

THE BRIGHTON BATHING BOXES AND DENDY STREET BEACH



2017, looking north .jpg



H2369 the brighton bathing boxes and dendy street beach air photo 21-11-2017.JPG



Diagram 2369.JPG

Location

ESPLANADE BRIGHTON, BAYSIDE CITY

Municipality

BAYSIDE CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2369

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO143

VHR Registration

August 2, 2018

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 22, 2025

What is significant?

The Brighton Bathing Boxes and their coastal landscape setting. The interiors of the individual bathing boxes are not of cultural heritage significance. The c. 1960s change room has no significance in the context of this place.

History Summary

Brighton developed into a beachside suburb and tourist destination from the mid 1800s when its beaches became places of leisure and sea bathing. Along the many beachfronts of Brighton, gardens and walkways were created for promenading and bathing boxes were erected to allow for modest bathing. Bathing boxes were originally used as changing rooms, and located close to the water so that the bather could enter the water discreetly. By the 1920s most of the bathing boxes on Brighton beaches had fallen into disrepair and there was agitation for their removal. This was addressed in 1934 when most of the bathing boxes in the area were relocated to one beach, Dendy Street Beach. By 1952, the boxes at Dendy Street Beach were again in a dilapidated state. Various municipal authorities supported the removal of all bayside structures around Port Phillip Bay, including Frankston City Council who in 1974 gave bathing box owners ten years to remove their boxes. The policies were supported by the Labor government but due to strong lobbying from the Brighton Bathing Box Association and individuals, the Minister for Planning and Environment requested a study of all structures around the bay. This resulted in the retention of the Dendy Street Bathing Boxes as a representative group. By this date, the bathing boxes had been painted in bright colours. They continue to be utilised by Brighton residents who lease them from Bayside City Council.

Description Summary

The Brighton Bathing Boxes are located on Dendy Street Beach, The Esplanade, Brighton. Running along The Esplanade are vegetated sand dunes, in front of which are a uniform line of more than 80 brightly painted beach bathing boxes. The bathing boxes are located close together, apart from at the southern end of the beach, where there are small groupings of boxes with wider spaces in between. They are similar in size and form, of small

scale, and comprise timber weatherboard cladding with corrugated iron roofing. Openings are generally to the front elevation and vary in size and style.

This site is part of the traditional land of the Bunurong people.

How is it significant?

The Brighton Bathing Boxes and Dendy Street Beach are of historical and social significance to the State of Victoria. They satisfy the following criteria for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A

Importance to the course, or pattern, of 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 G

Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

Why is it significant?

The Brighton Bathing Boxes and Dendy Street Beach are significant at the State level for the following reasons:

The Dendy Street Beach Bathing Boxes are historically significant for their association with the development of beach culture in Victoria from the 1840s to the present day. This is demonstrated through their evolution from functional, rudimentary structures which allowed bathers to change and discreetly enter the water, to their present use and appearance as brightly decorated places which form focal points for casual and social interaction.
(Criterion A)

The Brighton Bathing Boxes demonstrate the principal characteristics of Bathing Boxes through their small scale, gabled roofs, and rudimentary design using simple building materials such as weatherboard cladding and corrugated iron roof sheeting
(Criterion D)

The Brighton Bathing Boxes and Dendy Street Beach are of aesthetic significance to the Victorian community in exhibiting the iconic colours and forms of Bathing Boxes of the Victorian coastline. The visual impact of the vibrant, brightly painted exterior walls of the Brighton Bathing Boxes are enhanced by their setting along the curve of the Dendy Street Beach in front of its vegetated sand dunes. Images of the Brighton Bathing Boxes, in many cases with Melbourne's skyline featured in the background, are iconic to the State.
(Criterion E)

The Dendy Street Beach Bathing Boxes are socially significant for their strong association with local, national and international visitors. They are renowned not only for their function, but for their landmark qualities as a backdrop to many celebrations and casual visits to the beach. They have been reported and recorded in multiple mediums including photography, painting, digital and film media, and used in promotional products. They are instantly recognisable as the predominant assemblage of Bathing Boxes retained in Victoria.
(Criterion G)

Permit Exemptions

General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which

don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

Specific Exemptions:

It should be noted that Permit Exemptions can be granted at the time of registration (under s.42(4) of the Heritage Act). Permit Exemptions can also be applied for and granted after registration (under s.66 of the Heritage Act)

"http://www.w3.org/TR/html4/strict.dtd">

General Condition 1

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

General Condition 2

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

General Condition 3

All works should ideally be informed by Conservation Management Plans prepared for the place. The Executive Director is not bound by any Conservation Management Plan, and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Conservation Management Plan.

