Committee) and Emily McLean (Heritage Victoria).

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ACCESSIBILITY

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Following the advice in this guide is not a guarantee that permits for a specific project will be issued.

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The Park Life renovation includes new flowing interior and exterior spaces.

ORIGINAL ARCHITECT: HOUSING COMMISSION OF VICTORIA, 1941–45. **ARCHITECT:** ARCHITECTURE ARCHITECTURE. **PHOTOGRAPH:** TOM ROSS.

Living in a heritage home can be a delightful and rewarding experience, but all residences need ongoing care and maintenance. Some may also require alterations and additions to meet contemporary needs and to provide the level of amenity and comfort expected today. These changes are part of the evolving life of the property, and have the potential to add another engaging layer to its story, but they must be undertaken with sensitivity to ensure that new contributions enrich rather than diminish our collective heritage.

Many Australian homes have heritage value and significance. Some will already be recognised through heritage listing – at either state level through the Victorian Heritage Register, or at a local level through council Heritage Overlays. Others will have heritage value, but not yet be recognised through listing. Listing is a dynamic process – it is a crucial way of recognising and documenting those places that our community wants to protect for future generations. Listing does not prevent further change to a heritage place. However, it does aim to ensure that the heritage values and cultural significance are maintained throughout the ongoing life of the place.

This guide has been developed by the Heritage Council of Victoria to assist homeowners renovating a heritage house or creating a home in another type of

heritage building. It demonstrates how good design and cultural heritage awareness can help create contemporary living environments, while also supporting and enhancing the heritage of the place. It explains the concepts of heritage value and significance, outlines some of the opportunities and challenges that may be encountered, offers an overview of design considerations and process, and provides a brief overview of the heritage system in Victoria.

The case studies that accompany this guide highlight how others have designed and managed change to houses, apartments and other residential properties in ways that respond to and maintain heritage values. We hope that you find these inspiring and thought provoking, and wish you well in your heritage adventure.



The Bank at Vaughan, showing a richness of expression to the interiors.

ARCHITECT: MARIA DANOS ARCHITECTURE. PHOTOGRAPHS: TREVOR MEIN.

2. Living in a heritage home

Heritage properties are special to those who live in them, but they are also important to the wider community. They provide connections to the past and carry social and cultural meaning. Living in a heritage home involves caring for it now and into the future. This custodianship brings additional responsibilities, but it is also part of the pleasure of daily life in a heritage place.

Heritage homes may be grand mansions or tiny workers cottages. They can be found in urban, suburban, regional and rural settings. A heritage home could have been designed to articulate new ways of living and changing social and cultural mores, as many postwar houses were. It may have been built by government as part of a housing program to improve living standards. It may have been created to convey the prestige and wealth of the original owner. Victoria has an extensive stock of historic houses, but many people also make their home in structures that were built for another purpose – as warehouses, banks, or a multitude of other uses. All heritage homes have the capacity to tell stories of the past and play a role in our future.

Heritage homes can provide a rich and engaging living environment. They may be an outstanding work of architecture, an exemplar of a particular style, or the work of a distinguished architect or artisan. They may be made with traditional materials rarely affordable in new houses. They may feature generous ceiling heights and beautifully crafted details, or quirky elements that tell tales of past times. The plan or spatial layout of a home may express the social conventions of earlier times. It may convey changing family structures, or domestic roles, and architectural innovations that responded to desires for different ways of living over time.



Park Life is located on a prominent corner site in Champion Road Estate Heritage Precinct, a largely intact 1940s housing estate designed on Garden City principles to provide worker housing after the Second World War. The heritage values of the house relate to the property as a whole, including the siting of the house on the block, and in relation to the streetscape, nature strip and broader landscape garden setting. Engaging with this context was fundamental to the success of the project and the full site was carefully planned and understood.

ORIGINAL ARCHITECT: HOUSING COMMISSION OF VICTORIA, 1941–45. **ARCHITECT:** ARCHITECTURE ARCHITECTURE. **PHOTOGRAPH:** TOM ROSS.

A heritage property may be valued for its contribution to the streetscape, or for its technical prowess, or its association with significant events in our collective past. It may provide links to well-known histories or individuals, or evoke the lesser-known experiences of those who lived and worked there. A heritage home may contribute to our understanding of patterns of historic development – for example, it may contribute to a group of terrace houses or be part of a planned suburb. All heritage places are shaped by their cultural, social, historical, political, economic and physical contexts and, in turn, they all contribute to our understanding of these histories and our contemporary experiences.

A heritage home is more than just the building. Heritage values can also be expressed in the gardens, external elements and the setting as a whole. The location of buildings and structures on a site – and their relationship to context – may embody heritage values, and the property may make an important contribution to an area’s character. In the heritage world, all of these attributes are collected in the phrase ‘heritage place’, which includes tangible aspects (such as buildings, spaces and views) and intangible aspects (such as cultural memories and symbolic associations).



The Former Salter House is valued as the work of two of Australia’s most significant and well-known architects, Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin (designers of Canberra, among many other places). It is one of the few built using the Griffins’ patented Knitlock modular construction system and is one of the earliest examples of a house planned around an internal courtyard.

