

# Statement of recommendation from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, to the Heritage Council of Victoria

**Name:** Maisie's Plots  
**Address:** Bogong High Plains Road,  
Bogong  
**Local Government Authority:** Alpine Shire  
**Provisional VHR No.** PROV VHR H2424



Maisie's Plot at Pretty Valley, April 2022

## Executive Director recommendation

Under Part 3, Division 3 of the *Heritage Act 2017* ('the Act') I recommend to the Heritage Council of Victoria that Maisie's Plots, Bogong High Plains Road, Bogong, should be included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) in the category of registered place.

**STEVEN AVERY**  
Executive Director, Heritage Victoria  
DATE OF RECOMMENDATION: 18 May 2022



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## Executive Director recommendation to the Heritage Council of Victoria

The Executive Director, Heritage Victoria ('Executive Director'), recommends that the Heritage Council include Maisie's Plots, 2 Bogong High Plains Road, Bogong, in the VHR in accordance with section 49 of the Act by determining:

- That Maisie's Plots is of State-level cultural heritage significance and should be included in the VHR in the category of registered place in accordance with section 49(1)(a) of the Act.
- That the proposed categories of works or activities which may be carried out in relation to Maisie's Plots for which a permit under the Act is not required will not harm the cultural heritage significance of the place under section 49(3) of the Act.

### Photographs

On the day of the site visit in April 2022 it was raining, overcast and there was poor visibility. Some photos in this report have been drawn from other sources in years prior to 2022 for the sake of clarity.



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## The process from here

### 1. The Heritage Council publishes the Executive Director's recommendation (section 41).

The Heritage Council will publish the Executive Director's recommendation on its website for a period of 60 days.

### 2. Making a submission to the Heritage Council (sections 44 and 45)

Within the 60 day publication period, any person or body with a real and substantial interest in the place or object can make a submission to the Heritage Council. This submission can support the recommendation, or object to the recommendation and a hearing can be requested in relation to the submission. Information about making a submission and submission forms are available on the Heritage Council of Victoria's website:

<https://heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/registrations-reviews/executive-director-recommendations/>

### 3. Heritage Council determination (sections 46 and 49)

The Heritage Council is an independent statutory body. It is responsible for making the final determination to include or not include the place or object in the VHR, or amend a place or object already in the VHR.

If no submissions are received the Heritage Council must make a determination within 40 days of the publication closing date.

If submissions are received, the Heritage Council may decide to hold a hearing in relation to the submission. If a hearing does take place, the Heritage Council must make a determination within 90 days after the completion of the hearing.

### 4. Obligations of owners of places and objects (sections 42 and 43)

The owner of a place or object which is the subject of a recommendation to the Heritage Council has certain obligations under the *Heritage Act 2017*. These relate to advising the Executive Director in writing of any works or activities that are being carried out, proposed or planned for the place or object.

The owner also has an obligation to provide a copy of this statement of recommendation to any potential purchasers of the place or object before entering into a contract.

### 5. Further information

The relevant sections of the Act are provided at Appendix 1.

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## Description

The following is a description of Maisie's Plots at the time of the site inspection by Heritage Victoria in April 2022.

Maisie's Plots are two non-contiguous areas of land about 1 km apart used for ecological monitoring experiments. The Rocky Valley Plots are located on Alpine Peatland and consist of a fenced enclosure (7.50ha) and an unfenced control area (5ha). The Pretty Valley Plots are located on Alpine Grassland and consist of a fenced enclosure (0.102ha) and an unfenced control area (0.102ha). At the Rocky Valley Plots, a seasonal temporary deer-proof fence is erected annually between October and May around the fenced enclosure at a varying distances of up to 20 metres from the original plot fence line.



Pretty Valley Plot, Summer 2020-21

Source: Associate Professor John Morgan, Department of Environment & Genetics, La Trobe University



Pretty Valley Plot Interpretative Signage, 2022

Source: Heritage Victoria

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Rocky Valley Plot (behind a deer-proof fence) 2019

Source: <https://rcaae.org/2019/05/09/protecting-the-past-by-ensuring-its-future/>

## History

### Maisie Fawcett

#### *Education*

Stella Grace Maisie Fawcett (nee Carr) (1912-88) was a botanist and ecologist born in the Melbourne working-class suburb of Footscray. Dux of the local primary school, she attended the then co-educational Melbourne High School and won a university 'free place'. After time as a schoolteacher, Fawcett graduated BSc in 1935 and MSc in 1936 majoring in botany with honours. She received several scholarships and an exhibition. With research scholarships and grants she undertook fungal research in the University of Melbourne Botany Department. In 1940 an accident to her head and neck 1940-41 prevented further microscope work.

### High country fieldwork

#### *Omeo - Hume Dam catchment erosion project*

Realising Fawcett's potential, Professor John Turner, Head of Botany at the University of Melbourne redirected her research grant to an urgent ecological project investigating the widespread soil erosion in the catchment of the new Hume Dam. Across Victoria, soil erosion and the resulting siltation of water reserves was a growing problem. Today the damaging impact of cattle grazing on the ecology of the High Country, including patterns of soil erosion, is well understood. But in the early twentieth century, there was little scientific evidence to conclusively demonstrate this. By January 1939 the Black Friday bushfires had hastened the rate of erosion. More research was needed to protect water catchment areas and dams so that siltation did not become an expensive problem for government water projects.

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In 1940 the *Soil Conservation Act* established Victoria's new Soil Conservation Board (SCB). It instigated an investigation into soil erosion and ecology of the High Country in 1941 in collaboration with Professor Turner. He selected eroded areas near Omeo in the Hume catchment area for research. He needed a skilled ecologist to undertake the fieldwork. At this time, the High Country was a remote and rugged part of Victoria: some areas were only accessible on horseback and communication by telephone was limited. Given these difficult conditions, it was initially thought that a man was best suited to the job.

As it was wartime, however, male ecologists were in short supply. Turner convinced the SCB that his talented female postgraduate, Maisie Fawcett, could capably undertake this work. From September 1941, Fawcett moved to Omeo. As part of her pasture regeneration studies, she had large areas fenced to exclude stock on the steep eroded slopes of Mt Mesley and Mt Livingstone. In these exclosures she recorded vegetation changes and also stream flow and siltation rates. Fawcett travelled extensively on foot and horseback across the hilly Hume catchment area becoming familiar with the Alpine environment and its particular ecology. Being a city-bred woman, a scientist, a representative of the University and the SCB was not easy in a rural community. Fawcett overcame entrenched conservative attitudes, wartime shortages, physical exhaustion and challenging terrain and weather conditions. In 1944 she was officially appointed the SCB's first Research Officer.

