

## FORMER CUSTOMS HOUSE



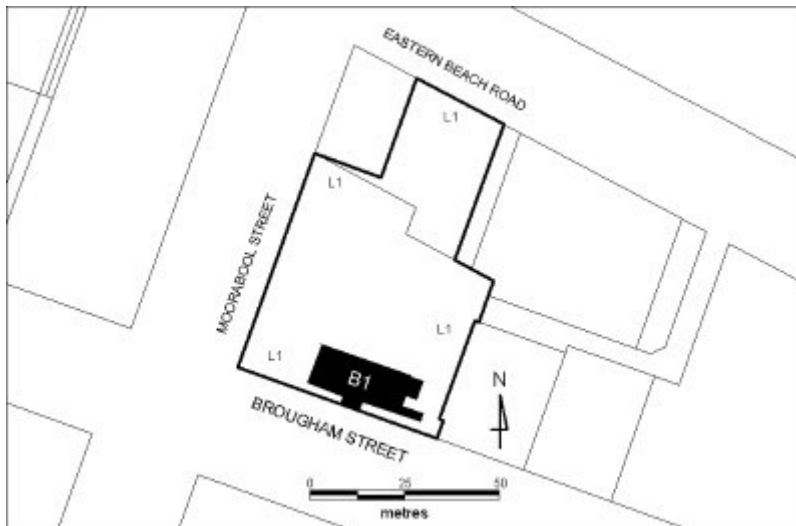
FORMER CUSTOMS  
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customs house geelong plan

### Location

57 BROUGHAM STREET GEELONG, GREATER GEELONG CITY

### Municipality

GREATER GEELONG CITY

### Level of significance

Registered

### Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1892

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO130

## VHR Registration

August 17, 2000

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 7, 2021

What is significant?

The Geelong Customs House was built by Melbourne contractor WC Cornish in 1855-56. The design of the building is attributed to three architects: Clerk of Works for Geelong, William Edward Davidson; Colonial Architect James Balmain; and prominent Public Works Department architect John James Clark. It is probable that all three were involved in the design, but to what extent remains unresolved. The building replaced two earlier structures: a prefabricated building of c1838 and a stone building of 1845. The Colonial Georgian style Customs House is a three-storey Barrabool freestone and bluestone structure with a slate roof. It housed a bond store in the basement, offices on the lower ground floor and a central long room above. The building served as a Customs House for 140 years.

How is it significant?

The former Customs House has architectural and historical significance to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The former Customs House has architectural significance as an exceptional and elegant example of the Colonial Georgian style. It is characterised by simplicity, plain surfaces, elegant proportions, symmetry and an occasional use of classical detail. The rear of the building has a more Renaissance Revival character with a rusticated basement with a piano nobile over and quoinwork to the corners of the building. The interior has a number of original features and furniture including notable examples of joinery throughout the building, fireplaces, the coved ceiling of the Long Room and the counter. It is also significant as an outstanding example of freestone masonry in Victoria. The building has an unusual architectural expression with a steep fall from front to rear of the site resulting in two distinctive principal elevations: the single storey elevation to Brougham Street and the three storeyed facade facing Corio Bay.

The former Customs House, built on a site associated with customs activities since 1838, has historical significance as a physical expression of the commercial importance of the second most prosperous port in the colony after Melbourne. The scale and impressive design of the building reflect the importance of a busy commercial port which at the height of its activity briefly challenged Melbourne as the principal port in the colony. The building demonstrates the planning principles and level of security required for 19th century customs houses with the secure bond store at the lower level and the Long Room where business was transacted accessible only from the front of the building.

The former Customs House has architectural and historical significance for its associations with its attributed architects. The building is one of the few works that can be associated with Edward Davidson and James Balmain. John James Clark was one of the most prominent and talented architects to work in the Victorian Public Works Department. The building also has associations with builder WC Cornish who was a significant and controversial contractor in Melbourne from his arrival in 1852 until his early death in 1859. Cornish was known for his disputes with trade unions, in particular his refusal to accept the eight-hour day.

## 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.
2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations 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 alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible.
3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it.
4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.
5. Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

#### Land

\*Landscape works commenced prior to registration as part of the Waterfront Geelong development in accordance with the attached landscape plans by Taylor & Cullity Pty Ltd.

#### Exterior

- \*Repairs to roof and roof plumbing which replace like with like.
- \*Minor repairs and maintenance.

#### Interior

- \* Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of the original paint or other decorative scheme.
- \* Installation, removal or replacement of carpets and/or flexible floor coverings, except for the stairs between first and second floors.
- \*Refurbishment of bathrooms and toilets including the removal, installation and replacement of sanitary fixtures and associated piping, mirrors, walls, and floor coverings.

\*Refurbishment of kitchen including the removal or replacement of fittings and fixtures, associated services, and finishes in existing location.

\* Removal of existing heating system.

\* Installation, removal or replacement of electrical wiring provided that all new wiring is fully concealed and any original light switches, pull cords, push buttons or power outlets are retained in-situ and do not cause structural alterations.

\* Installation, removal or replacement of smoke detectors and exit signs.

Construction dates 1855,

Architect/Designer Cornish, WC,

Heritage Act Categories Registered place, Registered object integral to a registered place,

Hermes Number 3853

Property Number

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## History

Contextual History:

History of Place:

In March 1854 the Clerk of Works for Geelong Edward Davidson was asked to prepare plans for a new customs house at Geelong. It would replace two earlier structures: a prefabricated building of c.1838 and a stone building of 1845. The design is attributed to Davidson and the Colonial Architect James Balmain. The prominent public works architect John James Clark also claimed responsibility for the design. It is probable that all three were involved in the design, but to what extent remains unresolved. The tender for construction was awarded to Melbourne contractor W. C. Cornish in 1855 and building started later that year and was completed by December 1856.

The three storey building housed bond stores at ground level, offices on the first floor and a central long room above.

## Assessment Against Criteria

Criterion A

The historical importance, association with or relationship to Victoria's history of the place or object.

Criterion B

The importance of a place or object in demonstrating rarity or uniqueness.

Criterion C

The place or object's potential to educate, illustrate or provide further scientific investigation in relation to Victoria's cultural heritage.

Criterion D

The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as part of a class or type of places or objects.

Criterion E

The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features.

Criterion F

The importance of the place or object in demonstrating or being associated with scientific or technical innovations or achievements.

Criterion G

The importance of the place or object in demonstrating social or cultural associations.

Criterion H

Any other matter which the Council considers relevant to the determination of cultural heritage significance

## Extent of Registration

1. All the building marked B1 on Diagram Number 1892 held by the Executive Director.
2. All the following movable objects (see furniture inventory on file for detailed description): Cedar counter located in Long Room; 9 cedar cabinets; cedar table with two drawers and inset leatherette top; 6 cedar chairs with solid circular turned backs; 2 swivelling office chairs (1 blackwood, 1 maple) with inset leather panels and cushions; 2 steel safes.
3. All the land marked L1 on Diagram Number 1892 held by the Executive Director being all the land included in Lot 2 on Plan of Subdivision PS 424108Q.

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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/>*