ORIGINAL ARCHITECT: WALTER BURLEY GRIFFIN AND MARION MAHONY GRIFFIN, c. 1922. **ARCHITECT:** JANE CAMERON ARCHITECT AND ARCHITECT HEWSON. **PHOTOGRAPH:** JACK LEVEL.



The Bank at Vaughan is a new home within a former bank building in regional Victoria, which is valued for its association with the gold rush and the commercial development of the area. The conversion into a home ensures that the heritage building has an ongoing life.

ARCHITECT: MARIA DANOS ARCHITECTURE. **PHOTOGRAPH:** TREVOR MEIN.

3. Understanding heritage values and significance

‘Heritage values’ and ‘cultural heritage significance’ are interrelated concepts that frame the care and management of heritage places of all types and scales, including residential properties. Understanding these concepts is an essential first step when considering alterations and additions to a heritage home – they are fundamental to planning and designing new work (from the tiniest alteration to substantial additions), are essential to approval processes, and provide the framework for ongoing care.

Heritage professionals and architects can guide homeowners through all these concepts and processes, but it is helpful for owners to have a general understanding of heritage values and significance to participate in design conversations and to better understand planning and approval requirements.

Knowing about the heritage values and significance of your home also increases the appreciation of the place you live in. Recognising the values of the property and its connections to the past heightens the sense of satisfaction of caring for the place, enhancing everyday activities and increasing the pleasures of being at home.

DEFINING HERITAGE VALUES AND SIGNIFICANCE

In Victoria, heritage values and significance are informed by the *Burra Charter* and defined in the Model Heritage Criteria (HERCON).

Heritage values describe the cultural meaning found in a heritage place, and help articulate why a heritage place is important to our communities. A heritage place can have more than one heritage value, and places may have a range of values for different individuals or groups.

The **cultural heritage significance** of a place is the sum of all of the heritage values that can be recognised in that place for past, present or future generations. This can change over time, with the use of the place and as the result of new information. (It is often shortened to ‘heritage significance’.)

The *Burra Charter* provides the guiding principles for heritage practice in Australia. It articulates five heritage values – aesthetic, historic, scientific, social and spiritual value. Residential properties are most likely to be recognised for their historic and aesthetic values, but some homes will also embody other aspects.

The *Burra Charter* outlines a clear, values-based process for caring for heritage places. The first step is to understand what makes the place special – that is, identifying its heritage values. The second step is to ‘manage’ the place in line with these values – that is, establish frameworks and processes to ensure that the place remains special.

In Victoria, heritage value is assessed in terms of the eight HERCON criteria, which build on the *Burra Charter* values – historical significance, rarity, research potential, representativeness, aesthetic significance, technical significance, social significance and associative values. (Further detail on the HERCON criteria is found in the Appendix.)

PROTECTING HERITAGE VALUES AND SIGNIFICANCE

The heritage significance of some homes is formally recognised under different jurisdictions and protected through heritage listing processes – at a state level through the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR), or at a local level through municipal Heritage Overlays (HOs). Permissions to alter listed heritage places are assessed in terms of the impact on the significance and heritage values of the place. See sections 5 and 6 for more detail.

4.

Renovating a heritage home – opportunities and challenges

Heritage homes offer owners the possibility of combining the beauty, history and delight of an historic building with the comfort, practical amenity and convenience of a modern renovation – but it’s not always easy or straightforward. Working with experienced heritage consultants, architects, planners and tradespeople helps create opportunity from potential challenges. Sensitive design approaches help to balance heritage values and significance with contemporary needs.

COMFORT, FUNCTION AND AMENITY

Many heritage homes provide beautiful spaces for everyday life. However, contemporary living patterns are quite different to the habits, social structures and family roles of the past. New demographic patterns, and the need for flexibility as household groups change, motivate many renovations. Small adjustments to walls and room layouts can often make a house more suitable for contemporary living without demolishing the core spatial layout.

Expectations of comfort and amenity have also changed. Areas that were previously seen as utility spaces, such as kitchens, are now understood as an important part of living areas. Rooms that were once considered perfectly adequate in terms of light and warmth, may now be experienced as cool and cramped, and we expect closer integration of interior and exterior spaces than in the past. Our homes must also accommodate many more appliances and increased technological demands, while changes may be required to meet access and accessibility needs.



In the Kagan House, minimal new openings between rooms have greatly improved interior circulation and flow. The updated kitchen improves amenity in a cheerful and engaging manner, while resisting an aesthetic of ‘luxury’ that would not have been appropriate in this modest house that was originally built in a context of postwar austerity.

ORIGINAL ARCHITECT: ANATOL KAGAN. ARCHITECT: KENNEDY NOLAN. PHOTOGRAPH: DEREK SWALWELL.

MATERIALS AND DURABILITY

Heritage buildings are often built of fine, high quality, durable and repairable materials, with finishes and detailing that are no longer widely available – either for cost or environmental reasons. This can be one of the joys of heritage homes. Such materials have a long life if well maintained. A renovation is often an opportunity to revive or restore materials and finishes.

When working with unusual materials or older techniques and finishes, it is important to find tradespeople experienced in working with traditional materials and methods. It can be challenging to find these people, but it also helps keep trades and traditional knowledge viable into the future.

