

3 SIGNIFICANCE

3.1 Assessment Against Criteria

The following criteria were adopted by the Heritage Council of Victoria on 7 August 2008 pursuant to Sections 8(c) and 8(2) of the *Heritage Act 1995* (now the *Heritage Act 2017*). They provide a framework for defining the cultural significance of heritage places so that their meanings and values can be properly understood.

Criterion A	Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.
Criterion B	Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.
Criterion C	Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.
Criterion D	Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or objects.
Criterion E	Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.
Criterion F	Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.
Criterion G	Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.
Criterion H	Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.

The Geelong Town Hall has been assessed as being of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria. The Victorian Heritage Database entry for the place indicates that it satisfies the following criteria for inclusion in the VHR:

Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history

Geelong Town Hall is of historical significance as Victoria's earliest surviving municipal building and for its long-serving role as a centre of local government. The Geelong Town Council has occupied the site since 1855 and the southern section has been continually used for municipal purposes since this date. The building, as completed in 1917 in accordance with Joseph Reed's original design, clearly demonstrates the importance and growth of municipal governance in the State.

Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or objects

Geelong Town Hall is of architectural significance as an early and intact representative example of a municipal building in Victoria and one of prominent Melbourne architect, Joseph Reed's, earliest designs. The southern facade, constructed in 1855, and the balance of Reed's design vision, completed in 1917, demonstrates the adoption of the Renaissance Revival style in the design of an important public building and is a fine example of a classically designed town hall in Victoria.

3.2 Statement of Significance

The VHR Statement of Significance for the Geelong Town Hall (VHR H0184) reads as follows:

What is significant?

The Geelong Town Hall, including the original 1855 (southern) wing fronting Little Malop Street, consisting of a bluestone building with freestone facade set on a rusticated podium; 1917 (eastern and northern) wings, the northern containing a central colonnade which projects beyond the side pavilions to include the council chamber and a reception room; principal facade fronting Gheringhap Street dominated by a hexastyle Ionic portico; and landscaped setting; western wing with an entrance to Little Malop Street, constructed 1968-69. Remnants of nineteenth century wallpaper survive in the 1855 wing.

How is it significant?

Geelong Town Hall is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criteria for inclusion on 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 Geelong Town Hall is significant at the State level for the following reasons:

The Geelong Town Hall is of historical significance as Victoria's earliest surviving municipal building and for its long-serving role as a centre of local government. The Geelong Town Council has occupied the site since 1855 and the southern section has been continually used for municipal purposes since this date. The building as completed in 1917, in accordance with Joseph Reed's original design, reflects the growth of municipal governance in the State [Criterion A].

The Geelong Town Hall is of architectural significance as an early and intact representative example of a municipal building in Victoria and one of prominent Melbourne architect, Joseph Reed's, earliest designs. The southern facade, constructed in 1855, and the balance of Reed's vision, completed in 1917, demonstrates the adoption of the Renaissance Revival style in the design of an important public building and is a fine example of a classically designed town hall in Victoria [Criterion D].

3.3 Local Heritage Value

In addition to the State-level values, the Geelong Town Hall can be considered to meet Criterion G and H at a local level for the following reasons:

Criterion G Strong or special association with a particular community of cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

Geelong Town Hall is of social significance to the City of Greater Geelong for its role as the civic centre of Geelong over a long period of time. It has provided the regional community with a facility for functions and ceremonies for over a hundred years and, together with the Art Gallery and Peace Memorial, provides a setting for Geelong's major public open space, Johnstone Park.

Criterion H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of person, of importance in Geelong's history

Geelong Town Hall has strong associations with Joseph Reed, who was a prominent and highly influential Melbourne architect from the mid-nineteenth century. Reed designed many important buildings in Melbourne, including the Public Library, Swanston Street (1853), the Melbourne Town Hall (1868) and the Exhibition Building, Carlton (1879-80). The Renaissance Revival style commonly adopted by Reed is clearly demonstrated at the Geelong Town Hall - the only known example of his work in the City of Greater Geelong.

3.4 Significant Areas and Elements

3.4.1 Introduction

To enable management of the heritage values of the Geelong Town Hall – including in the face of appropriate change – the following levels of significance have been established, based on the degree of intactness of individual elements, the integrity of spaces, and the resulting contribution they make to an understanding of the significance of the place as a whole.