## *Bogong High Plains - Kiewa hydro-electric scheme erosion project*

During her time at Omeo, Fawcett became aware that soil erosion in the Bogong High Plains to the northwest of Omeo could potentially threaten the new expensive Kiewa hydro-electric scheme which had been under construction since 1938. To address this concern, she established research exclosures in that catchment area.

## Rocky Valley Plots

In 1944-45 Fawcett established a large fenced exclosure in Rocky Valley (a peatland area with various vegetation types) which excluded cattle, and an unfenced control area in which cattle could graze.

## Pretty Valley Plots

In 1946 Fawcett selected land for an exclosure on the edge of Pretty Valley (grassland area) which was fenced in 1947 to exclude cattle, and an unfenced control area in which cattle could graze.

Turner arranged for several scientists (including Sophie Ducker, Ethel McLennan and Nancy Millis) the self-proclaimed 'High Plains Plant Hounds', to assist Fawcett during several summers. In 1945, a Bogong High Plains Committee was established and in 1946 a Royal Commission was held into the grazing of forests, at which Fawcett and Turner gave evidence. Representing the SCB, Maisie was the only woman on the Bogong High Plains Advisory Committee which determined the permissible number of cattle and length of their stay each summer.

## *Fieldwork reception and findings*

Fawcett's investigations were not always welcome. She criticised the cattlemen's frequent burning of vegetation and examined the effects of rabbits and stock on indigenous pastures. Her research earned her the titles of 'Washaway Woman' and 'Erosion Girl'. That said, Maisie slowly and consistently won the respect of cattlemen, of SCB members and others by speaking not only from her love for the high country, but from the clear, uncluttered evidence that the land itself was revealing. In 1949 Fawcett became a lecturer in systematic botany and ecology at the University of Melbourne and continued her research at the Alpine plots. Fawcett's findings - that summer grazing was detrimental to the sustenance of native vegetation and encouraged soil erosion - were published in 1959, co-written with John Turner, in the *Australian Journal of Botany*. Her plots have been monitored ever since. The compelling evidence provided by this longitudinal data contributed to the creation of the Alpine National Park in 1989 and the cessation of all licenced grazing in the Victorian Alpine Park in 2005.

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## Legacy

Maisie's Plots are thought by many within the scientific community to be one of the foundations of Australian ecology.<sup>1</sup> The plots at Rocky Valley and Pretty Valley were among the first such exclosures in Australia. They are one of the longest running ecological experiments in Australia and are thought by some within the scientific community to be of National Significance.<sup>2</sup> They are amongst the longest continual grassland monitoring projects in the world.<sup>3</sup> Prior to the 1940s there had been only a handful of exclosure projects in Australia.<sup>4</sup> When most of Australia's few ecologists were male, Fawcett undertook ground-breaking ecological research that revealed unequivocally the damaging effects of cattle on the vegetation and soils of major Australian water-catchments. Fawcett was a gifted scientist and pioneering ecologist who grasped opportunities that took her to the forefront of her field. 'Maisie's Plots' continue to be monitored by new generations of scientists and is yielding new information about climate change.



Maisie Fawcett on her horse 'Sheila', Bogong High Plains, 1949  
Source: <https://www.tern.org.au/share-tweet-decades-of-data-sustaining-the-australian-alps/>



Pretty Valley, 1946  
Source: Associate Professor John Morgan, Department of Environment & Genetics, La Trobe University

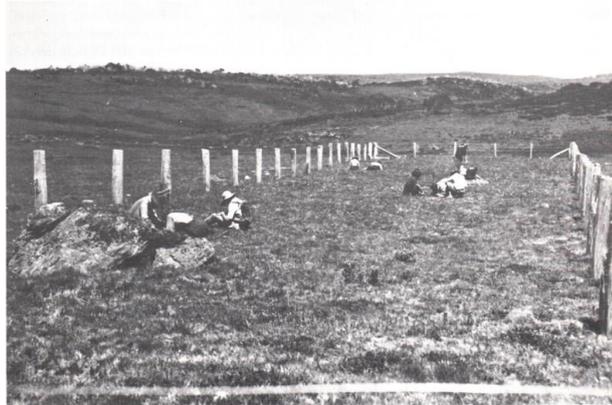
<sup>1</sup> Linden Gillbank, 'Ecological investigations of Maisie Fawcett', *News of Friends of Grasslands*, September - October 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Morgan, John & Pete Green, Vegetation change in the Pretty Valley alpine grasslands from 1945 to 2003: the influence of grazing on plant community succession (undated, c.2009) [http://aff.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Morgan\\_Vegetation\\_change\\_in\\_the\\_Victorian\\_alps.pdf](http://aff.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Morgan_Vegetation_change_in_the_Victorian_alps.pdf) [Accessed 19 January 2022]

<sup>3</sup> Personal correspondence with Associate Professor John Morgan, Department of Environment & Genetics, La Trobe University, 15 May 2022.

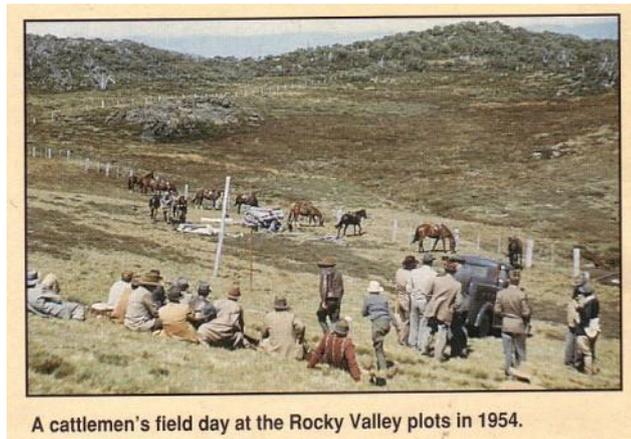
<sup>4</sup> Personal correspondence with Linden Gillbank, 4 May 2022. These included one at Koonamore, South Australia (1925) to exclude rabbits and sheep which is still being monitored.

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Pretty Valley, 1947

Source: Associate Professor John Morgan, Department of Environment & Genetics, La Trobe University



A cattlemen's field day at the Rocky Valley plots in 1954.

Rocky Valley, 1954

Source: <https://rcaae.org/2019/05/09/protecting-the-past-by-ensuring-its-future/>



Pretty Valley, 2009

Source: <https://rcaae.org/>

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## Selected bibliography

Australian Research Data 'Soil Conservation', <https://researchdata.edu.au/soil-conservation/490060> [Accessed 25 April 2022]

Feller, Evelyn 'Meeting Maisie', *Park Watch*, December 2018.