Other heritage materials may cause difficulties, such as asbestos and lead paints. It is important to work with experienced

and knowledgeable consultants who are able to devise appropriate solutions that ensure there is minimal danger from these materials, while preserving the heritage fabric and ensuring the house is safe for inhabitants now and in the future.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Heritage homes bring many advantages in terms of environmental sustainability. Maintaining existing buildings retains the energy embodied in the existing structure and materials, and reduces the resource consumption and construction waste involved in building new homes.

Renovations can also enhance performance. Many heritage houses were designed to be energy efficient – for example, through passive heating and cooling, sunshading,

natural ventilation, or the use of high thermal mass. Renovating creates the opportunity to ensure that these systems are working as intended and to optimise performance through new knowledge and technologies.

There is also potential to improve poor environmental performance and to carefully integrate new environmentally sustainable design (ESD) initiatives, such as installing renewable energy sources, and implementing water saving and rainwater collection measures.

New elements must be integrated carefully. It is important to work with skilled heritage practitioners, architects or consultants to devise an approach that will ensure excellent performance from environmental, heritage and design perspectives.



The renovation of the Bank at Vaughan makes the most of the robust materials. The work was undertaken by craftspeople experienced in traditional trades, which helps keep these skills alive.

ARCHITECT: MARIA DANOS ARCHITECTURE. **PHOTOGRAPHS:** TREVOR MEIN.

Design process and considerations

An important factor in the success of new work is the quality and sensitivity of the design response. New work should respect the context, strength, scale and character of the original, and should not overpower it. The key to success is carefully considered design that respects and supports the significance of the place...

Well-designed new work can have a positive role in the interpretation of a place.

— AUSTRALIA ICOMOS PRACTICE NOTE,
BURRA CHARTER ARTICLE 22 —
NEW WORK

Planning the renovation of a heritage home requires a holistic approach that integrates a broad range of needs, ambitions and requirements. When contemplating substantial changes, it is essential to consult early with a professional heritage consultant, architect or designer, who can help navigate the process. The skill of the design team will have a substantial impact on the quality and experience of the project.

Appropriate design approaches and solutions can vary widely in terms of aesthetics. What is fundamental is high quality work that respects the heritage values. The *Burra Charter* advocates a cautious approach: “Do as much as necessary to care for the place and to make it useable, but otherwise change it as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained.”

Pre-application discussions with Heritage Victoria or a local council planner and/or heritage advisor are strongly encouraged during the early stages of design. Advisors can provide important information and help navigate complexities or potential problems ahead of time. Many local councils provide heritage guidelines, which outline key aspects of houses of different periods and styles listed in their planning schemes, along with particular factors to consider when undertaking alterations and additions.

This section outlines a general process and key considerations. Projects differ widely, and not all the steps will be relevant to all projects. It is split into three stages – the exploratory research stage, the design stage and the approvals process. Although roughly sequential, these three stages can often overlap, and discoveries made in a later stage can occasion a rethink of earlier decisions.

Working through the following considerations will help support homeowners’ conversations with architects, heritage consultants and permit bodies.

RESEARCH, EXPLORATION, DOCUMENTATION

The start of any renovation has two aspects – to understand the heritage values and significance of the place, and to identify the practical needs and aspirations of the homeowners.

1. Understand the heritage values and significance of the place

When contemplating making changes to your heritage home, the first thing to do is to understand its heritage values and significance.

It is helpful to talk to a heritage advisor early. Many local councils employ heritage officers or advisors who may provide preliminary advice at no cost. It is also important to document the existing conditions through photographs and plans. Heritage architects and consultants can provide assistance in these early stages.

An understanding of the heritage significance may not be limited to the post-colonisation history of the site. It can be appropriate to acknowledge and highlight the Aboriginal significance of the site, but care needs to be taken to ensure this is respectful and not a form of cultural appropriation.

(i) Identify the heritage status of the home

Understanding the current heritage status of the property is fundamental. Is the property listed on the VHR, or on a HO, or is it not (yet) protected?

- Generate a Planning Report for your property at the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning website. Download the PDF report, and check to see if your property is on the HO or the VHR (note that properties on the VHR are automatically in the HO as well). The report will also identify your property's zones and any other planning overlays.
- For properties listed on the VHR, check the registration to understand exactly what is protected.
- For properties on a HO, refer to the planning controls, including the HO, policies and guideline documents, to check if a permit is required for the proposed works.