This has been informed by the original 1855 (Joseph Reed) drawings of the Geelong Town Hall, held by the Geelong Heritage Collection, as well as 1917 (T D Slevin) drawings published in *Building*, and demolition, alterations and additions (Buchan, Laird & Buchan) plans, fixings and door schedules dated 1968 and held by the Geelong Heritage Collection and City of Greater Geelong.

These drawings provide useful information about the configuration and appearance of the building in 1855 and 1917 and document the changes that were made to the building in the 1960s. The significant refurbishment works that were undertaken in the 1990s have been informed by Phil Pavey, Co-ordinator Facilities Maintenance, City of Greater Geelong.

The room reference numbers used throughout this CMP accord with room numbers assigned to the existing conditions plans provided at Appendix A.

3.4.2 Level 1: Primary Significance

Areas and elements identified as being of primary significance are key to an understanding of the significance of the place and remain substantially intact from the original 1855 and later 1917 building in form and finish. These areas and elements should be conserved in their original form and the fabric retained. Any conservation or reconstruction work should be based on the principles of the *Burra Charter*.

Exterior of the Building

The exterior of the building to its south, east and north elevations reflects the original and early appearance of the Town Hall, as completed in 1917. These three elevations are regarded as being of Primary Significance.

Later non-contributory elements include the central skylight, the north elevation of the west wing addition, the rear additions to the principal Town Hall building that connect it to the west wing addition, landscaping to the east and north elevations, and universal access compliant ramps to the east and west elevations.

Interior of the Building

Extensive alterations have been made to the interior of the building over time, though the original form and layout of internal spaces within the 1855/1917 building generally remain intact and are regarded as being of Primary Significance.

Little fabric retains a high level of integrity. The exception to this is Rooms G.04, G.10, G.16 and G.17 on the ground floor; Rooms 1.10, 1.11 and 1.12 on the first floor (which retain original ceiling ornamentation); and the remnant wallpaper and extant fireplaces to Rooms 2.01, 2.03, 2.04 and 2.05 on the second floor, all of which are regarded as being of Primary Significance. The original 1855 staircase at the west end of the south wing is also considered to be of Primary Significance.

The original stair hall window, removed from its original location and presently located in the basement car park, is considered to be of Primary Significance.

3.4.3 Level 2: Contributory Significance

The only section of the building considered to have contributory significance is the facade and colonnade of the south (Little Malop Street) end of the 1968-69 west wing addition, and its internal entrance foyer. Despite internal modification of this space with the installation of partitions, original fabric has been largely retained, including the metal pan ceiling, marble-clad walls with memorial inscription and wall mural. The reinstatement of its original form and appearance is encouraged. Externally, the removal of the banded frieze connecting the west wing portico to the Art Gallery is also encouraged to reinstate the original volume of the west wing addition.

3.4.4 Level 3: Little or No Significance

These areas and elements have either been significantly altered, make no contribution to the significance of the building or are modern additions. They can be altered or adapted, although the exterior of the original building should not be adversely affected by such works.

Areas of little or no significance comprise the majority of the west wing (with the exception of the Little Malop Street entry), the linking elements between the original building and the west wing, and the paved area to the north of the Town Hall.

Specific non-contributory elements that are located within Areas of Primary Significance include:

- The foyer of the 1917 building and meeting rooms, offices and staff rooms to the west of this space (at both ground and first floor levels), which were extensively modified and refurbished in the 1960s and 1990s
- The lift between floors, inserted in the 1990s
- Modern partitioning that has been inserted into existing spaces (Rooms G.17, 1.02, 1.11, 1.24 and 2.03)

Specific non-contributory elements that are located within contributory areas include:

- Meeting room partitions that have been inserted into the Little Malop Street entry foyer of the west wing addition (1990s)

Figure 80.
Basement level
significance diagram



- PRIMARY SIGNIFICANCE
- CONTRIBUTORY SIGNIFICANCE
- LITTLE OR NO SIGNIFICANCE

Figure 81.
Ground floor
significance diagram



- PRIMARY SIGNIFICANCE
- CONTRIBUTORY SIGNIFICANCE
- LITTLE OR NO SIGNIFICANCE
- LITTLE OR NO SIGNIFICANCE - LANDSCAPING

Figure 82.
First floor significance
diagram



- PRIMARY SIGNIFICANCE
- CONTRIBUTORY SIGNIFICANCE
- LITTLE OR NO SIGNIFICANCE

Figure 83.
Second floor
significance diagram

