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# STAWELL AMALGAMATED MINERS' ASSOCIATION BANNER



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image003.jpg

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## Location

59-69 MAIN STREET STAWELL, NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

## Municipality

NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2383

## VHR Registration

April 12, 2018

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 22, 2025

# What is significant?

The Stawell AMA Banner.

## How is it significant?

The Stawell AMA Banner is of historical significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criteria for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

### Criterion A

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

### Criterion B

Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

### Criterion D

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

## Why is it significant?

The Stawell AMA Banner is significant at the State level for the following reasons:

The Stawell AMA Banner is historically significant for its association with one of the earliest unions in Victoria, the AMA. The AMA became part of the AMAA, Australia's first intercolonial union in 1884. The Stawell AMA was established in February 1872 and was the second miners union in Victoria, the first being Bendigo which was formed only one day earlier. The Stawell AMA Banner is important in demonstrating the union's political and social aspirations as well as the non-oppositional labour and capital ethos that was the defining feature of the first Australian gold mining unions. It is also important for its association with the Eight Hour Day Movement, one of the most significant nineteenth century industrial reforms.

(Criterion A)

The Stawell AMA Banner is significant as a rare surviving example of an early twentieth century trade union banner which was a replica of an earlier banner. More than 200 union banners were produced in Victoria and the Stawell Banner is one of only twelve union banners known to have survived in Victoria. It is a rare surviving historical document associated with an early intercolonial trade union for which little documentary evidence survives.

(Criterion B)

The Stawell AMA Banner is a notable example of the class of union banners. It is fine and highly intact example of a nineteenth century union banner and displays a large number of characteristics which are typical of the class, including the materials, use of symbolic and political images and mottos, and large scale and design. The design and sewing of the banner and the painting of the imagery and mottos are executed in a highly proficient manner.

(Criterion D)

## 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.49(3) of the *Heritage Act 2017*). Permit Exemptions can also be applied for and granted after registration (under s.92 of the *Heritage Act 2017*).

### 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 the Collection Policy prepared for the object. The Executive Director is not bound by any Collection Policy, and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Collection Policy.

### General Condition 4

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

## Conservation

Written notification is required for any proposed conservation activities. The applicant will then be notified by the Executive Director whether the conservation activity requires permit approval pursuant to the *Heritage Act 2017*, or whether it is permit exempt.

## Theme

### 4. Transforming and managing the land 7. Governing Victorians

Construction dates	1904,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered object,
Other Names	TRADE UNION BANNER,
Hermes Number	14365
Property Number	

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## History

The Stawell AMA Banner is a trade union banner which was displayed by the Stawell Branch of the AMA during sports day parades until 1909.

### History of union banners

The tradition of parades where the banners of unions and friendly societies were displayed originated in Britain. The first parades and banners in Victoria focused on the Eight Hour Day Movement, but as unions were formed, banners were created as a means of identity for the various organisations. They were elaborately painted with imagery and wording, usually had tassels and fringing and were of a large scale to allow their prominent display on horse drawn carts. The imagery included tools and emblems associated with the various trades, and mottos espousing the beliefs and vision of the particular union or organisation. Figures depicted were usually men and if women were included, they were usually depicted as representations of ideals such as truth and wisdom.

### Mining unions

The first mining unions in Victoria were established in the 1860s to protect the conditions and wages of miners on the goldfields when mining evolved from the use of labour intensive, simple surface-focused techniques undertaken by individual miners, to the establishment of large mining companies. Initially established in each mining area, the individual unions united in 1874 to form the AMA. Most branches had large banners which were displayed during parades as symbols of pride and solidarity and as a means of visual identification.

In March 1872, the Bendigo Miners' Association held the first annual Miners' Picnic and Sports Day, an event which was to define the miners' unions. It was held at Ravenswood and an estimated 3,000 people attended. In addition to sports such as quoits, foot racing, and hop, skip and jump, there was an open-air meeting where Robert Clark, President of the Bendigo Miners Association, stated that the picnic was also being held to celebrate the increasing success of the agitation for an eight hour day system. Three months after the Ravenswood Picnic and Sports Day, gold miners at Bendigo were awarded an eight hour working day, reputedly the first miners in the world to win the Eight Hour Day campaign. This was one of the most important industrial reforms won by unionists in the nineteenth century. Sports and picnic days became annual events, commencing with a procession in which the union banners were displayed. They were fund raising events, often declared public holidays by the mining companies and attended by huge crowds. For example, the Miners' Association Sports Day at Creswick in 1882 attracted 7,000 people with approximately 1,700 participants in the parade which was  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile (1.2 kilometres) in length.