(ii) Understand the heritage significance of the home

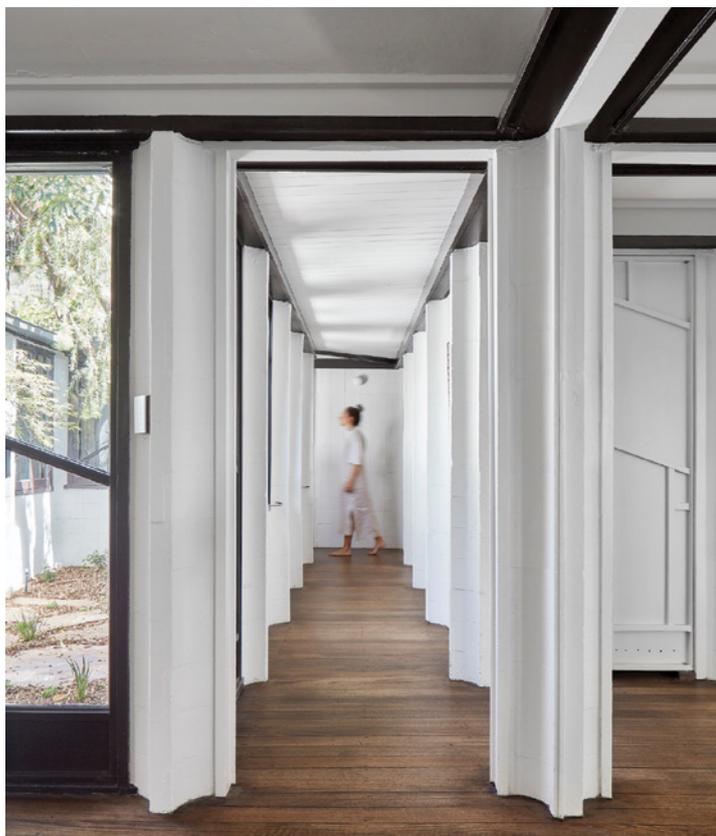
Start with existing documentation. Listings on the VHR or on a HO are likely to include valuable information about the significance of a place. This may be found in a Statement of Significance, or in a local council heritage study, a building identification sheet, or a background report. The care of highly significant properties may also be guided by a conservation management plan or strategy.

Additional research and documentation may be necessary. Homeowners and their consultants may find further information in archives. Previous owners, or those who have lived in the area for considerable lengths of time, may also be useful sources.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Does the place have the aesthetic characteristics of a particular architectural movement or style?
- Is it an exemplar of the work of a significant architect, designer or landscape architect?

- Does it show a high degree of creative or technical achievement?
- Is it distinctive within the setting? For example, is it a prominent landmark?
- Is it unusual or rare? For example, is it in an unusual style or in a remarkably intact condition?
- Does the place demonstrate a pattern of historic development that is important locally, regionally or statewide?
- Is the place associated with an important historical movement, theme or event?
- Is it associated with a person or cultural group that is important to the history of the area?
- What is the pre-colonial and/or contact period history of the site?



The Knitlock construction system used in the Former Salter House contributes to the technical significance of the house and creates particular aesthetic qualities. The system also presented substantial challenges to the renovation. These were carefully navigated by the architect and builder, and included a specialist engineering solution to a structurally unsound wall.

ORIGINAL ARCHITECT: WALTER BURLEY GRIFFIN AND MARION MAHONY GRIFFIN, c. 1922. **ARCHITECT:** JANE CAMERON AND ARCHITECT HEWSON. **PHOTOGRAPHS:** JACK LEVEL.



The garden setting of the Former Salter House had changed substantially over the years, and was not in keeping with the house or the Griffins' approach to landscape. The new garden returns the house to a more appropriate 'natural' landscape setting.

(iii) Understand how the heritage values are embodied in the home

The next step is to consider how the heritage values are embodied in the property and what this means for any proposed new works.

Heritage citations for places on the VHR or HO may describe the place's evolution, and point out later changes that may be unsympathetic or of minimal heritage significance. This can help identify the most appropriate location for future alterations.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Which elements and characteristics contribute to the heritage value of the place?
- What is essential to retain and protect?
- What areas or elements are less significant and may be changed?
- Is there an opportunity to enhance the heritage values, for example by stripping out unsympathetic additions and accretions, or reinstating lost or altered original elements?

2. Develop the brief

A brief outlines the practical needs and aspirations of the project, and integrates these with the understanding of the heritage values. It describes the level of change appropriate to the property's heritage significance and may point to potential tensions to be resolved through the design process.

A considered brief provides a touchstone throughout the course of the project. It is a live document, and may respond to ideas and discoveries through the design process. Architects and heritage consultants may help with the development of the brief.

(i) Understand the scope of work and current and future needs

Begin by documenting the extent and purpose of the project, the functional requirements and what is needed for the work to be sustainable, enduring and adaptable into the future.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Why is the work being undertaken?
- What are the owners' aspirations, intentions and aims?
- What is required to ensure that the heritage place can have an ongoing life as a home now and into the future?

- What is the extent and type of work envisaged? Does it include repair, restoration, alterations or additions?

(ii) Assess current environmental performance

The first step to improving the environmental performance of the building is to assess its current performance, and understand how it was originally intended to work.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- What works well in terms of current environmental performance?
- What needs to be improved?
- Is there an opportunity to reinstate or enhance existing systems?
- Is there an opportunity to sensitively introduce new environmental systems and elements?

(iii) Be aware of regulatory and building code requirements

Alterations and additions to heritage places must comply with a range of regulations, including the Building Code of Australia (BCA). This is a performance-based code, which means that it is possible to develop alternative design strategies as long as they meet the performance requirements. Designing an alternative



The kitchen and bathroom in the Kia Ora Apartment had been unsympathetically changed in a past renovation. These alterations were stripped out in a process of 'de-renovation'. The new facilities are clearly recognisable as new, while drawing on the aesthetic qualities of the Streamline Moderne apartment building.