General Condition 4

Nothing in this determination prevents the Heritage Council from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions

General Condition 5

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

Specific Permit Exemptions

BATHING BOXES AND EXTERIOR OF THE BATHING BOXES

- Minor patching, repair and maintenance which replaces like with like.
- Painting of previously painted surfaces, subject to the Permitted Painting Parameters, which replicates the colours and patterns of the existing paint scheme or with the Permitted Painting Parameters.
- Subject to any building permit to be issued by the responsible authority, any demolition and replacement and rebuilding of a bathing box within the same footprint and in accordance with the Construction

Guidelines and the Permitted Painting Parameters.

- The design and construction of new bathing boxes, within the general footprint of the Brighton Bathing Boxes and in accordance with the DELWP Standards for Bathing Box and Boatshed Construction Guidelines 2015.
- The exterior paint and appearance of new Bathing Boxes should be guided by the Permitted Painting Parameters.

INTERIOR OF THE BATHING BOXES

- Works to the interior spaces which do not impact on the internal structure required to support the building.

MAINTENANCE, PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY OF THE BATHING BOXES

- General maintenance of the Bathing Boxes. Such maintenance includes the temporary shuttering of windows and covering of holes as long as this work is reversible and does not have a detrimental impact on cultural heritage significance.
- General works/maintenance providing that the original form of the structure remains unaltered and that the works do not involve a substantial alteration or modification.
- Proposed new additions and alterations to stairs, entrances and decks require a permit.
- Public safety and security activities provided the works do not involve the removal, alteration or demolition of the Bathing Boxes.
- The erection of temporary security fencing, scaffolding, hoardings or surveillance systems to prevent unauthorised access or secure public safety.
- Emergency stabilisation necessary to secure safety where a bathing box has been irreparably damaged or destabilised and represents a safety risk to its users or the public. Note: Urgent or emergency site works are to be undertaken by an appropriately qualified specialist such as a structural engineer or other heritage professional.
- Removal or excavation of sand under or around a Bathing Box on Dendy Street Beach for the purpose of protection and preservation of the foundations, flooring, steps and any other structures and components of the Bathing Box.

SURF LIVESAVING CLUB AND THE CHANGING ROOM BUILDING (C. 1960S)

- Maintenance and internal and external alterations to the Surf Life Saving Club (SLSC) and changing room buildings provided that the works occur within the envelope of the existing building.
- The demolition of SLSC and changing rooms fabric.

LANDSCAPE EXEMPTIONS

- No permit is required for tree or vegetation works, removal or replanting under the Heritage Act 2017 where it is undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Bayside Planning Scheme.

Theme

6. Building towns cities and the garden state 9. Shaping cultural and creative life

Construction dates 1880,

Heritage Act Categories Registered place,

Other Names Dendy Street Beach, Dendy Street Beach Bathing Boxes,

Hermes Number 13226

Property Number

History

The landscape:

The land known as the Landscape of Dendy Street Beach is the traditional land of the Boonwurrung people and their presence is evident in cultural sites within the sand dunes along the Esplanade. This place includes Green Point, originally a low receding cliff which was filled in when a sea wall was constructed post 1936, and Dendy Street Beach and Holloway Bay. The dunes behind Dendy Street Beach were probably created around 6,000 years ago when the sea level stabilised and sand was deposited against the Red Bluff Sands which run under the Esplanade. Foreshore winds continue to shift sand from the beach, resulting in two dunes with a small swale or depression between them. Vegetation has stabilised the dunes and continues to trap the sand.

The dune area is now known as the Dr Jim Willis Reserve after Dr Jim Willis who was the Assistant Government Botanist at the National Herbarium of Victoria (Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne) until his retirement in 1972. He was a long term resident of Brighton and was widely recognised for his taxonomic research and more than 800 publications on native flora.

