

---

# CSL (COMMONWEALTH SERUM LABORATORIES) COLLECTION



CSL collection 1 - image  
Museums Victoria



CSL collection 2 image  
Museums Victoria



CSL collection 3 image  
Museums Victoria



CSL collection 4 image  
Museums Victoria



CSL collection 5 image  
Museums Victoria

---

## Location

10 CAMERON STREET COBURG AND 11 NICHOLSON STREET CARLTON AND 2 BOOKER STREET SPOTSWOOD, HOBSONS BAY CITY, MELBOURNE CITY, MERRI-BEK CITY

## Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

HOBSONS BAY CITY

MERRI-BEK CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2422

## VHR Registration

April 20, 2023

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

---

## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 19, 2023

# What is significant?

The CSL (Commonwealth Serum Laboratories) Collection, comprising 652 items dating from the time of the company's foundation in 1916, and held at Melbourne Museum, Scienceworks and Melbourne Museum Merri-bek Annexe.

# How is it significant?

CSL (Commonwealth Serum Laboratories) Collection is of historical and technical significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies 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 H

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

# Why is it significant?

The CSL (Commonwealth Serum Laboratories) Collection is historically significant for its association with the improvement of public health in Victoria and Australia. Prior to the outbreak of World War I, Australia primarily relied upon essential medicines shipped from overseas and had no domestic facility for the manufacture of vaccines, sera, and other medical products. Established in Parkville in 1916, CSL was the nation's first domestic manufacturer of essential medicines and vaccines, later expanding its role into research and development. The collection provides insight into the diverse work of CSL since the early twentieth century, including its critical role in responding to public health crises such as the Spanish influenza pandemic. It also highlights CSL's ongoing work in developing important vaccines, antivenoms, veterinary medicine and blood therapies.

(Criterion A)

The CSL (Commonwealth Serum Laboratories) Collection is scientifically and technically significant for its ability to illustrate the immense manufacturing capabilities of CSL, as well as its adaptation of existing biotechnology for specifically Australian purposes. The company's unprecedented manufacturing capacity is evident in the size and breadth of the collection, which features an array of medicines dating to the early 1920s. The collection also highlights key innovations in Victoria's medical history, including the development of antivenoms against Australian fauna and the development of Rh(D) immunoglobulin.  
(Criterion F)

The CSL (Commonwealth Serum Laboratories) Collection is significant for its association with the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories, Australia's primary manufacturer of vaccines and other essential medicines since 1916. CSL was initially established to respond to domestic shortages of vaccines and sera and went on to provide a broad range of lifesaving treatments to Australians. In addition to being the nation's primary manufacturer of medical treatments and therapies throughout the twentieth century, CSL also carried out ground-breaking research and development work including advancements in veterinary medicine.  
(Criterion H)

## 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:

## Specific Exemptions

The below permit exemptions are not considered to cause harm to the cultural heritage significance of the CSL (Commonwealth Serum Laboratories) Collection subject to the following guidelines and conditions:

## Guidelines

1. Where there is an inconsistency between permit exemptions specific to the registered place or object ('specific exemptions') established in accordance with either section 49(3) or section 92(3) of the Heritage Act 2017 (Vic) and general exemptions established in accordance with section 92(1) of the Heritage Act 2017 (Vic) specific

exemptions will prevail to the extent of any inconsistency.

2. In specific exemptions, words have the same meaning as in the Heritage Act 2017 (Vic), unless otherwise indicated. Where there is an inconsistency between specific exemptions and the Heritage Act 2017 (Vic), the Heritage Act 2017 (Vic) will prevail to the extent of any inconsistency.

3. Nothing in specific exemptions obviates the responsibility of a proponent to obtain the consent of the owner of the registered place or object, or if the registered place or object is situated on Crown Land the land manager as defined in the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 (Vic), prior to undertaking works or activities in accordance with specific exemptions.

4. If a Cultural Heritage Management Plan in accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic) is required for works covered by specific exemptions, specific exemptions will apply only if the Cultural Heritage Management Plan has been approved prior to works or activities commencing. Where there is an inconsistency between specific exemptions and a Cultural Heritage Management Plan for the relevant works and activities, Heritage Victoria must be contacted for advice on the appropriate approval pathway.

5. Specific exemptions do not constitute approvals, authorisations or exemptions under any other legislation, Local Government, State Government or Commonwealth Government requirements, including but not limited to the Planning and Environment Act 1987 (Vic), the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic), and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth). Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to obtain relevant planning, building or environmental approvals from the responsible authority where applicable.