Gillbank, Linden 'Carr, Stella Grace Maisie', Australian Dictionary of Biography, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/carr-stella-grace-maisie-201> [Accessed 21 April 2022]

Gillbank, Linden 'Carr, Stella Grace Maisie' *The Encyclopedia of Women & Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia*, <http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0493b.htm> [Accessed 21 April 2022]

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Gillbank, Linden *From System Garden To Scientific Research: The University Of Melbourne's School of Botany Under Its First Two Professors (1906-1973)*, School of Botany, University of Melbourne, Parkville, 2010.

Gillbank, Linden 'The University of Melbourne Herbarium from McCoy to MELU: A broken paper-trail' University of Melbourne Collections, Issue 1, November 2007 chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/[https://museumsandcollections.unimelb.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/1378729/gillbank.pdf](https://museumsandcollections.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1378729/gillbank.pdf) [Accessed 16 May 2022]

Kelly, Noelene, *Shoulder to the Wind: A lyrical evocation of the Bogong High Plains*, PhD Thesis, Faculty of Arts, Victoria University, March 2013.

Regional Forest Agreement - Historic Themes - Northeast Victoria Survey (1997)

Morgan, John & Pete Green, *Vegetation change in the Pretty Valley alpine grasslands from 1945 to 2003: the influence of grazing on plant community succession* (undated, c.2009) [http://aff.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Morgan\\_Vegetation\\_change\\_in\\_the\\_Victorian\\_alps.pdf](http://aff.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Morgan_Vegetation_change_in_the_Victorian_alps.pdf) [Accessed 19 January 2022]

Stretton, LEB, *Report of the Royal Commission to inquire into Forest Grazing together with Minutes of Evidence*, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1946.

Personal discussion and correspondence with:

- Dr Linden Gillbank, Honorary Researcher, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne
- Associate Professor John Morgan, Department of Environment & Genetics, La Trobe University
- Associate Professor Ewen Silvester, Director of the Research Centre for Applied Alpine Ecology (RCAAE)
- Elaine Thomas, Ranger, Alpine National Park, Parks Victoria.

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## Further information

<b>Relevant Authority</b>	Alpine Shire
<b>Heritage Overlay</b>	None
<b>Other Overlays</b>	Bushfire Management Overlay
<b>Other Listings</b>	None
<b>Date of construction</b>	Rocky Valley 1944-45 Pretty Valley 1946-47

### Traditional Owner Information

Maisie's Plots is located on the traditional land of the Jaithmathang people. Under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, a Registered Aboriginal Party has not been formally recognised.

### Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register

Maisie's Plots is not included in the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register.

### Integrity

The integrity of the place is excellent. The cultural heritage values of the place can be easily read in the extant fabric. (April 2022).

### Intactness

The intactness of the place is very good. Some of the original fencing at the Pretty Valley Plot is showing signs of deterioration. (April 2022).

### Condition

The plots are in excellent condition and well maintained by the owners and managers. (April 2022).

Note: The condition of a place or object does not influence the assessment of its cultural heritage significance. A place/object/object integral may be in very poor condition and still be of very high cultural heritage significance. Or a place/object/object integral may be in excellent condition but be of low cultural heritage significance.

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## Statutory requirements under section 40.

### Terms of the recommendation (section 40 (3)(a))

The Executive Director recommends that Maisie's Plots is included in the VHR in the category of Registered Place.

