

## FORMER NORTHCOTE CABLE TRAMWAYS SITE



Northcote Tramways Building  
Thornbury Oct 2007 mz Front  
Elevation 01



Northcote Tramways Building  
Thornbury Oct 2007 mz High  
Street & Martin Street  
Elevations



Northcote Tramways Building  
Thornbury Oct 2007 mz High  
Street Elevation



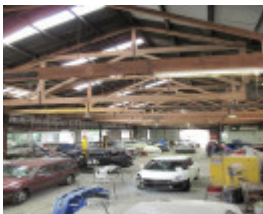
Northcote Tramways Building  
Thornbury Oct 2007 mz Front  
7 North Elevations



Northcote Tramways Building  
Thornbury Oct 2007 mz Car  
Shed Entry



Northcote Tramways Building  
Thornbury May 2009 mz  
Engine House Interior 01



Northcote Tramways Building  
Thornbury May 2009 mz  
Engine House Interior 02



Northcote Tramways Building  
Thornbury May 2009 mz Car  
Shed Interior



Northcote Tramways Building  
Thornbury May 2009 mz  
Foundation Stone



Northcote Cable Tram Building Plan June 2009

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## Location

626-628 HIGH STREET THORNBURY, DAREBIN CITY

## Municipality

DAREBIN CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2129

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO45

## VHR Registration

November 12, 2009

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

### **What is Significant?**

The Former Northcote Cable Tramways Site is situated on the corner of High Street and Martin Street in Thornbury. The site includes the former Northcote cable tram building which was built by the Clifton Hill to Northcote and Preston Tramway Company in 1890 to service its line which ran along High Street, Northcote from Dundas Street at the northern extent of the Northcote Municipality to Merri Creek at the southern extent and operated until 1940.

The cable tram building was the only one in Melbourne where the engine house and the car shed were contained within the one structure. It was divided longitudinally into two main bays. The north bay contained the engine room, cable tension pit, boiler room and cable reel shed, while the south bay comprised the car shed. The building is constructed of brick on a bluestone base. The principal facade, fronting High Street, covers both bays and extends south to include an office on the corner of Martin Street. Both the engine room and the car shed are roofed by large timber trusses and the car shed roof includes a simple centrally located ridge ventilator. The double doorways to the car shed and engine house are expressed with projecting openings, each under a pediment highlighted by a blind circular recess in the tympanum and surmounted by a squat finial. The facade of the building is expressed through a double mid height stringcourse and a simple cornice and frieze under a parapet. The exterior of the building was painted during the twentieth century.

Most of inner Melbourne's cable tramway system was developed as a planned public transport system and was constructed as a single major infrastructure project from 1883 to 1891 under the control the Melbourne Tramways Trust. The Northcote line was one of a few privately operated tramways constructed beyond the central Melbourne tram system.

The tramway and the building were designed by George Duncan, who designed and supervised construction of the main Melbourne cable tram network. The Northcote line was opened in February 1890 but due to financial difficulties associated with the 1890s depression was soon in financial difficulties and closed in July 1893. The tramway was to open and close a number of times over the next six years until July 1900 when the Northcote Council agreed to purchase the tramway. The operation was leased to private investors who re-opened the line in March 1901. From June 1916 the Northcote Council ran the tramway itself. In doing so, the Council became the first and only municipality in the state to run a tramway. The Council continued to run the line until February 1920 when the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board (MMTB) took over the operation of the line.

Under the MMTB's management the line was connected to the central cable tram network, enabling Northcote trams to operate through to the city. In time, the Northcote route, ran to Spencer Street via Queens Parade, Smith Street and Bourke Street, became the last line of Melbourne's extensive cable tram system to be converted to either electric traction or bus operation.

The Northcote line closed in October 1940, the last cable tram line to operate in Melbourne.

### **How is it Significant?**

The Former Northcote Cable Tramways Site is of historical, architectural and archaeological significance to the State of Victoria.

### **Why is it Significant?**

The Former Northcote Cable Tramways Site is of historical significance as an extant component of Melbourne's cable tramway system. The system was of an exceptionally large size when considered against other systems internationally and its long period of use relative to other systems underscores its importance. The system has been a major influence on the development of metropolitan Melbourne.

The Former Northcote Cable Tramways Site is of historical significance for its ability to assist in an understanding of the operation of the cable tram system.

The Former Northcote Cable Tramways building is of architectural significance for the method of its construction. The building's form expresses the utilitarian nature of its use and the functions of housing the machinery and running gear necessary to operate the tram cables and for storing cable trams. The Former Northcote Tramways building is the only cable tram building that integrated both the engine house and the car shed into the one structure.

The Former Northcote Cable Tramways Site is of archaeological significance for the potential to provide information on cable tram operation. Tram tracks and cable tunnels may survive under High Street and various below ground structures associated with the operation of both the engine house and the car shed may survive below the building.

## 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:

#### General Conditions: 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 Conditions: 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.

Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component. **General Conditions: 3.**

If there is a conservation policy and plan endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. **General Conditions: 4.**

Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. **General Conditions: 5.**

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

#### Non Registered Fabric:

All works including demolition and internal modification to structures not included in the extent of registration are

permit exempt. Additions to structures not included on the extent will require either the approval of the Executive Director or permit approval. Whether or not the works require a permit is at the discretion of the Executive Director.

The construction of any new structures within the boundaries of this registration will require a permit.

**Exterior:**

Minor repairs and maintenance which replaces like fabric with like.

Removal of extraneous items such as air conditioners, pipe work, ducting, wiring, antennae, aerials etc, and making good.

Installation and repairing of damp proofing by either injection method or grout pocket method.

Installation or removal of external fixtures and fittings such as, hot water services and taps.

**Interior:**

Installation, removal or replacement of carpets and/or flexible floor coverings.

Installation, removal or replacement of curtain tracks, rods and blinds.

Installation, removal or replacement of hooks, nails and other devices for the hanging of mirrors, paintings and other wall mounted art or religious works or icons.

Demolition or removal of non-original stud/partition walls, suspended ceilings or non-original wall linings (including plasterboard, laminate and Masonite), bathroom partitions and tiling, sanitary fixtures and fittings, kitchen wall tiling and equipment, lights, built-in cupboards, cubicle partitions, computer and office fitout and the like.

Removal or replacement of non-original door and window furniture including, hinges, locks, knobsets and sash lifts.

Installation of stud walls, which are removable.

Refurbishment of existing bathrooms, toilets and kitchens including removal, installation or replacement of sanitary fixtures and associated piping, mirrors, wall and floor coverings.

Removal of tiling or concrete slabs in wet areas provided there is no damage to or alteration of original structure or fabric.

Installation, removal or replacement of ducted, hydronic or concealed radiant type heating provided that the installation does not damage existing skirtings and architraves and that the central plant is concealed.

Installation, removal or replacement of electrical wiring.

Installation, removal or replacement of electric clocks, public address systems, detectors, alarms, emergency lights, exit signs, luminaires and the like on plaster surfaces.

Installation, removal or replacement of bulk insulation in the roof space.

Installation of plant within the roof space.

Installation of new fire hydrant services including sprinklers, fire doors and elements affixed to plaster surfaces.

**Minor Works :**

**Note:**

Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

### Regular Site Maintenance :

The following site maintenance works are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995,

- a)** regular site maintenance provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits;
- b)** the maintenance of an item to retain its conditions or operation without the removal of or damage to the existing fabric or the introduction of new materials;
- c)** cleaning including the removal of surface deposits, organic growths, or graffiti by the use of low pressure water and natural detergents and mild brushing and scrubbing;
- d)** repairs, conservation and maintenance to plaques, memorials, roads and paths, fences and gates and drainage and irrigation.
- e)** the replacement of existing services such as cabling, plumbing, wiring and fire services that uses existing routes, conduits or voids, and does not involve damage to or the removal of significant fabric.

**Note:** Surface patina which has developed on the fabric may be an important part of the item's significance and if so needs to be preserved during maintenance and cleaning.

**Note:** Any new materials used for repair must not exacerbate the decay of existing fabric due to chemical incompatibility, obscure existing fabric or limit access to existing fabric for future maintenance. Repair must maximise protection and retention of fabric and include the conservation of existing details or elements.

### Painting

Painting will not require permit approval if the painting:

- a)** does not involve the disturbance or removal of earlier paint layers or other decorative schemes, where the extant painting or other decorative scheme has not been mentioned in the statement of significance or the extent of registration.
- b)** involves over-coating with an appropriate surface as an isolating layer to provide a means of protection for significant earlier layers or to provide a stable basis for repainting;
- c)** employs the same colour scheme and paint type as an earlier scheme if they are appropriate to the substrate and do not endanger the survival of earlier paint layers.

If the painting employs a different colour scheme and paint type from an earlier scheme a permit will not be required if

- a)** the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed colour scheme, paint type, details of surface preparation and paint removal will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the item;
- b)** the person proposing to undertake the painting has received a notice advising that the Executive Director is satisfied.

Any proposal to undertake such work should be submitted to the Executive Director, detailing the proposed colour scheme, paint type, details of surface preparation and paint removal involved in the repainting, for approval

Construction  
dates                      1890,

Heritage Act  
Categories                Registered place, Registered archaeological place,

Other Names              FORMER CABLE TRAM ENGINE HOUSE, FORMER CABLE TRAM CAR SHED,  
FORMER NORTHCOTE CABLE TRAM BUILDING, FORMER NORTHCOTE CABLE  
TRAMWAYS SITE,

Hermes Number 2148

Property Number

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## Plaque Citation

This building was constructed in 1890 as an engine house and car shed for the privately operated Northcote cable tram line. The line ceased operation in 1940, the last in Melbourne to do so.

## Extent of Registration

1. All of the structure shown as B1 on Diagram 2129 held by the Executive Director.
2. All of the land shown as L1, being all of the land described in Certificate of Title Volume 02304 Folio 609, and all of the land shown as L2, being part of the High Street road reserve, on Diagram 2129 held by the 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/>*