



18 April 2019

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File no: B4121 Werribee Satellite Aerodrome  
B6706 B-24 MK Liberator Bomber

Dear Mr Avery,

**Re: Permit Application P26668 for Werribee Satellite Aerodrome (VHR H1884)**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above permit application regarding the proposal by Melbourne Water to dismantle, relocate, reconstruct and undertake works to Hangar 1 (B1); demolish the workshop (B3) and minor works to Hangar 2 (B2), at the Werribee Satellite Aerodrome site.

The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) (National Trust) is the state's largest community-based heritage advocacy organisation actively working towards conserving and protecting our heritage for future generations to enjoy, representing approximately 16,000 members across Victoria. As Victoria's premier heritage and conservation organisation, the National Trust has an interest in ensuring that a wide range of natural, cultural, social and Indigenous heritage values are protected and respected, contributing to strong, vibrant and prosperous communities.

The National Trust maintains a Heritage Register of Significant Places, including buildings, landscapes, gardens, trees, and public art. The B-24MR Liberator (Serial No. A72-176), currently housed in Hangar 2, was classified by the National Trust in 2001 at the National level for historic, scientific and social reasons. The B-24MR Liberator is only one of its type to survive in Australia of a fleet of nearly 300, and one of only five remaining internationally of the some 18,000 that were produced. The B-24 Liberator Restoration Australia group are currently restoring the Liberator in-situ in Hangar 2, and it is their intention to restore the airframe in its entirety. Our Classification Report for the place has been attached to this submission (Appendix 1).

Subsequently, the Werribee Satellite Aerodrome site was added to the National Trust Heritage Register in 2007 for architectural, historic, social and technical reasons at the State level. Our Classification Report for the place has also been attached to this submission (Appendix 2). At the time of National Trust classification, the following management issues/threats were identified:

*It is proposed that Hangars 4 and 5 would be demolished to make way for VicUrban subdivision. Hangar 2 would also be demolished or relocated, while Hangar 1 would be refurbished to 'public place of assembly' standard for B24 Liberator Bomber project. Curtilage of VHR H18884 to be halved.*

As outlined in the Heritage Impact Statement prepared by RBA Architects + Conservation Consultants, prior to this classification, Hangar 3 collapsed in 2004, and Hangars 4 and 5 were subsequently demolished due to concerns regarding their structural integrity. In 2006, steel struts were installed in Hangars 1 and 2 'as means of providing structural reinforcement.'

## **1. Relocation and the Burra Charter**

In principle, the National Trust does not generally support the relocation of significance buildings or heritage fabric, based primarily on the fact that the physical location of a place is part of its cultural heritage significance. As per the *Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, The Burra Charter, 2013* (Burra Charter), while it may be appropriate to relocate some buildings or elements of places that were 'designed to be readily removed or already have a history of relocation', this is not the case for Hangar 1. In this regard, we submit that a reading of Article 9.1 of the Burra Charter is a more appropriate consideration. Specifically that the relocation may be acceptable if this is 'the sole practical means of ensuring its survival'.

In this regard, we acknowledge the need to relocate the structure, primarily the intention to subdivide, remediate and sell the site which has been proposed since at least 2007. Combining this consideration with the low structural integrity of the place and the need for immediate conservation works, we submit that the relocation of the structure represents a practical means of ensuring its survival. We are in favour of this cultural heritage outcome as opposed to the demolition of the structure or further outcomes that could eventuate as a result of demolition by neglect, noting in particular that Hangar 3 collapsed in 2006 based on its lack of structural integrity.

While we lament the loss of context and setting for the structure and the site as a whole, we do acknowledge that Melbourne Water have committed to fund the relocation of the hangar as part of the sale of the southern part of the land 'as a means of funding the substantial program of conservation works'. Based on these considerations, we support the assessment of RBA that relocation is a 'reasonable' heritage outcome as it would help to 'safeguard the structure and is preferable when compared to previous proposals' (HIS p26).

