CASE STUDY

Mooramong Homestead

DTP VicPlan web map

The place

Mooramong is a 1560-hectare farm near Skipton in western Victoria. In 1838 Scottish immigrant Alexander Anderson took up a squatting run, Baangal, that included the present-day farm. The original timber homestead was built in 1873. It was extended by various owners before the property was purchased in 1926 by L.K.S. Mackinnon as a 21st birthday gift for his son Donald.

In 1938 Donald's wife, Claire Adams, a Hollywood silent screen actor, commissioned Melbourne architect Marcus Martin to modernise the homestead. New interiors were created in the glamorous Moderne style and a swimming pool was added. The property includes a collection of objects and photographs, gardens, outbuildings, a nature reserve and a working farm. It is open to the public once a month.

HERITAGE COUNCIL VICTORIA

Location

Skipton, Corangamite Shire

Traditional Owners

Wadawurrung People

Main Impacts

Longer fire seasons, with up to **double** the number of high fire danger days

Double the number of very hot days

Type

19th century rural complex, comprising:

- timber and concrete structures with metal roofs
- internal collections and objects
- historical garden and other landscaping.

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

HERITAGE VICTORIA
HERITAGE VICTORIA
HERITAGE VICTORIA

Front view of the homestead and gardens.

The place is managed in three distinct areas: the homestead and gardens, the farm, and the nature reserve. The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) manages the homestead and gardens and the nature reserve, but the farm is operated by leaseholders.

Heritage significance

Mooramong is significant as a grand nineteenth century Western District house, and for its association with Alexander Anderson, Claire Adams and her husband Donald Mackinnon. The collection of objects reflect the privileged life of wealthy Western District landholders in the twentieth century, and the interior demonstrates fashionable 1930s tastes in Victoria. Two prominent Victorian architectural firms, Davidson & Henderson (1873) and Marcus Martin (c. 1938), are associated with the original building and major alterations in the 1930s.

Mooramong is also significant to the Wadawurrung People, particularly because of the presence of stony rises, a geological formation of cultural heritage sensitivity.

Climate change impacts

Higher mean temperatures are likely to cause more frequent and intense flooding, erosion and soil degradation at Mooramong. More frequent and sustained droughts threaten the place and its landscape setting. Risks to the place and its valuable collection are posed by the likelihood of more frequent and more severe bushfires, grassfires and heatwaves.

The property is already experiencing periods of more intense seasonal rainfall and storms.

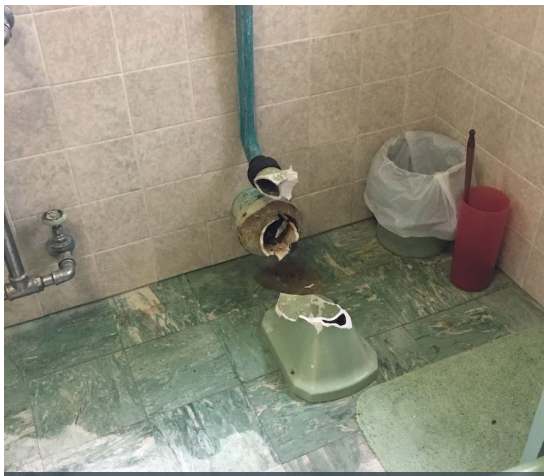
Site vulnerability and heritage impacts

As an isolated rural property surrounded by native grassland, Mooramong and its timber buildings are extremely vulnerable to fire.

Vegetation on the property, including the two surviving significant trees, are vulnerable to damage or death because of the increased fire risk, higher temperatures and reduced water availability. Although bore water is available, it is too saline to be used for irrigation in the long-term. It can also damage building fabric if it is used for cleaning.

Higher internal humidity has been experienced in the house due to rising dampness from the slab following heavy rainfall. This increases the risk of mould and fungal growth and insect attack on the building fabric. Mould could also damage furniture, artwork, clothes, jewellery, tableware, books, photographs and curios, and affect the health of employees and visitors.

Roof damage to an outbuilding from a severe storm. More frequent severe weather events will result in a greater likelihood of tree falls.



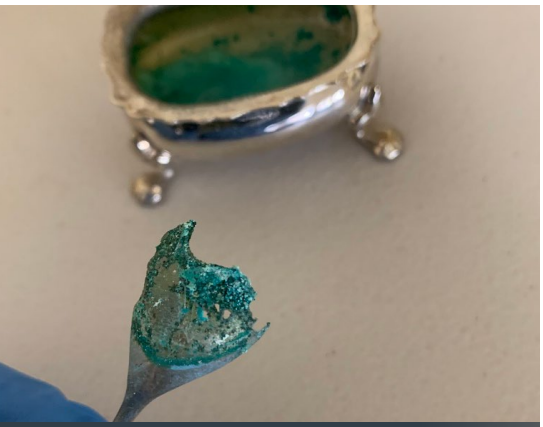
Damage to the fabric in the toilet caused by bore water. Bore water available on site is too saline to be used in the long-term without treatment.

Trees and buildings will be more vulnerable to stronger winds, and there is a greater likelihood of tree damage and damage due to wind-borne debris. Structures in poor repair are especially vulnerable because they may be blown down or lose roofing because of corroded fixings or timber shrinkage.

More frequent closure of the property to visitors due to climatic risks may reduce the financial viability of the property. This would make financing important maintenance and climate resilience works challenging.

Current management for climate resilience

The National Trust's *Climate Action Plan 2021–2023* sets its agenda for responding to climate change risk. The National Trust believes that the best strategy for climate resilience is pre-planning and timely maintenance.



Deterioration or damage to internal collections.

The National Trust and the resident managers are implementing systems to take a more proactive approach to the management of the site. Climate change impacts are being integrated into new management plans and processes, and an asset management strategy and asset management plan are being developed. This work will take into account the climate risks facing Mooramong, enabling management to be proactive rather than reactive.

The nature reserve is under a covenant and has a separate management plan with an ecological framework.

Potential strategies for building resilience

Immediate actions that would improve climate resilience and protect site values include:

- ensuring that the asset protection zone is maintained for protection against wildfires
- installing ember mesh to prevent embers entering the subfloor and roof spaces
- installing roof sprinklers on the most important buildings
- installing disaster bins to store and transport the collection in an emergency
- insulating the roof space to reduce the heat load inside the house
- fitting seals around door and window frames to reduce heat loss in winter and reduce the risk of ember attack and smoke damage during fires
- opening the house up to enable it to dry after long rain periods
- installing an internal climate control system and data logger to monitor damp
- regular inspections to monitor the condition of the house, outbuildings, garden and collections.

In the longer term, collaboration and knowledge-sharing with managers of properties that are facing similar vulnerabilities would support and improve the collective climate change response. For example, the Landscape Succession Strategy implemented by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, could be used as a model for building landscape resilience at Mooramong.

Example of a damaged object: increased humidity caused the salt to expand and crack a rabbit salt shaker.

Updating the conservation management plan that integrates a climate change strategy for the site would help guide planning. The full assessment of the significance of the various elements and the risks to them will be essential for informing the prioritisation of actions.

The current funding model provides funds for capital works. Access to funding that provides for ongoing maintenance and other works would help improve resilience for climate change. For example, treating bore water to remove salts and other impurities would bolster water availability on the site.

ISBN 978-0-7311-9251-9 **(pdf/online/MS word)**
Author: GML Heritage. Design: Green Scribble.
All photographs: National Trust of Victoria (Australia).