### Information to identify the place or object (section 40(3)(b))

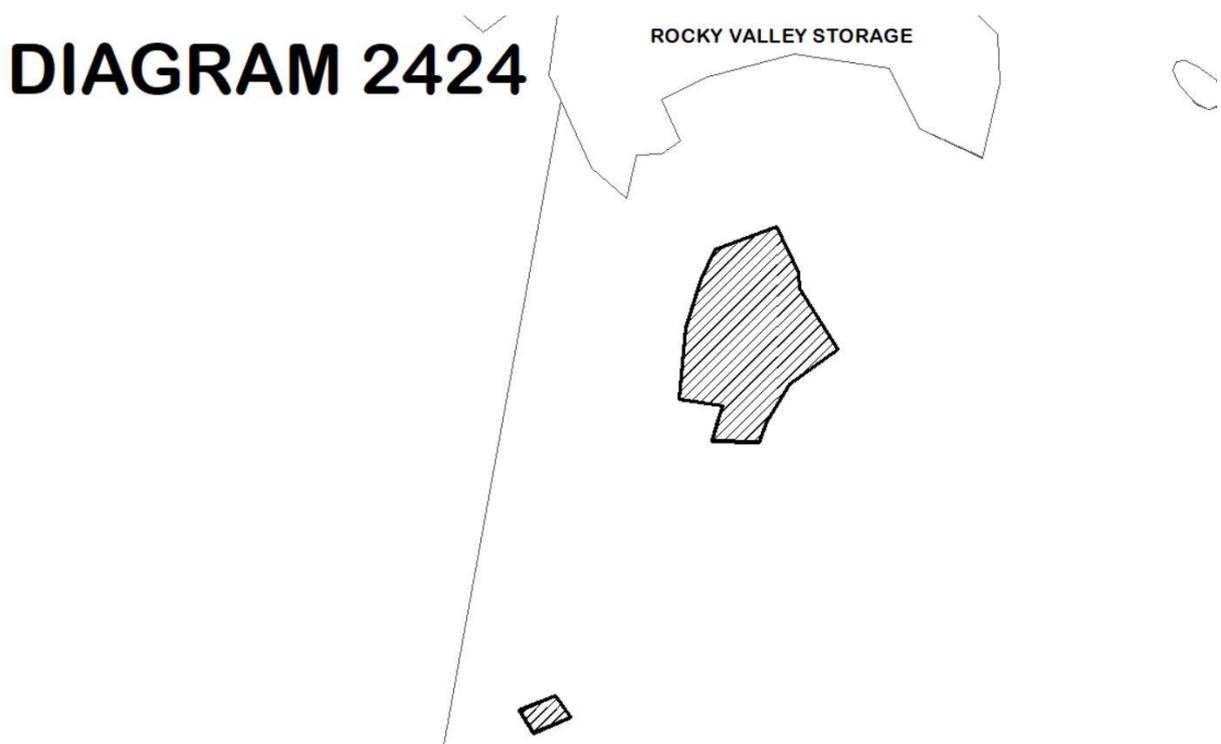
**Name:** Maisie's Plots

**Address:** Bogong High Plains Road, Bogong, Alpine Shire

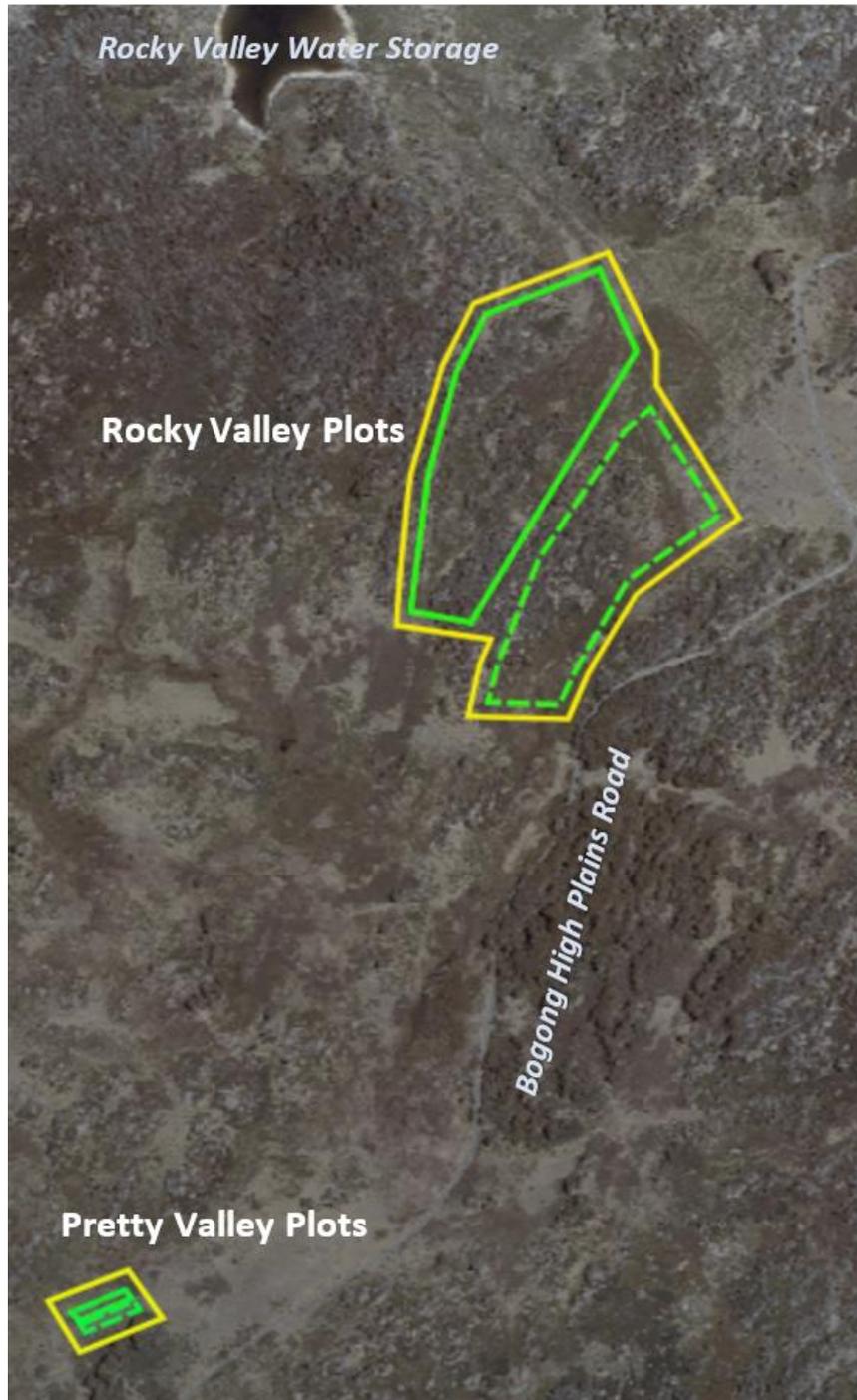
### Proposed extent of registration

The Executive Director recommends that the extent of registration for Maisie's Plots be gazetted as:

All of the place consisting of two non-contiguous areas shown hatched on Diagram 2424 encompassing part of Allotment 3 Parish of Nowyeo, known as Rocky Valley (17.5ha) and as Pretty Valley (0.9ha). The two areas are located approximately 1km apart.

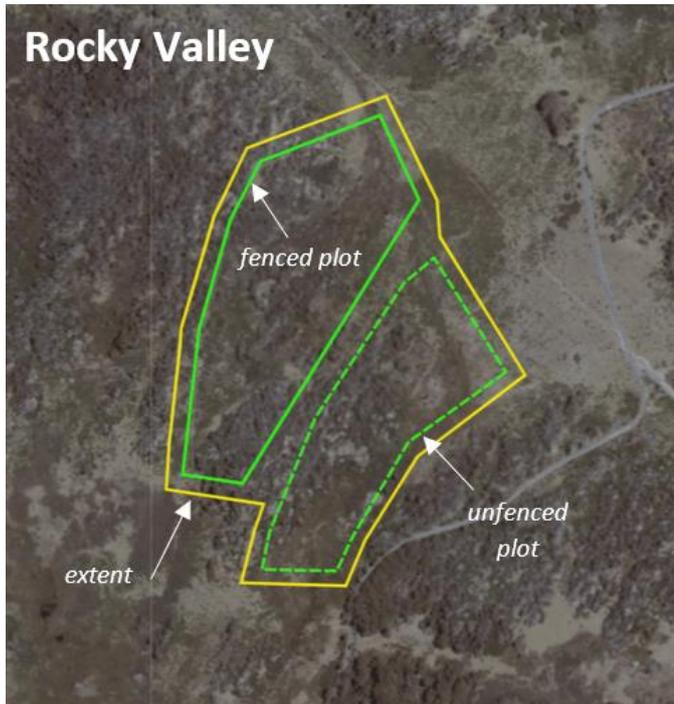


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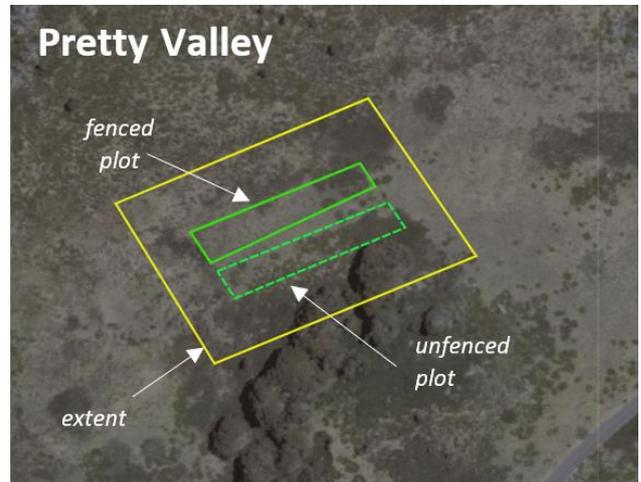


Aerial photo of the place showing proposed extent of registration

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Aerial photo of the Rocky Valley Plots



Aerial photo of the Pretty Valley Plots

Note: These aerial views provide a visual representation. They are not precise representations of the recommended extent of registration. Due to distortions associated with aerial photography some elements of the place may appear as though they are outside the extent of registration.