ORIGINAL ARCHITECT: LEWIS LEVY, 1936. ARCHITECT: BARACCO & WRIGHT. PHOTOGRAPHS: RORY GARDINER.

solution can be a more expensive option, but it does offer flexibility in relation to heritage places.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Do you need to engage a professional consultant with the relevant expertise to advise on regulatory and/or code requirements advice? This could include the architect or a building surveyor (usually engaged by the architect).
- Are there opportunities to consult your local council building department?
- What processes will be put in place to ensure regulatory compliance?

(iv) Identify potential challenges

Identify the extent and possible impact of challenges and restrictions early on to ensure that they can be resolved through the design process. Consulting early with councils, regulatory bodies and expert advisors is key to developing appropriate solutions through the design phase.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Are there potential difficulties meeting regulatory requirements while maintaining heritage values?
- Does the property have asbestos or other types of contamination present?

- Is there deteriorating building fabric or materials?
- Is specialist advice required to address challenges?

DESIGN RESPONSES

The design of new work can respond to the heritage values of the place in many ways – from the broad questions of siting, location and internal planning to material choices and approaches to colour and detail.

3. Engage with setting, streetscape and landscape context

Heritage homes often make important contributions to the streetscape and neighbourhood character. In turn, the landscape and setting may contribute to the heritage values and amenity of the residence. Renovating a heritage home can enhance this relationship.

Alterations and additions to homes in heritage areas should be sympathetic to the streetscape and urban context, and should not visually dominate or overwhelm the heritage building or setting. New elements should be sensitively sited and maintain important views. There may also be opportunities to enhance views and vistas.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Is the property part of a set that has heritage value as an ensemble – for example, a row of terrace houses or a property in a planned housing estate? If so, how does the new work support this?
- Are there consistent front and side setbacks in the area that should be conformed to?
- How can additions or new elements be located on the site in a way that respects existing development patterns, and/or complements the streetscape?
- Are there natural features, such as mature trees, that should be retained?
- How do any new gardens, landscape elements and planting schemes respond to and enhance the heritage values of the area?
- Does the design ensure that any significant views to, from and within the heritage place are retained (including views of the heritage property itself)?
- Is the overall shape, volume and arrangement of new elements sympathetic to the predominant form of the place, precinct or streetscape?
- How does the proposed new form, massing and detail respond to and respect the heritage context?



Located on an elevated corner block, the Bustle House is prominent in the streetscape and offers view across Melbourne. The long side of the property provided the chance to develop a considered street edge that engages with the neighbourhood while preserving the tall Victorian front elevation with its more aloof, slightly ramshackle air.

ARCHITECT: FMD ARCHITECTS. PHOTOGRAPHS: PETER BENNETTS.

4. Distinguishing new and old

A key principle of the *Burra Charter* is that 'new work' should be identifiable as new. In this way, the interested observer can 'read' the building; understanding when and what it was upon first creation, and how it has changed over time. Approaches can range from a contextual yet strikingly contemporary extension through to one with traditional cladding and roof form but simpler detailing than on the original building. Under the *Burra Charter*, not all work is classified as 'new'. For example, repairs and reconstruction may be treated differently and may only be identifiable on close inspection.

New design work should be of high quality in its own right. Heritage elements and details should provide inspiration, but not be slavishly copied, and additions should complement and enhance the heritage. This should be evident across scales, from small details to major additions; and can be achieved in many ways, from subtle differences to heightened contrast.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Will new elements read as distinct from the heritage fabric, whether at first glance or in a more subtle way?



The extension to the Bank at Vaughan is clearly contemporary. The form of the 'pod' is inspired by the steep skillion roof of the bank building. Clad in a different but equally robust material (slate), it is connected to the original by a glazed link, which provides a clear visual separation between old and new.

ARCHITECT: MARIA DANOS ARCHITECTURE. **PHOTOGRAPH:** TREVOR MEIN.



Great care has been taken with finely detailed insertions in the Kia Ora Apartment. Lightly coloured curved forms inspired by the original building, pull away from the heritage fabric revealing the original cornice and architraves.

ORIGINAL ARCHITECT: LEWIS LEVY, 1936. **ARCHITECT:** BARACCO & WRIGHT. **PHOTOGRAPHS:** RORY GARDINER.

- How can the heritage place be interpreted in new and respectful ways? This could be in terms of building fabric, details, internal planning, the scale of built form, siting and relationship to setting/landscape.
- What work is restoration, rather than 'new'?

5. Planning interiors

Heritage values are often embedded in the spatial layout of a home, expressing the social conventions of previous times and capturing architectural approaches. It is important to respect these planning and spatial qualities, and retain or reference them where possible.

The allowed extent of change to internal arrangements will depend on the heritage status of the property and its significance. In general, substantial internal planning changes are more likely to be permitted to properties in HOs than to those in the VHR. This is because a HO typically does not protect interiors, whereas a VHR listing protects the whole of the place.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- What aspects of the interior planning are important to the heritage values of the home? How can these be maintained or referenced in the renovation?
- Can the amenity of the home be improved through new openings and small adjustments, rather than gutting the interior?
- Does the house have undercroft, roof spaces or underused ancillary spaces that can accommodate new living spaces or other functions?
- Can the qualities of the heritage planning and internal spatial arrangements inform the plan of new additions and the relationship between old and new?