The establishment of Brighton:

In 1840, prior to leaving Britain, Henry Dendy was granted eight square miles of land under a Special Survey approved by the British Government's Land and Emigration Commission. It was bounded by North Road, East Boundary Road, South Road and the high water mark of Port Phillip Bay. On his arrival in 1841, Dendy employed Jonathan Binns Were as his agent and the new township of Brighton was surveyed in the same year. Dendy eventually sold his interest to the Were family and after a slow beginning, Brighton became a popular recreational destination, with interest slowly growing in the healthy atmosphere of beach side locations.

Beach ownership:

In 1873 Beach Road (now the Esplanade) was formed, exacerbating ongoing disputes about ownership of land at Brighton between the road and the high water mark. Some believed it was in private ownership and others

believed it was for public use. In theory, a portion of land one chain from the high water mark had been allocated for public use but bathing boxes had already been erected on this land and drew complaints from private owners whose properties abutted the foreshore. In 1876, Nicholas Were tested this ownership by advertising a property between the road and the high water mark for sale. The land was jointly purchased by private residents, the government and Council and was ultimately handed over to the Brighton Council for public use.

Bathing and bathing boxes:

In the nineteenth century, the activity of sea bathing was common in Britain, as well as Australia. People visited beachside destinations to take in the unpolluted seaside air, and to bathe. During this period sea bathing was not considered so much as a sport or recreational activity, but as a health benefit. The water was clean, and bathing was often a substitute for washing. It was a discreet affair, with segregated bathing times and areas. Men bathed naked and women wore dresses or bathing costumes, almost as cumbersome as clothing. Even with segregation, bathers accessed the water using bathing 'machines' or purpose built baths which extended out into the water, ensuring there was as little opportunity as possible for the bather to be seen. Despite this, there were many complaints about the visibility of naked men, and in 1891 Brighton Council passed a resolution that they too had to be clothed. During the mid to late nineteenth century, beaches around Port Phillip Bay, including Brighton, St Kilda and Williamstown, had a number of commercial bathing enclosures with change rooms, promenades and enclosures extending out into the water.

It is not known when the first bathing boxes were constructed in the Brighton area, but the Brighton Hotel advertised a wheeled bathing machine for use as early as 1844. It is likely that there were bathing boxes on Dendy Street Beach by the 1860s, and definitely by the 1880s. Unlike places in Europe and Britain where bathing boxes were almost always connected to a resort or hotel, bathing boxes in Victoria were usually privately owned. Some of them were connected to a beachside house, but most were freestanding. As with all nineteenth century bathing boxes, those at Dendy Street Beach were initially erected close to the high water mark.

Brighton continued to expand and by 1915 there were 120 bathing boxes on Brighton beaches. Permits for the boxes were managed by Council, and licensees paid an annual fee to use them, and were also expected to maintain them. However by the 1920s, many of the bathing boxes were falling into disrepair, or were destroyed or damaged by storms and high tides. There was agitation to remove bathing boxes, boat sheds and other similar structures from the foreshore, however most survived and new ones were constructed. Those built in the first few

decades of the twentieth century were weatherboard with shingle or corrugated iron roofs and painted white and green. It wasn't until the mid-1970s that the individual, brightly painted colour schemes evident today were implemented.

The issue of public versus private beach ownership and access was also raised, as well as the view that the boxes were restricting foreshore improvements. In response to the Depression of the 1930s, the State Government initiated a work program building a bluestone wall along the Brighton foreshore to reduce erosion. The area known as Dendy Street Beach was excluded and most bathing boxes in the Brighton area were relocated to Dendy Street Beach, at first to the high water mark and later to the rear of the beach in a single, uniform line. In 1935 the Brighton Bathing Box Owners Association formed, and is still in operation today.

By the 1950s, newspapers were again reporting the neglected appearance of the boxes, 'Hundreds of gaily painted bathing-boxes, once the pride of many beaches, have become forgotten. Some look like dilapidated fowl houses-walls missing, boards torn off, roofing ragged and rusty . sand piles half-way up the walls.' In response, Council proposed to demolish the privately licensed boxes and replace them with large concrete dressing sheds for use by all members of the public. This never eventuated and the conflict between public beach access and perceived private ownership continued.

In 1967, the Port Phillip Authority developed a policy proposing the removal of all beach structures, including bathing boxes, as they were seen to restrict access to, and use of, crown land as well as causing environmental issues. Although the Liberal government did not support the policy, it also did not support the construction of any new structures.