## **2. Conservation Works and New Use**

We support the rationale provided by RBA as outlined in the Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) that the impact the relocation will have on the cultural heritage significance of the place (primarily relating to loss of context and setting) is somewhat mitigated through the proposed conservation works to stabilise Hangar 1 and facilitate a new use for the building.

As explained by RBA and informed by expert advice from Mark Hodgkinson Pty Ltd Consulting Structural Engineers, though the dismantling and reassembly of buildings is not generally encouraged, many of the structural connections to Hangar 1 are bolted making it possible to disconnect sections of the building, including the prefabricated trusses, without damaging the existing timber members. RBA submits that this would allow a comprehensive program of conservation works to be undertaken at ground level which is necessary to address the poor condition of the temporary structure which has 'proven to be problematic since it was erected' (HIS p26). We support the assessment undertaken by Mark Hodgkinson that this method is preferable to the Mammoth Movers proposal to move the structure *en masse*, noting that the disadvantage of this method is that 'it does not address the remedial works that are required to the structure' (Structural Engineers Report, p5).

We support the proposed adaptive re-use of the structure and agree with RBA that the proposed works, including the provision of basic services, is fundamental to the future viability of the place.

### **3. Permit Conditions**

As with any proposed relocation of a heritage building or elements of a heritage place, we submit that it is essential that the structure is reconstructed as soon as feasible after it is dismantled and relocated. We submit that this should form part of the permit conditions, including suitable storage (preferably in-situ) for heritage fabric while the works are being undertaken. Relevant permit conditions as set out for the recent permit application to relocate the Porter Prefabricated Iron Store (VHR H2243) would similarly apply in this case, including the development of a robust deconstruction and reassembly methodology.

### **4. Interpretation**

We note the assessment undertaken by RBA that an understanding of the broader site as a large aerodrome has already been diminished, regardless of the outcome of this permit application and the proposed relocation of Hangar 1 (HIS p18). We suggest to Melbourne Water that an interpretation program is developed to not only communicate the broader history of the site, but to document the more recent history of the place, including the proposed relocation and reconstruction of Hangar 1. As included under Article 20 of the Burra Charter, reconstruction should be both identifiable on close inspection or through additional interpretation. We submit that additional interpretation would further mitigate the impact on the cultural heritage significance of the place based on the erosion of the context and setting. As per Article 25 of the Burra Charter, this interpretation should enhance understanding and engagement, and be culturally appropriate.

In consultation between Melbourne Water and Heritage Victoria, we submit that an interpretation program could be included as part of permit conditions for the project. We submit that this could be an opportunity for Melbourne Water to engage with the local and wider community regarding the history of the site and the proposed relocation project. As the housing development further encroaches upon the site, it is essential that the place is seen to be an asset for the community to ensure its use and viability into the future. As a site of state

level significance which currently houses an asset of national significance (and also fostering rare and skilled trades), we submit that this engagement should form part of Melbourne Water's commitment to the site on behalf of the Victorian community.

## **5. Extent of Registration and Statement of Significance**

We submit that the extent of registration for the place should be reviewed, dependent on the outcome of this permit application. We further submit that the Statement of Significance for the place should be updated to reflect the recommendations provided by RBA (HIS p4) as informed by the Conservation Management Plan prepared in May 2014. We support these recommendations and encourage Heritage Victoria to review both the extent of registration and statement of significance at an opportune time.

## **6. Conclusion**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment regarding the above permit application. As outlined in our submission, we are broadly supportive of the proposal to dismantle, relocate, reconstruct and undertake works to Hangar 1, based on the considerations we have specified. While relocation should be the final recourse in regard to the preservation of a heritage place, we submit that in this particular case it is appropriate to ensure the cultural heritage significance of the place. We support RBA and Mark Hodgkinson Pty Ltd in working closely with Heritage Victoria to further develop a suitable deconstruction and reassembly methodology to ensure that the best possible conservation outcome is achieved.

Please get in touch with this office on 9656 9837 if you have any questions or concerns regarding the above.

Kind Regards,



Caitlin Mitropoulos  
Community Advocate – Built Heritage