## Rationale for the extent of registration

The recommended extent of registration includes all of Maisie's Plots and 20 metres of land around them sufficient for the protection, conservation and understanding of the place. This land is described here:

Plot Name	Size in Ha
<b>Rocky Valley</b>	
Fenced plot	7.50Ha
Unfenced plot	5.00Ha
Area of proposed Rocky Valley extent	17.50Ha
<b>Pretty Valley</b>	
Fenced plot	0.102Ha
Unfenced plot	0.102Ha
Area of proposed Pretty Valley extent	0.916Ha
<b>Total Maisie's Plots land area proposed for VHR</b>	<b>18.416Ha</b>

It should be noted that the proposed extent of registration includes all the land, all hard landscape features, structures fixtures and interpretative signs. A permit or permit exemption from Heritage Victoria would be required for any works within the proposed extent of registration, apart from those identified in the categories of works or activities in this recommendation.

# Statement of recommendation from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, to the Heritage Council of Victoria

## Reasons for the recommendation, including an assessment of the State-level cultural heritage significance of place/object/object integral (section 40(3)(c))

Following is the Executive Director's assessment of Maisie's Plots against the tests set out in *The Victorian Heritage Register Criteria and Thresholds Guidelines*. A place or object must be found by the Heritage Council to meet Step 2 of at least one criterion to meet the State level threshold for inclusion in the VHR.

### CRITERION A: Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

#### Step 1: Test for satisfying Criterion A

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.

*plus*

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.

*plus*

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

#### Executive Director's Response

Maisie's Plots has a clear association with ecology (environmental biology), an interdisciplinary field studying the relationships between living organisms, including humans, animals, plants and their physical environment. This association is evident in the physical fabric of the place and in documentary resources and oral history. The field of ecology has made a strong and influential contribution to Victoria by providing information about how land, soil, water, animals, the natural environment and agriculture should be managed by people.

Step 1 of Criterion A is likely to be satisfied.

#### Step 2: Test for satisfying Criterion A at the State Level

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

Maisie's Plots allows the clear association with the study of ecology (environmental biology) to be understood better than most other places in Victoria with substantially the same association. They are one of the longest running ecological experiments in Australia and are thought by many within the scientific community to be of National Significance.<sup>5</sup> The data yielded for around 75 years have helped shape land, water and animal management principles in the High Country and Alpine areas. Ecological monitoring experiments are often time-limited, leaving little built fabric behind once the data has been collected. Maisie's Plots allows the history of ecology in Victoria to be particularly well understood because the place is still intact and scientists still monitor the plots and collect data to this day.

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

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<sup>5</sup> Morgan, John & Pete Green, Vegetation change in the Pretty Valley alpine grasslands from 1945 to 2003: the influence of grazing on plant community succession (undated, c.2009) [http://aff.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Morgan\\_Vegetation\\_change\\_in\\_the\\_Victorian\\_alps.pdf](http://aff.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Morgan_Vegetation_change_in_the_Victorian_alps.pdf) [Accessed 19 January 2022]

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## CRITERION B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

### Step 1: Test for Satisfying Criterion B

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.

*plus*

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.

*plus*

The place/object is *RARE OR UNCOMMON*, being one of a small number of places/objects remaining that demonstrates the important event, phase etc.

*or*

The place/object is *RARE OR UNCOMMON*, containing unusual features of note that were not widely replicated

*or*

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.

### Executive Director's Response

Maisie's Plots has a clear association with the history of ecology (environmental biology), an interdisciplinary field studying the relationships between living organisms, including humans, animals, plants and their physical environment. This is evident in the physical fabric of the place, documentary resources and oral history.

As ecological exclosures which have survived from the early twentieth century, Maisie's Plots are unusual and uncommon. This is because 'ecological exclosures' are part of a specialist scientific class of place of which few were ever established (unlike terrace houses, railway stations or churches). Some exclosures were established for a period of time then dismantled after data collection ceased.

The uncommon nature of exclosures does not relate to the class being endangered.

The Executive Director is of the view that Maisie's Plots are best assessed under Criterion A and Criterion F which will allow its historical and technical (scientific) values to be better addressed.

## CRITERION C: Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.

### Step 1: 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

This place is unlikely to contain physical evidence of historical interest that is not currently visible or understood. Its design, construction and use are evident in its physical fabric, and it is well documented.

Step 1 of Criterion C is not likely to be satisfied.

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

### **Step 1: 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**

Maisie's Plots is of the class 'ecological enclosures' or 'ecological project'.

As a cultural heritage place the Executive Director is of the view that this place is best assessed under Criterion A and Criterion F which will allow its historical and technical (scientific) values to be better addressed.

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

### **Step 1: Test for Satisfying Criterion E**

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

### **Executive Director's Response**

Maisie's Plots does not demonstrate particular aesthetic characteristics nor was intended to.

Step 1 of 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 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**

Maisie's Plots contains physical evidence that clearly demonstrates technical (scientific) achievement for the time in which it was created. There is a broad consensus within the scientific community that Maisie's Plots, the methods Fawcett used and the data it collected represented ecological fieldwork which was ahead of its time.

The physical evidence demonstrates a high degree of integrity. Maisie's Plots is highly intact and readable. One of the underlying principles of the project is that the built fabric of the place (the fence line) remains 'the same' in order that changes in the natural ecological changes within the plots can be consistently monitored over time.

Step 1 of Criterion F is likely to be satisfied.

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## Step 2: State Level Significance Test for Criterion F

The nature &/or scale of the achievement is *OF A HIGH DEGREE* or 'beyond the ordinary' for the period in which it was undertaken as evidenced by:

- *critical acclaim* of the place/object within the relevant creative or technological discipline as an outstanding example in Victoria; or
- *wide acknowledgement of exceptional merit* in Victoria in medium such as publications and print media; or
- recognition of the place/object as a *breakthrough* in terms of design, fabrication or construction techniques; or
- recognition of the place/object as a successful solution to a technical problem that *extended the limits* of existing technology; or
- recognition of the place/object as an outstanding example of the *creative adaptation* of available materials and technology of the period.