6. Care should be taken when working with heritage buildings and objects, as historic fabric may contain dangerous and poisonous materials (for example lead paint and asbestos). Appropriate personal protective equipment should be worn at all times. If you are unsure, seek advice from a qualified heritage architect, heritage consultant or local Council heritage advisor.

7. The presence of unsafe materials (for example asbestos, lead paint etc) at a registered place or object does not automatically exempt remedial works or activities in accordance with this category. Approvals under Part 5 of the Heritage Act 2017 (Vic) must be obtained to undertake works or activities that are not expressly exempted by the below specific exemptions.

8. Works should be informed by a Collection Preservation Needs Assessment or similar. The Executive Director is not bound by any Assessment, and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Assessment.

## Conditions

1. All works or activities permitted under specific exemptions must be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents harm to the registered place or object. Harm includes moving, removing or damaging any part of the registered place or object that contributes to its cultural heritage significance.

2. If during the carrying out of works or activities in accordance with specific exemptions original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the registered place are revealed relating to its cultural heritage significance, including but not limited to historical archaeological remains, such as features, deposits or artefacts, then works must cease and Heritage Victoria notified as soon as possible.

3. If during the carrying out of works or activities in accordance with specific exemptions any Aboriginal cultural heritage is discovered or exposed at any time, all works must cease and the Secretary (as defined in the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic)) must be contacted immediately to ascertain requirements under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic).

4. If during the carrying out of works or activities in accordance with specific exemptions any munitions or other potentially explosive artefacts are discovered, Victoria Police is to be immediately alerted and the site is to be immediately cleared of all personnel.

5. If during the carrying out of works or activities in accordance with specific exemptions any suspected human remains are found the works or activities must cease. The remains must be left in place and protected from harm or damage. Victoria Police and the State Coroner's Office must be notified immediately. If there are reasonable grounds to believe that the remains are Aboriginal, the State Emergency Control Centre must be immediately notified on 1300 888 544, and, as required under s.17(3)(b) of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic), all details about the location and nature of the human remains must be provided to the Secretary (as defined in the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic)).

6. The below exemptions must be in accordance with the National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries and/or in accordance with the accepted collection management standards, policies and procedures of Museums Victoria.

## Exempt works and activities

1. Management of items (including removal and relocation, display, conservation, and temporary loans of eighteen months or less).
2. The conservation, research or analysis of items does not require approval by the Executive Director pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017, where the custodian employs qualified conservators.

### Theme

5. Building Victoria's industries and workforce 8. Building community life 9. Shaping cultural and creative life

Construction dates	1916,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered object,
Other Names	CSL COLLECTION,
Hermes Number	209308
Property Number	

### History

#### The development of CSL

During the nineteenth century, Australia relied heavily upon international medical suppliers. With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, shipping facilities and essential vaccines, sera and other bacteriological products were abruptly in short supply. The provision of tetanus and diphtheria anti-toxin and other important medicines was prioritised to the allied armies, limiting Australia's access to such treatments domestically. In 1915, members of the Melbourne Metropolitan Hospitals Board of Supplies led a deputation which eventuated with the recommended foundation of a 'Federal Government Institute for the preparation of therapeutic sera, vaccine and organ extracts'. An advertisement was placed in British and Australian medical publications for an inaugural director, and William James Penfold of the Lister Institute was soon appointed.

The CSL was founded in 1916 as a unit within the Commonwealth Quarantine Department. During its formative years, the company focused on manufacturing vaccines, sera and diagnostic agents concerning the most common diseases of the era including diphtheria, tuberculosis, tetanus and typhoid. In 1928, CSL broadened its remit into research and development. This scheme envisioned the development of anti-venoms, vaccinations against other deadly diseases and other products. Many of these aspirations were realised as the twentieth century progressed and as the company continued to grow.

The activities of the CSL were carried out within various iterations of the federal health department until 1961, when the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories Commission was established. In 1991, the Commission was replaced when the company became public and was renamed Commonwealth Serum Laboratories Limited.

#### Milestones in the history of CSL Limited

The history of CSL Limited is characterised by its long list of achievements, which includes the development and provision of essential medicines to Australians during public health crises. In October 1918, CSL effectively tripled its workforce to produce a vaccine against the 'Spanish' influenza pandemic. Although this vaccine was not overwhelmingly effective, CSL's diligence in developing a treatment solidified its reputation as Australia's key provider of life saving medicines.