In the early 1980s the Labor government adopted policies which actively discouraged the private use of any public areas. Local authorities had created similar policies, including Frankston which in 1974 had given box licensees ten year notice to remove their boxes. The issue was exacerbated in 1983 when the Coastal Caucus Committee of the Labor Party recommended that the approximately 2,000 Port Phillip Bay boatsheds, bathing boxes and similar structures should be phased out over five years or less, a policy supported by the Minister for Planning and Environment in 1984. This caused strong objection from groups, most significantly from the Brighton Bathing Box Association, and representations were made to the Historic Buildings Council. In response, the Minister requested a study of the architectural and historical significance of all structures around Port Phillip Bay, which resulted in a recommendation to retain the Dendy Street Beach Bathing Boxes as a representative group. By this date, the bathing boxes had been painted in their existing bright colours, and have continued to be maintained and utilised by Brighton residents who pay a licensing fee to Bayside City Council.

KEY REFERENCES USED TO PREPARE ASSESSMENT

Allom Lovell & Associates (1999) City of Bayside Heritage Review (including a review of City of Brighton Urban Character and Conservation Study (1986) and the City of Sandringham Heritage and Conservation Study (1989) by Andrew Ward)

Allom Lovell & Associates and John Patrick (1999) City of Bayside Heritage Review (Landscape assessment)

Brighton Historical Society

Heritage Insight (2015) Draft Due Diligence Report, Proposed Dendy Street Beach Pavillion

Heritage Unit and the Coastal Unit of the Ministry for Planning and Environment (August 1985) Bathing boxes and similar structures around Port Phillip Bay

Jenkinson, Jo (2015) The Lure of the Beach Brighton Historical Society

Smith, R V (1987) James H Willis - a distinguished botanical career Botanic Magazine Vol. 2 pg 27

Wakelin Associates Pty Ltd (2011) Geomorphology of Brighton Dunes & Jim Willis Reserve

Willis, J H (1991) My Lifetime Involvement with Systematic Botany Botanic Magazine Vol. 8 pg 43

The Age and the Argus (various articles) http://www.brightonvillage.com.au/Brighton_History/history.htm
<http://www.brightonbathingbox.org.au/en/history>

Assessment Against Criteria

Criterion

The Dendy Street Beach Bathing Boxes are historically significant for their association with the development of beach culture in Victoria from the 1840s to the present day. This is demonstrated through their evolution from functional, rudimentary structures which allowed bathers to change and discreetly enter the water, to their present use and appearance as brightly decorated places which form focal points for casual and social interaction. [

Criterion A]

The Brighton Bathing Boxes demonstrate the principal characteristics of Bathing Boxes through their small scale, gabled roofs, and rudimentary design using simple building materials such as weatherboard cladding and corrugated iron roof sheeting. [

Criterion D]

The Brighton Bathing Boxes and Dendy Street Beach are of aesthetic significance to the Victorian community in exhibiting the iconic colours and forms of Bathing Boxes of the Victorian coastline. The visual impact of the vibrant, brightly painted exterior walls of the Brighton Bathing Boxes are enhanced by their setting along the curve of the Dendy Street Beach in front of its vegetated sand dunes. Images of the Brighton Bathing Boxes, in many cases with Melbourne's skyline featured in the background, are iconic to the State. [

Criterion E]

The Dendy Street Beach Bathing Boxes are socially significant for their strong association with local, national and international visitors. They are renowned not only for their function, but for their landmark qualities as a backdrop to many celebrations and casual visits to the beach. They have been reported and recorded in multiple mediums including photography, painting, digital and film media, and used in promotional products. They are instantly recognisable as the predominant assemblage of Bathing Boxes retained in Victoria. [

Criterion G]

Extent of Registration

NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 2017**, I give notice under section 53 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by modifying the following place in the Heritage Register:

Number: H2369

Category: Registered Place

Place: The Brighton Bathing Boxes and Dendy Street Beach

Location: Esplanade, Brighton

Municipality: Bayside City

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 2369 encompassing part of Lot 2 on Title Plan 963646 and part of Crown Allotment 2048 Parish of Moorabbin bounded on the East by Esplanade between Keith Court and Gould Street, and on the West by Port Phillip Bay between the points with the co-ordinates 37.91726S, 144.98603E and 37.92238S, 144.98615E.

Dated 2 August 2018

STEVEN AVERY

Executive Director

[*Victoria Government Gazette* G 31 2 August 2018 1731]

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/>