### Executive Director's Response

The nature of the achievement demonstrated at Maisie's Plots is of a high degree or 'beyond the ordinary' for the period in which it was undertaken.

This is evidenced by critical acclaim of the place within the ecological sciences as an outstanding example of a research project in Victoria which made significant breakthroughs:

- Maisie's Plots are thought by many within the scientific community to be one of the foundations of Australian ecology.<sup>6</sup>
- The plots at Rocky Valley and Pretty Valley were among the first such exclosures in Australia. Prior to the 1940s there had been only a handful of exclosure projects in Australia.<sup>7</sup>
- Fawcett's exclosure technique was highly innovative for its time and facilitated robust, longitudinal data collection. Her work has been pivotal in developing a sound ecological understanding of Alpine vegetation dynamics in Victoria.
- The plots are one of the longest running ecological experiments in Australia.<sup>8</sup> The invaluable data yielded for around 75 years have been pertinent to various ecological issues in the High Country, including climate change.
- At an applied level, the data has helped shape land, water and animal management principles in the High Country and Alpine areas and elsewhere in Victoria.
- The data collection and analysis methods employed and refined by Fawcett have become influential across the ecological disciplines.

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

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<sup>6</sup> Linden Gillbank, 'Ecological investigations of Maisie Fawcett', *News of Friends of Grasslands*, September - October 2000.

<sup>7</sup> These included one at Koonamore, South Australia (1925) to exclude rabbits and sheep which is still being monitored, personal correspondence with Linden Gillbank, 4 May 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Morgan, John & Pete Green, Vegetation change in the Pretty Valley alpine grasslands from 1945 to 2003: the influence of grazing on plant community succession (undated, c.2009) [http://aff.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Morgan\\_Vegetation\\_change\\_in\\_the\\_Victorian\\_alps.pdf](http://aff.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Morgan_Vegetation_change_in_the_Victorian_alps.pdf) [Accessed 19 January 2022]

# Statement of recommendation from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, to the Heritage Council of Victoria

## **CRITERION G: Strong or special association with a particular present-day community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.**

### **Step 1: Test for Satisfying Criterion G**

Evidence exists of a community or cultural group.

*Plus*

Evidence exists of a strong attachment between the COMMUNITY OR CULTURAL GROUP and the place/object in the present-day context.

*Plus*

Evidence exists of a time depth to that attachment.

### ***Executive Director's Response***

There is evidence of a present-day community of ecologists (including botanists, biologists and environmental scientists) which regard Maisie's Plots highly in the history of their scientific disciplines.

There is evidence that the members have a strong and special attachment to the place in the present day. Maisie's Plots is a popular place of visitation by ecological scientists and environmentalists – for professional reasons and from historical interest. There is an interpretative panel at the Pretty Valley plot. Parks Victoria has produced a pamphlet about the Pretty Valley plot due to the public interest in the area. There is a large number of online articles and commentary about the history of Maisie's Plots. There is also a large academic literature in botany and ecology written by communities of scientists who have a strong professional attachment to the place.

There is a time depth to the attachment of the community to the place. Maisie's Plots has been yielding data for over 75 years. Generations of students and researchers have been educated at Maisie's Plots and the place is highly valued, visited and written about by botanists and ecological scientists in Victoria and around the world. Their fondness for the place is evident in the name 'Maisie's Plots'.

Step 1 of Criterion G is likely to be satisfied.

### **Step 2: State Level Significance Test for Criterion G**

Evidence exists that the social value resonates at a State Level, that is across the 'broader Victorian community'.

*('Resonance' means the extent to which the social value of a place/object can be demonstrated to exert an influence. The social value must resonate beyond a particular local, social or cultural community into the 'broader Victorian community').*

**Plus**

Evidence exists that the social value is part of an event or story that contributes to Victoria's identity.

### ***Executive Director's Response***

Maisie's Plots is renowned in scientific circles, but its social value resonates across the broader Victorian community. It has been written about extensively in books and online for a broad audience, particularly audiences interested in conservation and environmentalism. Due to the popularity of the place and its story, Parks Victoria organised a general interest tour in 2020 (but this was cancelled due to the pandemic). The history of Maisie's Plots and its social value in the present day contributes to an important part of Victoria's identity, that is the education of women in universities and their rise in STEM disciplines.

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

# Statement of recommendation from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, to the Heritage Council of Victoria

**CRITERION H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.**

## Step 1: 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**

Maisie's Plots (the building) has a direct association with Maisie Fawcett who made a strong and influential contribution to the ecological sciences in Victoria.

- The association of Maisie's Plots to Maisie Fawcett is evident in the physical fabric of the place, the name, documentary resources and oral history.
- The association relates to an enduring and close interaction between Maisie Fawcett and Maisie's Plots.

The Executive Director is of the view that Maisie Fawcett's strong and influential contribution to the ecological sciences through Maisie's Plots is better assessed under Criteria A, F and G.

Step 1 of Criterion H is not likely to be satisfied.

# Statement of recommendation from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, to the Heritage Council of Victoria

## Comparisons

Maisie's Plots is usefully compared with places where scientific data about the natural environment has been collected.

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### **Thomas Smith's Good Bed Fossil Quarry, Werona (VHR H1413)**

Thomas Smith's Good Bed Fossil Quarry is of historical and scientific importance to the State of Victoria. It is scientifically important in the context of the site's contribution to the advancement of geological understanding in the State and due to the rarity in Victoria of shelly fossils, such as graptolite, which are used worldwide for the dating and correlation of rocks laid down during the Ordovician, Silurian and Early Devonian Periods (390-500 million years ago). It is historically important because of its association with Thomas Smith and his significant contribution to the knowledge of the State's unique geology.



Thomas Smith's Good Bed Fossil Quarry

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### **Melbourne Observatory, Melbourne (VHR H1087)**

The Observatory Site is of scientific, historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria. Containing the Great Melbourne Telescope Building, it is of international and Victorian scientific significance as a record of the development of 19th century astronomical, magnetic and meteorological technology. The large complex is a remarkable testimony to public investment in scientific endeavour over a long period. The Observatory Site is of architectural significance as a rare and largely intact example of a 19th century observatory complex. Astronomical, magnetic and meteorological observations were conducted at the site from 1861 until 1945.



Melbourne Observatory

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# Statement of recommendation from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, to the Heritage Council of Victoria

## **Bureau of Meteorology Instrument Enclosure (part of the Royal Society of Victoria) Melbourne (VHR H0373)**

The site of the Royal Society of Victoria is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria. The main features are the two-storey Royal Society building, a caretaker's cottage and the Bureau of Meteorology instrument enclosure at the eastern corner of the site. The Bureau of Meteorology instrument enclosure reflects the scientific interests of the Royal Society. It is historically significant for its role in monitoring the changing atmospheric and meteorological conditions in Melbourne for over a century from 1908. Within the enclosure is a small shed of an unknown date, but engraved graffiti by Bureau staff on the interior walls dates back to 1922.