From the 1920s, CSL broadened its manufacturing scope to include anti-allergens, veterinary vaccines and antivenoms. Many of the company's major breakthroughs combatted previously fatal diseases and, in some instances, virtually eradicated those diseases from Australia. Throughout the twentieth century, CSL led key developments in the improvement of public health including:

- 1923: Insulin - Following the extraction and purification of insulin in Toronto in 1921, CSL was one of four laboratories in the world licensed to make insulin for the treatment of diabetes.
- 1925: Sera processing as a blood substitute for transfusions - From this time, CSL developed a method for processing human serum to be used as a substitute for whole blood transfusions.
- 1930s-80s: Antivenoms - Following the establishment of an antivenom research department in 1938, CSL successfully developed and delivered antivenoms for some of Australia's deadliest animals including the tiger snake (1933), paralysis tick (1938), taipan (1955), redback spider (1957), stonefish (1962), box jellyfish (1970) and the funnel web spider (1980).
- 1939: Blood typing sera - In the wake of the Second World War, CSL worked with the Australian Red Cross to identify the blood type of every Australian soldier in preparation for many anticipated blood transfusions and therapies.
- 1944: Penicillin - After the successful application of penicillin in overseas trials, CSL commenced a program of mass-producing the antibiotic. Australia gained the distinction of being the first country in the world in which penicillin was available for civilian use.
- 1940s-50s: Blood fractionation - The isolation and concentration of the components of blood (e.g., red blood cells, plasma, albumin, proteins) allowed for the development of custom blood and plasma therapies, and the treatment of blood disorders such as haemophilia.
- 1953: Triple Antigen vaccine - This vaccine protected Australian children against three previously fatal diseases (diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough).
- 1956: Polio vaccine - CSL's development of an effective polio vaccine virtually eradicated the disease in Australia within a matter of years.
- 1966-67: Rh(D) immunoglobulin - This agent was a crucial breakthrough for Rh- mothers carrying Rh+ fetuses, protecting unborn children against Rh disease – a condition where the antibodies in the mother's blood destroy the unborn baby's blood cells. This research was led by the leading medical scientist Roy Thomas Simmons (1906-1975) and resulted in the virtual disappearance of Rh disease in babies in Australia.
- 1980s: HIV/AIDS - In the early stages of the epidemic, CSL was instrumental in researching the effects of HIV/AIDS on blood donations and developed methods for identifying contaminated samples.
- 1991: Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine.

In addition to improvements to public health in the twentieth century, CSL Limited also developed important veterinary vaccines to protect sheep and other livestock against serious diseases such as black disease, blackleg, pulpy kidney, and malignant oedema.

CSL Limited has continued to respond to public health crises of the twenty-first century, including the H1N1 (2009) and Coronavirus (2019-2022) pandemics. From 2020, CSL Limited manufactured AstraZeneca – the first coronavirus vaccine available to Australians.

## History of the collection

The CSL Collection includes 652 artefacts dating from the time of the company's foundation in 1916. Objects were originally collected by CSL staff and volunteers for the CSL Museum, which was once located in the Jennerian Building at the CSL site in Parkville. The collection was acquired by Museums Victoria in c.2000 and focused on areas including CSL's historic involvement in the development of penicillin, insulin, antivenoms, vaccines, diagnostic products veterinary products and blood products; examples of old laboratory practice and examples of laboratory practice specific to CSL. Some paper-based material was retained at the CSL archives. The CSL Collection is now owned by Museums Victoria and housed across three of its locations – Melbourne Museum, Scienceworks and Melbourne Museum Moreland Annexe. Museums Victoria continues to work closely with CSL to acquire significant objects which reflect the company's ongoing role in Australian public health.

## 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 an object in the Heritage Register:

Number: H2422

Category: Registered Object

Name: CSL (Commonwealth Serum Laboratories) Collection

Location: 10 Cameron Street, Coburg; 11 Nicholson Street, Melbourne; 2 Booker Street, Spotswood

Municipality: Melbourne City; Hobsons Bay City; Merri-bek City

All 652 objects in the CSL (Commonwealth Serum Laboratories) Collection held at Museums Victoria which are listed in the catalogue held by the Executive Director.

Dated 20 April 2023

STEVEN AVERY

Executive Director

*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/>*