6. Working with materials, detailing and colour

Materials, textures, colour, details and decorative elements all play important roles in defining the architecture and aesthetic of a heritage place. They tell stories of

craft and labour and can be a source of inspiration for new design elements. Well-designed contemporary details can reinterpret traditional details, create new relationships between new and old, and contribute to the character of a place.

The scale of heritage details should also be considered. Older buildings are often made of small parts – bricks, weatherboards, roof tiles, fretwork – that relate to the scale of human bodies (the size of a fist, a head, the length of a forearm, and so on). This intimate scale can be mirrored in new work in a contemporary form.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- What aspects of materials, details and colour convey heritage values? What should be preserved or conserved?
- How might these inspire the design of new elements?



The colours, materials and details of new elements at the Kagan House draw on the Modernist aesthetic of the original house, and reinterpret them in a contemporary manner.

ORIGINAL ARCHITECT: ANATOL KAGAN. **ARCHITECT:** KENNEDY NOLAN. **PHOTOGRAPHS:** DEREK SWALWELL.

7. Improving environmental performance

Renovating a heritage home presents opportunities to increase environmental performance and enhance comfort.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Is there an opportunity to enhance existing environmental systems, such as passive heating and cooling?
- Is there potential to integrate new passive heating and cooling through controlling sun access, sun shading and the orientation of additions and/or new openings?
- Can draughts be prevented through new door and window seals?
- Can insulation be added to the roof space?
- Is there an opportunity to carefully introduce new elements to help reduce energy consumption – for example, solar power, double or secondary glazing, energy-efficient lighting, heating and cooling, and hot water heating systems?

- Is there an opportunity to carefully introduce new elements to help reduce water usage – for example, rainwater tanks, grey water harvesting and water-saving devices?

PERMITS AND APPROVALS

Before starting any alterations or additions to a heritage home, it is important to obtain the relevant permits. Many changes to protected heritage places are subject to specific approvals and cannot proceed without them.

8. Gaining permission

Approval processes are different according to the type of listing and the particular protections it extends.

Pre-application discussions with Heritage Victoria or local council planners and/or heritage advisor are strongly encouraged during the early stages of the design process. This is important to navigate any complexities or potential problems ahead of time.

Many of the questions listed as considerations in the preceding sections relate to considerations in the *Heritage Act 2017* and local planning schemes. If the homeowner and their design and heritage team have moved carefully through the process outlined above, the results will feed into more productive preliminary discussions and a smoother permit application process.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- What permits are required for the proposed works?
- What information is required to apply for a permit?
- What is the criteria against which a permit is assessed?

Refer to the next section for more detail on these matters.



The Jewel Box House took a very different approach to environmental sustainability. Here Passive House principles were followed, which included installing new windows detailed to relate to the original.

ARCHITECT: LOVELL CHEN. **PHOTOGRAPH:** TREVOR MEIN.



The Arnold Street House sought to retain as much of the original building fabric as possible. This is an inherently sustainable approach which retains embodied energy. Comfort and environmental performance was improved through the addition of delicately designed internal shutters, which improved thermal performance and meant the very thin original glazing could be retained.

ARCHITECT: ROBERT SIMEONI ARCHITECTS.
PHOTOGRAPH: TREVOR MEIN.

6. Permissions to renovate a heritage home

New work or alterations to a property listed in the VHR require a heritage permit from Heritage Victoria, while changes to places in the HO are usually managed by the local council and require a planning permit. In addition, all new work or renovations must meet the requirements of the Building Code of Australia (BCA).

VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER LISTED PROPERTIES

The VHR protects places of state-level heritage significance under the *Heritage Act 2017*. All registrations in the VHR meet one or more of the HERCON Criteria in relation to the state, and are considered important to understanding the history and development of Victoria.

A VHR listing generally covers the whole place – including buildings (exteriors and interiors), outbuildings, land and sometimes landscape – unless elements are expressly excluded. VHR listings are supported by a statement of significance, which outlines how and why the place is significant. It is essential to understand this when considering making changes to a listed place.

When is a permit required?

Heritage permits are required for work that may impact the heritage significance of the listed place. For heritage homes, this includes:

- extensions, interior works, demolition or relocation of buildings and structures, changes to colour schemes and signage
- construction of new buildings and garden structures such as fences, decks, pathways, driveways
- works to registered trees, gardens and landscapes that are not regular maintenance works.

Note: The Heritage Act regulates physical changes to heritage places. It does not regulate the ‘use’ of those places, which is managed through the local planning system.

How is a permit application assessed?

All new work proposed for a VHR-listed heritage place is considered in terms of its impact on heritage significance. The work is assessed in terms of the relevant HERCON criteria, and the extent to which the refusal of the application would affect the reasonable or economic use of the place. (In this context, ‘reasonable use’ relates to the compatible use of the property, not the owner at a particular point in time. This means that an application may be refused if someone else could reasonably use the heritage place without carrying out the proposed works.)

Other considerations include submissions from other interested parties and any other matters relating to the protection and conservation of the registered place – for example, any repairs or conservation works required to maintain the place, or the need to upgrade to meet Building Code requirements.