Bureau of Meteorology Instrument Enclosure (part of the Royal Society of Victoria)

## **Former Horticulture Research Station, Merbein South (VHR H2316)**

The 1919 and 1937 laboratories at the former Merbein Horticulture Research Station are of historical significance to the State of Victoria. The 1919 laboratory, the first scientific research laboratory for viticultural research in irrigated areas, demonstrates the involvement of local growers, and later of the Commonwealth government, in agricultural research in Victoria and reflects the growing importance of the dried fruit industry during the early twentieth century. Both laboratory buildings are significant for their association with the CSIRO, Australia's premier research organisation. The two buildings reflect the beginnings of the national coordination of scientific research in Australia and the expansion of the CSIRO's activities during the 1930s.



Former Horticulture Research Station at Merbein (1919 Building)

# Statement of recommendation from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, to the Heritage Council of Victoria

## State Research Farm, Werribee (VHR H1961)

The State Research Farm (established in 1912) is of historical and scientific significance to the State of Victoria. It is of scientific significance for its role in the development of agricultural practices, in particular advancement of wheat strains, cropping and irrigation practices, livestock yields and research into soil productivity, which were implemented around Victoria. It is historically significant for its association with a number of the State's foremost agricultural scientists, including the Victorian Director of Agriculture from 1911 to 1931, Dr Samuel S Cameron, who was instrumental in the establishment of the Research Farm, the reorganisation of the Victorian Department of Agriculture and the regulation of the meat and dairying industries in Victoria.



State Research Farm,  
Farm Manager's Office

## Summary of Comparisons

Like the places listed above, Maisie's Plots has yielded important longitudinal data about the natural world. It has made a strong and influential contribution to Victoria's scientific understanding of botany, land management and climate change. In the field of ecology, the scientific impact, methods and data sets from the 1940s yielded by Maisie's Plots are comparable with the above examples in their fields. Unlike some of the above examples which have ceased their former scientific use, Maisie's Plots is still used for fieldwork about Alpine ecology and climate change and is yielding valuable data for new generations of researchers.



# Statement of recommendation from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, to the Heritage Council of Victoria

## Summary of cultural heritage significance (section 40(4)(a))

The ED recommends that Maisie's Plots be included in the VHR as a Registered Place.

## Statement of significance

### What is significant?

Maisie's Plots, two Alpine ecology monitoring sites, one at Rocky Valley and one at Pretty Valley, each consisting of a fenced exclusion plot and an unfenced control plot.

### How is it significant?

Maisie's Plots are of historical, technical (scientific) and social significance to the State of Victoria. They satisfy the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

#### Criterion A

Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

#### 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

### Why is it significant?

Maisie's Plots are historically significant as one of the longest continual ecological monitoring experiments in Australia and Victoria. It is amongst the longest continual grassland monitoring projects in the world. Established on the Bogong High Plains by botanist Maisie Fawcett between 1945-47, Maisie's Plots yielded valuable data about the impact of cattle grazing published with colleague John Turner in 1959. The project demonstrated that grazing was detrimental to the sustenance of native vegetation and encouraged soil erosion. This and subsequent longitudinal data contributed to the cessation of licensed grazing in the Alpine National Park in 2005–06. [Criterion A]

Maisie's Plots are historically significant for their importance in demonstrating a high degree of scientific achievement by pioneering ecologist Maisie Fawcett. Her use of the enclosure technique was highly innovative for its time and facilitated robust, long-term data collection. Her work has been pivotal in developing a sound ecological understanding of alpine vegetation dynamics in Victoria. [Criterion F]

Maisie's Plots are socially significant within the Victorian scientific community as place where Victoria's earliest ecological data collection methods can be viewed in action. Generations of students and researchers have been educated at Maisie's Plots and the place is highly valued, visited and written about by botanists and ecological scientists in Victoria and around the world. Their fondness for the place is evident in the name 'Maisie's Plots'. [Criterion G]



# Statement of recommendation from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, to the Heritage Council of Victoria

## Categories of works or activities (permit exemptions) recommended under section 38 (section 40(4)(b))

### Introduction

The purpose of this information is to assist owners and other interested parties 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.

It is acknowledged that alterations and other works may be required to keep places and objects in good repair and adapt them for use into the future. However, under the Act a person must not knowingly, recklessly or negligently remove, relocate or demolish, damage or despoil, develop or alter or excavate all or any part of any part of a registered place without approval. It should be noted that the definition of 'develop' in the Act includes any works on, over or under the place.

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 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 section 38 of the Act) or after registration (under section 92 of the 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.

### Disrepair of registered place or registered object

Under section 152 of the Act, the owner of a registered place or registered object must not allow that place or object to fall into disrepair.

### Failure to maintain registered place or registered object

Under section 153 of the Act, the owner of a registered place or registered object must not fail to maintain that place or object to the extent that its conservation is threatened.

### 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.

### Archaeology

There is no identified archaeology of State-level significance at the place. However, 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.

# Statement of recommendation from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, to the Heritage Council of Victoria

## Aboriginal cultural heritage

To establish whether this place is registered under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* please contact First Peoples – State Relations in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The *Heritage Act 2017* and the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* are separate pieces of legislation. Please be aware that both Acts are required to be satisfied and satisfying the requirements of one Act may not satisfy the requirements of the other.

If any Aboriginal cultural heritage is discovered or exposed at any time it is necessary to immediately contact First Peoples – State Relations in the Department of Premier and Cabinet to ascertain requirements under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*. If works are proposed which have the potential to disturb or have an impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage it is necessary to contact First Peoples – State Relations in the Department of Premier and Cabinet to ascertain any requirements under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

## Other approvals

Approval from other authorities (such as local government) may be required to undertake works.

## Notes

- All works should ideally be informed by a Conservation Management Plan 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.
- Nothing in this determination prevents the Heritage Council from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.
- Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits where applicable.

## General Conditions

- All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place.
- Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place are revealed which relate to the significance of the place, then the exemption covering such works must cease and Heritage Victoria must be notified as soon as possible.

## Permit Exemptions

The following permit exemptions are not considered to cause harm to the cultural heritage significance of Maisie's Plots.

