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# YARRA BEND PARK NORTHCOTE 1

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## Location

YARRA BEND ROAD FAIRFIELD, YARRA CITY

## Municipality

YARRA CITY

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7922-0142

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - December 1, 2025

### What is significant?

SiteCard data copied on 01/12/2025: An assessment of significance has not been prepared as the nature of the archaeological values within the remainder of the VHI site has not been assessed in this current site card update.

### How is it significant?

### Why is it significant?

Interpretation of Site	SiteCard data copied on 01/12/2025: No relevant information about the former uses of the site is provided on the existing site card, as the archaeological values mentioned on the site card relate to historical places that are no longer within the VHI extent. The area proposed for excision from the VHI extent has been shown, from a review of historic maps and images, to not hold any historic archaeological potential. Aerial imagery from 1945 is the clearest indicator of historic land use in the landscapes along both sides of the Yarra River, immediately north and south of the current Eastern Freeway. This imagery shows that the landscape is treed or under agricultural use, and there are dirt roads and walking trails along the river bank. No buildings or structures are evident, and therefore no archaeological potential has been identified. No site analysis has been undertaken except for the area being proposed for removal.
Hermes Number	10348
Property Number	

## History

The original site card (see attached supporting documentation) is limited given its early date of preparation (1989). The original site card describes the archaeological site as “Yarra Bend Park, includes ornamental trees (1920s).” The condition was described as “poor”. The relevant content referenced from Hall (1989) refers to the full original extent of the VHI (which is now included in VHR registration of Yarra Bend Park (H2398). The site card states: From the earliest land sales, the Yarra Bend area was set aside for special kinds of institutions; ones that required isolation. Remoteness was provided by the distance to Melbourne and circlement by water (Lemon 1983:17). The area has been the site for an infectious diseases hospital (founded in 1904 and still remains), a Lunatic Asylum (from 1848), V.D. Clinic (1920s), and more recently a women’s prison. The last three were all on the same site... (Lemon 1983:30, 66 and 209). In the 1920s the Lunatic Asylum was gradually shut down and it was decided the surrounding area should be reserved for recreation. The Act proclaiming the Yarra Bend National Park was gazetted in 1926 (Lemon 1903:209). From the 1920s ornamental trees were planted in the area (Butler 1982 Vol. 2:63-5). Butler has a detailed description including trees species and a plan of Yarra Bend Park. The site is on Crown Land with the Yarra Bend Trust as committee of management. The VHI extent is very large (refer to Figure 1 in supporting documentation) and currently includes areas outside of Yarra Bend Park. Review of the MMBW 1897 Map (refer Figure 2 and Figure 3) indicates that from south to north, the historical uses of the VHI site included: • Studley Park, the original Studley Park Bridge and Road (now Yarra Boulevard, Kew). • Houses and homesteads within Studley Park, no longer extant however archaeological potential may remain. • The original location of the Johnston Street Bridge over the Yarra River and the original alignment of Johnston Street. • Areas of archaeological potential associated with buildings from the Kew Lunatic Asylum. Two of these buildings were mapped on the 1897 MMBW Map as being south and west of the current Wiltshire Drive. Figure 2 in the supporting documentation shows the part of the VHI site extent to be removed (marked in red outline) in relation to the existing VHI extent (shaded in blue), including the footprint of former buildings. Operational from 1871 to 1988, the Kew Lunatic Asylum was one of the largest asylums ever built in Australia. The complex of buildings was constructed between 1864 and 1872 to the design of architects G.W. Vivian and Frederick Kawerau of the Victorian Public Works Office. • Other areas of archaeological potential may be present within the remnant VHI extent. Further research on whether archaeological potential remains is recommended. Since the 1920s, ornamental trees have been planted across Yarra Bend Park, after the Yarra Bend National Park was gazetted in 1926 (Victorian Heritage Database 2021b). Detailed in the City of Northcote Urban Conservation Study (Butler 1983), the trees which are considered to be historically significant (shown in Figure 10) comprise River Red Gums (A), which grew prior to the ornamental plantings; rows of Roman Cypress (B), Moreton Bay Figs (C), Holm Oaks (D), mature English Elm groves (E) which relate to the earlier Asylum garden, the trees lining the former Asylum driveway (Moreton Bay Figs, Elms and Radiata Pines, F), the roadway marked by Spotted Gums (G), and a mixture of Pepper Tree and River Red Gum groves (H) (Butler 1983). These significant trees are all mapped outside current VHI site extent. In order to determine the archaeological potential in the area proposed for excision from the VHI extent, the following maps were reviewed: • The MMBW 1897 map (refer Figure 2 and Figure 3) shows that in the area south of the Eastern Freeway there are no historical buildings

or structures within the area to be excised from the VHI extent. No detailed MMBW map exists for the area immediately north of the Eastern Freeway. • Aerial imagery from 1945 (refer Figure 4) shows no buildings or structures in the area proposed to be excised from the VHI. Some roads and walking paths are evident from the aerial imagery. No indications of archaeological potential were identified in the historic map or imagery reviewed of the area to be excised from the VHI extent. In addition, site visits to the area proposed to be excised from the VHI were undertaken and the landscape was observed to be steeply sloped and heavily vegetated as shown in Figure 6 and Figure 7, taken on either side of the Yarra River immediately north of the Eastern Freeway. Figure 8 and Figure 9 show the nature of the landscape on the southern side of the Eastern Freeway where significant disturbance is demonstrated by landscaping, roads and infrastructure. The steep slopes and the areas of significant disturbance significantly reduce the archaeological potential in these landscapes.

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*