In June 1874, a conference of the individual miners' associations was held at Bendigo. The principal discussion focused on the formation of a union which would combine the multiple district unions and this resulted in the establishment of the AMA. As the *Bendigo Advertiser* reported, the philosophy of mutual satisfaction was to continue to guide the new association - *'there can be no question in the world that it will be better for both masters and men that a union of the sort to be formed, should exist. So long as one side is not unreasonable we are quite satisfied that the other will not be. the design of men, being selfish and corrupt, must be resisted and defeated'*. These sentiments are expressed in the mottos on the Stawell AMA Banner.

While upholding reconciliation and industrial harmony, the AMA reserved the right to industrial action if its legitimate claims were denied. Through the AMA, miners had the strength to dispute wage reductions, defective equipment and poor working conditions. Miners went on strike to protect their rights and any miner who filled the place of a union member was disqualified from joining the AMA.

In October 1884, 39 delegates from the 20 branches of the AMA, including Stawell, held a conference in the Masonic Hall at Maldon. This meeting resulted in further amalgamation with other unions including the New South Wales Coalminers' Union to form Australia's first intercolonial union, the AMAA. Union rules were based on those of the National Miners' Association of Great Britain with a decentralised organisational structure with strong branches which were kept in close contact with the union's central committee through stewards appointed at each mine. In 1888, union membership in all Bendigo mines was made compulsory. These were progressive achievements which were later adopted by the emerging rural workers' unions. The AMAA presence spread from central Victorian goldmines, to all Victorian mining fields, and within a decade to Tasmania, Far North Queensland and New Zealand.

#### History of the Stawell banner

Stawell AMA held its first Sports Day in 1873 and a makeshift banner was displayed in the street parade which started in Patrick Street and ended at the Botanical Reserve (now the Old Lake Reserve) where the sporting activities occurred. This banner was replaced in the following year with a banner made by E P Bishop at a cost of £45. It was used in parades until 1903 when it fell into disrepair and was replaced by a replica banner made by W Rodgers at a cost of £22. This banner was used in the annual parade and sports day from 1904 until 1909 when the Stawell branch of the AMA decided not to hold their sports day owing to lack of support. The banner was held in storage until 1982 when it became the property of the Stawell Town Council. The banner underwent conservation and was subsequently unveiled at the Stawell Town Hall in 1990 where it is currently displayed.

The gold industry began to decline around World War I when gold production began to decrease in Bendigo, Victoria's most important mining centre. Stawell's largest goldfield, the Magdala-cum-Moonlight closed in 1917 and its mining plant was sold.

In 1918, the AMAA became part of the Australian Workers' Union. Unlike other unions, no substantial archival records of the AMA or the AMAA survive. The banner therefore provides the most tangible record of the union's aspirations and an insight into the character of nineteenth century miners.

#### KEY REFERENCES USED TO PREPARE ASSESSMENT

Bannear, D. (2004) 'A symbol of cooperation goes on display' Inherit Heritage Council Victoria, Issue 20, October 2004

Reeves, A. (2007) 'Trade Unionism and the Australian Mining Industry: the influence of Central Victorian goldminers, 1870 - 1920' in K. Reeves & D. Nichols (eds.) Deeper Leads: new approaches to Victorian goldfields history, BHS Publishing, Ballarat, Victoria, 2007

Smith, B. Australian Trades Union Archives Retrieved from URL: <http://www.atua.org.au> 17/01/2012.

Conservation works completed by Victorian Centre for the Conservation of Cultural Material (c.1990)

### Assessment Against Criteria

#### Criterion

The Stawell AMA Banner is of historical significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

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## 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 including the following objects in the Heritage Register:

Number: H2383

Category: Heritage Object

Object: Stawell Amalgamated Miners Association Banner

Location: 59-69 Main Street, Stawell, Northern Grampians Shire

Dated 12 April 2018

STEVEN AVERY

Executive Director

[Victoria Government Gazette G 15 12 April 2018 679]

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*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/>*