### General

- Minor repairs and maintenance which replaces like with like. Repairs and maintenance must maximise protection and retention of fabric and include the conservation of existing details or elements. Any repairs and maintenance must not exacerbate the decay of fabric due to chemical incompatibility of new materials, obscure fabric or limit access to such fabric for future maintenance.
- Works or activities, including emergency stabilisation, necessary to secure safety in an emergency where a structure or part of a structure has been irreparably damaged or destabilised and poses a safety risk to its users or the public. The Executive Director must be notified within seven days of the commencement of these works or activities.

### Activities by the Research Centre for Applied Alpine Ecology (La Trobe University) & Parks Victoria

- All research, monitoring, security and educational activities undertaken by, authorised by and/or supervised by the Research Centre for Applied Alpine Ecology, La Trobe University and Parks Victoria.
- Erection, maintenance, repair and removal of the deer-proof fence at the Rocky Valley site.

# Statement of recommendation from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, to the Heritage Council of Victoria

## Appendix 1

### Heritage Council of Victoria determination (section 41)

The Heritage Council of Victoria is an independent statutory body that will make a determination on this recommendation under section 49 of the Act. It will consider the recommendation after a period of 60 days from the date the notice of recommendation is published on its website under section 41.

### Making a submission to the Heritage Council (section 44)

Within the period of 60 days, any person or body with a real and substantial interest in the place or object may make a submission to the Heritage Council regarding the recommendation and request a hearing in relation to that submission. Information about making a submission and submission forms are available on the Heritage Council's website.

### Consideration of submissions to the Heritage Council (section 46)

- (1) The Heritage Council must consider—
  - (a) any written submission made to it under section 44; and
  - (b) any further information provided to the Heritage Council in response to a request under section 45.
- (2) The Heritage Council must conduct a hearing in relation to a submission if—
  - (a) the submission includes a request for a hearing before the Heritage Council; and
  - (b) the submission is made by a person or body with a real or substantial interest in the place or object that is the subject of the submission.
- (3) Despite subsection (2), the Heritage Council may conduct a hearing in relation to a submission in any other circumstances the Heritage Council considers appropriate.

### Determinations of the Heritage Council (section 49)

- (1) After considering a recommendation that a place or object should or should not be included in the Heritage Register and any submissions in respect of the recommendation and conducting any hearing into the submissions, the Heritage Council may—
  - (a) determine that the place or part of the place, or object, is of State-level cultural heritage significance and is to be included in the Heritage Register; or
  - (b) determine that the place or part of the place, or object, is not of State-level cultural heritage significance and is not to be included in the Heritage Register; or
  - (c) in the case of a recommendation in respect of a place, determine that the place is not to be included in the Heritage Register but—
    - (i) refer the recommendation and any submissions to the relevant planning authority for consideration for an amendment to a planning scheme; or
    - (ii) determine that it is more appropriate for steps to be taken under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 or by any other means to protect or conserve the place; or
  - (d) in the case of a recommendation in respect of additional land which has been nominated to be included in the Heritage Register as part of a registered place in accordance with section 32, determine that the land be included in the Heritage Register if—

# Statement of recommendation from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, to the Heritage Council of Victoria

- (i) the State-level cultural heritage significance of the place would be substantially less if the land or any part of the land which is or has been used in conjunction with the place were developed; or
  - (ii) the land surrounding the place is important to the protection or conservation of the place or contributes to the understanding of the place; or
  - (e) determine that the object is integral to understanding the cultural heritage significance of a registered place or a place the Heritage Council has determined to be included in the Heritage Register.
- (2) The Heritage Council must make a determination under subsection (1)—
- (a) within 40 days after the date on which written submissions may be made under section 44; or
  - (b) if any hearing is conducted into the written submissions, within 90 days after the completion of the hearing.
- (3) A determination that a place or part of a place, or object, should be included in the Heritage Register may include categories of works or activities which may be carried out in relation to the place or object for which a permit under this Act is not required, if the Heritage Council considers that the works or activities would not harm the cultural heritage significance of the place or object.
- (4) If the Heritage Council determines to include a place in the Heritage Register, with the consent of the owner of the place, the Heritage Council may determine to include in the Heritage Register additional land of the owner that is ancillary to the place.
- (5) If a member of the Heritage Council makes a submission under section 44 in respect of a recommendation, the member must not take part in the consideration or determination of the Heritage Council.
- (6) The Heritage Council must notify the Executive Director of any determination under this section as soon as practicable after the determination.

## Obligations of owners of places and objects (section 42)

- (1) The owner of a place or object to whom a statement of recommendation has been given must advise the Executive Director in writing of—
- (a) any works or activities that are being carried out in relation to the place or object at the time the statement is given; and
  - (b) any application for a planning permit or a building permit, or for an amendment to that permit, that has been made in relation to the place but not determined at the time the statement is given; and
  - (c) any works or activities that are proposed to be carried out in relation to the place or object at the time the statement is given.
- (2) An advice under subsection (1) must be given within 10 days after the statement of recommendation is given under section 40.
- (3) The owner of a place to whom a statement of recommendation has been given must advise the Executive Director in writing of an application, permit or amendment if, before a determination under section 49 or 52 in respect of a place—
- (a) an application for a planning permit or a building permit or for an amendment to that permit in relation to the place is made; or
  - (b) a planning permit or building permit or an amendment to that permit in relation to the place is granted.



# Statement of recommendation from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, to the Heritage Council of Victoria

- (4) An advice under subsection (3) must be given within 10 days after the making of the application or the grant of the permit or amendment.
- (5) The owner of a place or object to whom a statement of recommendation has been given must advise the Executive Director in writing of the following activities or proposals if, before a determination is made under section 49 or 52 in respect of a place or object—
  - (a) any activities are carried out in relation to the place or object that could harm the place or object;
  - (b) any activities are proposed to be carried out in relation to the place or object that could harm the place or object.
- (6) An advice under subsection (5) must be given within 10 days after the owner becomes aware of the activity or the proposal, as the case requires.
- (7) If, before a determination is made under section 49 or 52 in respect of a place or object, a proposal is made to dispose of the whole or any part of the place or object, the owner of the place or object must advise the Executive Director in writing of that proposal.
- (8) An advice under subsection (7) must be given at least 10 days before entering into the contract for the disposal of the place or object.
- (9) The owner of a place or object who proposes to dispose of the whole or any part of the place or object before a determination is made under section 49 or 52 in respect of the place or object must, before entering into a contract for that disposal, give a copy of the statement of proposed contract, is to acquire the place or object or part of the place or object.

## **Owners of places and objects must comply with obligations (section 43)**

An owner of a place or object to whom section 42 applies must comply with that section.

Penalty:      In the case of a natural person, 120 penalty units;  
                    In the case of a body corporate, 240 penalty units.