Permit exemptions may be issued for minor works that do not harm the heritage significance of the place.

HERITAGE OVERLAY PROPERTIES

Places of local significance are protected through Heritage Overlays (HO) embedded in local municipal planning schemes and administered by the local council. These are intended to conserve and enhance heritage places, precincts or buildings and those elements that contribute to the natural or cultural significance of places. They also ensure that new development does not affect the significance of heritage places or precincts.

Local councils also commission heritage studies, which provide an understanding of the extent and significance of heritage places throughout their municipality. These studies may record detailed information and recommendations about individual buildings, places and precincts.

A HO may cover a single significant property or encompass a number of properties in a precinct overlay – most properties within a precinct are designated as individually significant or as contributory. Generally, HOs protect the exterior of a heritage place or buildings in a precinct with a focus on streetscape, particularly for

precinct overlays. Occasionally HO protections may also include interiors, trees and other elements.

The statement of significance is an essential part of the HO. It outlines what is significant and how and why it is significant, justified against the heritage criteria. At a precinct level, this statement will encompass the area as a whole and may not specifically refer to all individual properties within the overlay.

When is a permit required?

Under a HO, a planning permit from the local council is usually required to undertake the following:

- demolish or remove a building or part of a building, or a fence
- construct a building, or part of a building, or fence
- construct or carry out works, including domestic services, solar energy systems, rainwater tanks, swimming pool or spa, pergola or verandah
- externally alter a building.

Some HOs also regulate external paint colours, trees and internal alterations.

How is a permit application assessed?

The Victorian Planning Provisions include decision guidelines that councils refer to in making decisions on permit applications.

All applications to undertake work on a property under a HO are assessed in terms of the impact on the significance of the place. Other important decision guidelines include whether the proposal is in keeping with the character and appearance of adjacent buildings; local policies; and any applicable design guidelines.

It is important to note that there may be other overlays or zoning controls that apply to your land, which will also be taken into account as part of your permit application.



A very 'light touch' was taken at Kell Cottage, an 1840s house in Port Fairy. The structure was stabilised, exposed worn surfaces were patched and sealed, and the whole was cleaned. Finishes on surfaces that are protected from the weather were left as is, while new or exposed materials have been painted.

ARCHITECT & PHOTOGRAPH: BRENDAN O'TOOLE ARCHITECT.

This guide provides an overview of the process of renovating a heritage home and the key factors to be considered. It seeks to show how understanding a building and its setting is at the core of thoughtful and considered approaches that maintain the heritage significance of a place. This helps ensure that heritage properties have an ongoing life and accommodate many and varied occupants now and into the future.

The guide is complemented by a set of case studies. These demonstrate a broad range of approaches in diverse contexts – from nineteenth-century terraces to modest postwar homes that encapsulate the optimism of the period. Some demonstrate the potential of delicate insertions and subtle changes, others show how more substantial alterations can nonetheless respect and retain the heritage values. By exploring these examples, we hope that readers will find insight and inspiration for their own heritage project.

AT HOME WITH HERITAGE

A CONSIDERED APPROACH TO RENOVATING YOUR HOUSE

CASE STUDY

Kia Ora Apartment

PROJECT TEAM
ORIGINAL ARCHITECT: LEWIS LEVY, 1936
ARCHITECT: BARACCO & WRIGHT – LOUISE WRIGHT, MAURO BARACCO AND JONATHAN WARE
BUILDER: ATMA BUILDERS
PHOTOGRAPHY: RORY GARDNER
Heritage Listing: None

This is a subtle and delicate renovation of a Streamline Moderne apartment in inner Melbourne. The new work presents a delightful response to the aesthetic and heritage values of the apartment, while creating beautiful new spaces for daily life.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

This small apartment is within the Kia Ora apartment complex, located on St Kilda Road, Melbourne's 'grand boulevard'. Designed by architect Lewis Levy and built in 1936, the large building was commissioned by the Dixon family, owners of the Kia-Ora cordial factory in nearby Prahran. The Streamline Moderne building captures the ambitions and cultural shifts of the interwar period. The apartments imagined a new 'modern' mode of living – both in the long lines and curved forms of the building and interiors, and in facilities provided, such as panel hydronic heating, walk-in wardrobes and modern kitchens, with a larger communal kitchen on the ground floor. Apartments of this kind catered to well-off homeowners who were moving away from larger houses with servant quarters to elegantly appointed, centrally located apartments.

The building is not currently afforded heritage protection. However, the owners' corporation takes a careful and thorough approach to the custodianship of the building.

OPPORTUNITIES

The apartment was in good condition overall. Much of the original fabric was intact – including details such as window frames, floorboards, skirting, cornices and



Top The new kitchen replaces an earlier renovation. The kitchen 'bench' is designed as a central table.
Bottom The Kia Ora Apartment is a careful renovation of an apartment within a large Streamline Moderne complex.

“ In this small apartment, a lot of attention is paid to the domestic details of handles, light switches, shelves, texture and materiality, light and lighting and places to sit.” – BARACCO & WRIGHT

LESSONS

- Highly refined subtle design of new elements evokes the feel of the Streamline Moderne period, while creating a lively new.
- The curved forms allow the new elements to push back and reveal the heritage fabric.
- Significant improvements can be achieved through close attention to detail.

architects. There had been no major internal changes, with the exception of alterations to the kitchen and bathroom, which required the renovating. The original plan was in place and well laid out, and the apartment was well located in the block with a balcony overlooking a large tree. The architect commented that they had great material to work with.

