

## FORMER PORTLAND NATIONAL SCHOOL



FORMER NATIONAL  
SCHOOL SOHE 2008



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1 former national school  
portland side view jun1984

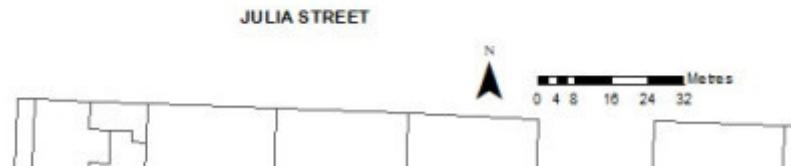
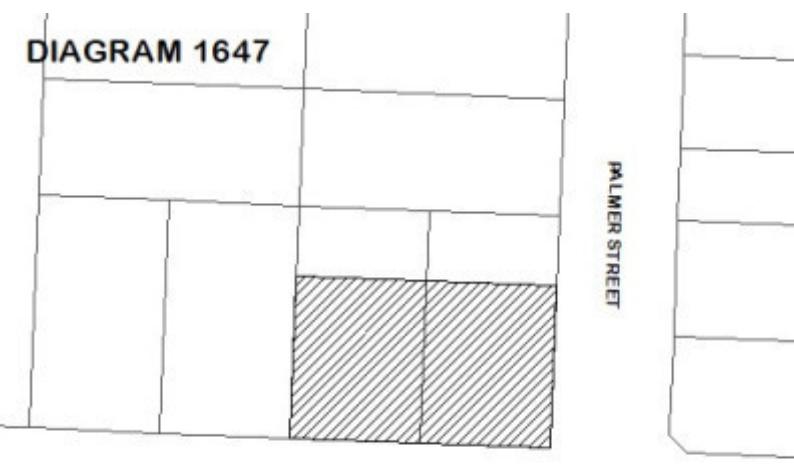


Diagram 1647



Aerial extent

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## Location

45 PALMER STREET PORTLAND, GLENELG SHIRE

## Municipality

GLENELG SHIRE

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1647

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO54

## VHR Registration

August 20, 1982

## Amendment to Registration

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 23, 2025

## What is significant?

The Former Portland National School, designed by John Barrow and opened in 1856, located on the grounds of Portland Primary School. Constructed of local bluestone, the National School addresses Julia Street and comprises a double-storey, five-roomed teachers' residence, abutted by a single-storey schoolhouse. The double-storey section comprises a central porch, first-floor window mouldings and a chimney set in the centre of the apex of the roof. Both the residence and schoolhouse feature roofs with gabled ends.

## How is it significant?

The Former Portland National School is of historical and architectural 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 D

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

## Why is it significant?

The Former Portland National School is historically significant as one of only around 23 surviving examples of early National School buildings constructed in Victoria between 1851 and 1862. The Former Portland National School is one of the earliest surviving schools in Victoria and contributes to our understanding of the origins of government education in the State of Victoria in the era before the passage of the Education Act 1872 and the introduction of free, secular and compulsory education.

(Criterion A)

The Former Portland National School is architecturally significant as a fine representative example of a National School building. Its unembellished external appearance and lack of architectural ornamentation was typical for National Schools, as economy in design and construction was an important consideration. The School is also of architectural significance as a fine example of a National School with accommodation attached for the teacher. The substantial two-storey residence demonstrates the important function and high regard shown to school-teaching at that time.

## 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 works and activities below are not considered to cause harm to the cultural heritage significance of the Former Portland National School 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 Act and general exemptions established in accordance with section 92(1) of the Act specific exemptions will prevail to the extent of any inconsistency.
2. In specific exemptions, words have the same meaning as in the Act, unless otherwise indicated. Where there is an inconsistency between specific exemptions and the Act, the Act 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, 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 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, the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006, 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 must be obtained to undertake works or activities that are not expressly exempted by the below specific exemptions.
8. All works should be informed by a Conservation Management Plan prepared for the place or object. The Executive Director is not bound by any Conservation Management Plan and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Conservation Management Plan.

## 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) must be contacted immediately to ascertain requirements under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.
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, 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).

## Exempt works and activities

### Landscape/ outdoor areas

1. Installation and replacement of shade sail fabric and supporting structure.
2. Replacement of playground equipment and outdoor furniture in the same location.
3. Pruning of all trees to ensure safety.
4. Removal, replacement and installation of new ground surfacing treatments (for example, asphalt, safety matting) provided it is not within five metres of significant buildings.

## Theme

### 8. Building community life

Construction dates 1855,

Architect/Designer Barrow, John,

Heritage Act Categories Registered place,

Other Names FORMER NATIONAL SCHOOL, Portland Primary School,

Hermes Number 946

## History

The National Board of Education operated from 1851 to 1862, managing government-funded, non-denominational schools. If a local community could raise some money towards school building costs, the National Board of Education would provide land and cover the remaining cost. In Portland the community raised over £500, and the Government then granted two acres of ground, and provided £900.

The Former Portland National School was built in 1855-56 to a design by local architect John Barrow. It opened in October 1856, with Mr and Mrs Dunbar appointed as resident teachers with 112 enrolled students.

The Former Portland National School is constructed of local bluestone and addresses Julia Street. It comprises a double-storey, five-roomed teachers' residence abutted by a single-story schoolhouse. The double-storey section comprises a central porch, first-floor window mouldings and a chimney set in the centre of the apex of the roof. Both sections have notable terminations to the gables. As it was forbidden to use government money for ornamentation, the building has a relatively plain exterior.

The intended design was to follow a symmetrical plan typical for early National Schools in Victoria with a central teacher's residence and a school room either side. At Portland the planned second single-storey wing, intended as the girls' school room, on the west side of the two-storey section was never constructed.

By 1862 there were 193 National School buildings. About 23 remain today, with the Former Portland National School being one of the oldest and most intact.

The Portland National School became a Common School in 1862 and a State School in 1873. A new school building was erected to the north of the site in 1879. The Former Portland National School is now located on the grounds of the Portland Primary School which continues to use the building.

## Selected bibliography

Blake L J (ed) (1973) *Vision and Realisation: A Centenary History of State Education in Victoria*, The Government Printer, Melbourne.

Burchell L (1980) *Victorian schools: a study in colonial government architecture, 1837-1900*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

Peterson R (1993) *Historic Government Schools: a Comparative Study June 1993*, Department of Planning and Development, Melbourne.

Sawyer W (1981), *Portland Urban Conservation Study*, Victoria.

## Extent of Registration

### Heritage Act 2017

#### 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 modifying a place in the Heritage Register:

Number: H1647

Category: Registered Place

Place: Former Portland National School

Location: 45 Palmer Street, Portland

Municipality: Glenelg Shire

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 1647 being that part of Allotments 1 & 20, Section 18B, Township of Portland extending from Julia Street to a point two metres beyond the northern most wall of the school building

20 June 2024  
STEVEN AVERY  
Executive Director  
[Victorian Government Gazette G25 20 June 2024 p1097]

*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/>*