

**H0895 Ovoid Sewer Aqueduct Over Barwon River  
42 Leather Street, Breakwater and 91-97 Tannery Road, Marshall  
Permit Application P32806**

**Why is the Ovoid Sewer Aqueduct of cultural heritage significance?**

The Ovoid Sewer Aqueduct ('the Aqueduct') is included in the Victorian Heritage Register under the provisions of the *Heritage Act 2017* for its architectural, historical, scientific (technical) and aesthetic significance to the State of Victoria.

The Aqueduct was constructed over the Barwon River in 1913-15 as part of a sewerage scheme to serve Geelong. The 756-metre-long Aqueduct is comprised of a series of 28 cantilevered trusses which spring from 14 concrete corniced piers, crossing the floodplain and the Barwon River.

The Aqueduct is in critically poor condition, partly owing to historic material faults associated with its original design and construction.

**What was the permit application for?**

In March 2020 Heritage Victoria received a permit application from Barwon Water for works to demolish four pier and truss spans of the Aqueduct to reopen safe public access to and use of the Barwon River.

The proposed works include:

- demolition of the four truss spans (28% of the total length) of the Aqueduct where they cross the Barwon River and Goat Island retaining the pier bases;
- permanent propping of the ends of the truncated truss spans;
- expansion of the existing exclusion zone and new fencing; and
- a heritage interpretation program.

The Aqueduct has deteriorated to the point where it is in critically poor condition, with large areas of spalling concrete and many members exhibiting visible evidence of corrosion.

The primary focus of the proposed works is to allow for the reopening of access to the Barwon River and immediate sections of the floodplain, which have been closed since the 1990s due to the precarious condition of the Aqueduct. The works will also allow for the establishment of a new park in the area around the Aqueduct, developed in partnership between Barwon Water and the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation.

The permit application was advertised between 23 May 2020 and 19 June 2020 with 26 submissions received.

Public submissions received in response to the application were overwhelmingly divided. Those in opposition to the works identified the substantial impact on the cultural heritage significance of the Aqueduct as a result of the proposed partial demolition, while those in support were strong in their desire to see the creation of the parkland, the reopening of the river, and more generally the engagement of the community with the Aqueduct and the broader place.

### **Why has the permit been approved?**

The *Heritage Act 2017* requires the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria to consider various matters in determining a permit application including the extent that the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the place; the extent that refusal would affect the reasonable or economic use of the place; any submissions received in response to public notice of the permit application; and the extent that refusal would unreasonably detrimentally affect the ability of a public authority to perform a statutory duty.

Evidence was provided as to the unacceptable safety risk to the public of the Aqueduct spans crossing the Barwon River. It was identified that significant and costly works would be required to meet safety compliance for this section, which could be to the detriment of allocating funding to the urgent structural needs of the remainder of the Aqueduct which is at risk of collapse.

As a response to concerns expressed by Heritage Victoria regarding the ongoing structural stability of the retained portion of the Aqueduct, Barwon Water was able to confirm that they would undertake structural propping and associated repairs to the Aqueduct amounting to almost \$3 million.

On 16 November 2020, the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria approved the permit application allowing for the demolition of the four truss spans with conditions to protect and conserve the remaining Aqueduct.

The permit also requires a Heritage Infrastructure Management Plan including a schedule of urgent maintenance and make safe works to be undertaken within the life of the permit, a schedule of inspection and reporting to be undertaken in perpetuity, and the development of a robust costed plan for future conservation of the Aqueduct as funds become available.

### **Can the applicant appeal the decision?**

The applicant can choose to apply to the Heritage Council of Victoria for a review of the Executive Director's decision within 60 days of receiving the approved permit. The Heritage Council is an independent statutory authority established under the *Heritage Act 2017*.