CHALLENGES
The core challenge was that present in all heritage projects – to develop a sensitive design approach that would support and enhance the heritage values of the place. In this project, the principal question was: how to add new elements – such as built-in joinery – while ensuring that the original interior details remained visible and valued. This project did not pose substantial practical, logistical or planning challenges.

APPROACH AND OUTCOME
This two-bedroom apartment has been renovated with great care and delicacy, although the building is not formally protected, the architects followed Burra Charter principles in their work. The design approach was to add a new layer that evokes the feel and quality of Streamline Moderne – through the use of curved forms, colour, texture and materials – but is subtly new and contemporary. There are no major changes to the interior layout, instead the design concentrates attention on the details of domestic life. The original dark timber floor, skirting, window frames, doors and architraves were all retained and restored. The new elements are lighter and paler – muted green painted marble tables and benches, glass spheres of light and pale grey walls are juxtaposed against the darker Moderne features. Curved forms, inspired by the original building, become

Living room with a new hearth and custom designed couch. Curving forms allow the new elements to sit separately from the heritage fabric.

Floor plan: Entry 3 Kitchen 3 Bedroom 4 Living 3 Bedroom 2 Laundry

An effective way to respect and give space to the heritage fabric while creating beautiful new living spaces. The additions are designed as a series of insertions – built-in cupboards curve away from the walls and ceiling, creating a sense of depth and revealing the original cornice and architraves. The rounded ends of the new Carrara marble benches, shelves and hearth allow these elements to float within the heritage rooms. The kitchen bench has become a large oval table – a place to sit as well as a place to prepare food and wash dishes. In the small bathroom, curved tiles create a unified space. Throughout the renovation, joy is found in small, everyday elements. Door, window and cupboard handles, light switches and small shelves – original and new – are all considered as part of a coherent and integrated interior. The places to sit are carefully considered – custom designed furniture occupies beautifully lit spaces, hidden in scale, but large in ambition, this project exemplifies the potential of close attention to interior quality and detail.

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8.

Further reading

Heritage Victoria

Advice on a wide range of general matters is available on the Heritage Victoria website.

<https://www.heritage.vic.gov.au>

Planning Schemes online

Access to all approved planning schemes in Victoria including ordinance (text) and maps that describe the land use and overlays.

<https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/schemes-and-amendments/browse-planning-schemes>

VicPlan

A searchable tool to view, query and create your own property reports.

<https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/vicplan>

What House is That? A Guide to Victoria's Housing Styles

A short, accessible guide to the main architectural styles of houses found in Victoria, downloadable from the Heritage Council website.

<https://heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/your-home/what-house-is-that>

Historic Homes. Researching your historic house with Public Record Office Victoria and other sources

An overview of how to get started researching a house using archives and public records.

https://issuu.com/statearchivesvictoria/docs/historic_home_no_bleed_flipbook_v1.1?e=11265066%2F12638683

The Burra Charter

The foundation document and essential reference for all work on heritage sites, structures and spaces within Australia. The *Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, The Burra Charter, revised 2013*, is endorsed by Australian government heritage agencies and community organisations.

The *Illustrated Burra Charter* (2004) expands on principles of the charter and provides examples of how these have been applied in specific places.

<https://australia.icomos.org/publications/burra-charter-practice-notes>

ICOMOS Practice Notes

Practical advice on a wide variety of topics. 'Understanding and Assessing Cultural Significance' provides a useful overview of the five *Burra Charter* heritage values and includes a suite of questions to help understand each value. 'New Work' provides a detailed explanation of different kinds of work and the principles that guide alterations and additions. 'Heritage and Sustainability 1: Built Heritage' addresses improving the environmental performance of heritage buildings.

<https://australia.icomos.org/publications/burra-charter-practice-notes>

Good Design + Heritage

A guide from the Office of the Victorian Government Architect exploring good design in heritage contexts. This is not specific to residential properties, but provides further insight into designing within heritage places.

<https://www.ovga.vic.gov.au/good-design-heritage-issue-7>

Appendix

HERITAGE CRITERIA

All assessments of heritage value and significance in Victoria are made in relation to the Model Heritage Criteria known as HERCON. These criteria have been slightly modified by the Heritage Council of Victoria to suit Victorian requirements (see opposite). Places listed in the Victorian Heritage Register are assessed against these criteria in relation to the cultural history of the state. Places listed on local council heritage overlays are assessed in terms of the cultural history of the local area.

Further detail about the use of these criteria in assessing places of state-level cultural heritage significance can be found in the *Victorian Heritage Register Criteria and Threshold Guidelines*.

<https://heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/heritage-protection/criteria-and-thresholds-for-inclusion>

Criterion A	Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.
Criterion B	Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.
Criterion C	Potential to yield information that will contribute to understanding Victoria's cultural history.
Criterion D	Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.
Criterion E	Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.
Criterion F	Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.
Criterion G	Strong or special association with a particular present-day community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.
Criterion H	Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.
