
Bethanga Bridge over Hume Weir (Murray Arm)

Location

Talgarno Road and Murray River Road,, BELLBRIDGE VIC 3691 - Property No B7225

Municipality

TOWONG SHIRE

Level of significance

File only

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0989

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 27, 2005

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE (Draft only)

What is significant? The Bethanga Bridge is a long, nine-span, riveted-steel, variable depth, Pratt Truss road bridge of nine principle spans of 82m. and a total length of 752m. over the flooded valley of the Murray River, now part of Hume reservoir. The bridge dates back to 1927-1930 when the Hume Weir was completed and the backed-up waters inundated this section of the river and consequently cut off the old low level bridge over the Murray. The State Rivers and Water Supply Commission and the New South Wales Department of Public Works were responsible for the construction works for the Hume Weir under the River Murray Waters Agreement. It is apparent that the similar joint arrangement was made for the construction of the Bethanga Bridge as part of the Hume Weir works. Victor Ruwolt fabricated the truss spans.

How is it significant? Bethanga Bridge is of historical significance for its association with the construction of Hume Weir as a major national undertaking in the early twentieth century. Apart from the weir itself, it is the most substantial visible construction at the Hume Weir, which relates to the Murray Rivers Water Agreement signed by the three states and the Federal Government in 1914. The bridge reflects the engineering and design approaches of the Victorian State Rivers and Water Supply Commission and New South Wales Public Works Department in the late 1920s and the influence of American engineering practice in the use of the Pratt Truss. The bridge is also significant as a marker of the anticipated development that the new weir was expected to bring to the region, serving as it did, only a few small farming communities and the copper and gold mining areas of Bethanga and Talgarno, which were already in steep decline at the time the bridge was completed.

As a major bridge built by other than a state road or rail authority, it is unusual, and is the most substantial bridge erected by water authorities, which otherwise were responsible for large numbers of smaller bridges needed to cross the drainage and irrigation channels downstream of irrigation reserves such as Hume. It compares with the other known SRWSC constructed bridge - Glenmaggie Bridge - but on a much larger scale commensurate with the scale of the Hume Weir.

It is of technical significance as the second longest metal road bridge in Victoria (after only the West Gate Bridge), the longest metal truss road bridge, with the greatest number of spans (9) of any truss bridge in Victoria, and the fourth longest bridge of any type in Victoria. It is also significant for the form of a Pratt Truss design, which is rare in Victoria and Australia, occurring on only a handful of large road and rail bridges. It's construction methods are also of note in the use of staged construction from abutments along temporary underslung warren trusses. It is of interest for the documented trial assembly of the spans at Vickers Ruwolt in Melbourne, which was probably one of the largest structures to be constructed by this significant Victorian engineering works.

It is of aesthetic or architectural significance for its dramatic rural setting over a wide expanse of water at high lake levels, and occasionally at great heights over broad river flats when the lake is down. It is also of aesthetic significance for the vast scale and length and the rhythmic patterning of repeated geometric motifs of the trusses.

It is of social significance as an important local tourism destination, and as the main link between the Bethanga/Granya region and the main regional cities of Albury-Wodonga. The expanse of Hume Weir that extends 70 kilometres up the Murray River and 40 kilometres up the Mitta Mitta almost encircles the area between and means the Bethanga Bridge is the only practical access route.

Other Names National Trust Bridges Database Reg. No.4293, VicRoads Structure ID> SN8099,

Hermes Number 71578

Property Number

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.

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