

## Recommendations report

### Recommendations

Following the investigation and analysis set out below, **it is recommended that *Parklea* (HO74) be removed from the City of Melton Heritage Overlay.**

The site nevertheless remains of local historical interest, and it is also recommended that measures that would help mitigate the loss of the heritage fabric on site be implemented for the benefit of the local community, including possible interpretation within the landscape and other forms of recognition.

### Overview and methodology

Following a fire and subsequent demolition of built fabric at *Parklea*, Extent Heritage Pty Ltd (Extent) was engaged by Melton City Council (Council) to recommend whether the site has sufficient heritage value to be retained in the Heritage Overlay. The following scope of work was outlined in Council's Request for Quotation dated 22 October 2019:

1. Review the existing statement of significance for HO74;
2. Provide an assessment on whether the site contains sufficient heritage significance to remain on the Heritage Overlay;
3. In the advent that Schedule 74 is to be retained, a revised Statement of Significance should be prepared, and consideration should be given on whether the extent of the schedule mapping should be modified; and
4. In the event that Schedule 74 is recommended to be removed, a report will be required which justifies why the site should be removed.

To provide a recommendation, Extent followed the following three stage methodology:

- Stage 1—Desktop review, which considered both the existing Statement of Significance for *Parklea* as well as other publicly accessible material to inform the fieldwork and ultimate recommendations.
- Stage 2—Fieldwork: comprising a site visit undertaken by a Heritage Advisor / Archaeologist and a Research Assistant, to:
  - independently verify and ground truth the information from the desktop review;
  - assess the current condition and existence of the heritage attributes that gave rise to its recognised heritage significance, and
  - in conjunction with the information from the desktop review, to consider whether there were any other attributes or grounds for significance that had become evident since the existing statement of significance was prepared, including archaeological evidence.

- Stage 3—Findings and Recommendations: comprising the preparation of this recommendations report.

No formal guidance could be found on a methodology for considering the retention or otherwise of damaged places in municipal Heritage Overlays in Victoria, including in *Practice Note 01 – Applying the Heritage Overlay* (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, August 2018).

Accordingly, in line with good heritage practice and as suggested by the scope of works, Extent in the first instance took the existing statement of significance as the basis for its reassessment. The statement of significance is clear, comprehensive in its scope and assumed to be exhaustive at the time of its evaluation between 2006 and 2009. Clearly, if the place sufficiently retained the attributes for which it was found to meet the threshold of local heritage significance in the existing statement of significance, it would justify retention on the Heritage Overlay, with any necessary modifications to the statement of significance. If, however, the place did not sufficiently retain those attributes, this would normally be sufficient to recommend removal. Such an approach is supported, for example, in the *Operational Guidelines to the World Heritage Convention* (2019; available at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/>), which provides that a place is delisted if the Committee decides that it ‘has deteriorated to the extent that it has lost those characteristics which determined its inscription on the World Heritage List’ (Paragraph 191).

Extent did, however, consider whether other attributes or grounds for significance beyond those recognised in the statement of significance may be considered sufficient to meet the threshold for local significance. In this regard, noting the demolition and removal of built fabric from the site, the archaeological potential of the site was considered because the demolition and removal of built fabric may have revealed or indeed created archaeological evidence not previously available, including when the existing statement of significance was developed. While no detailed social significance consultation was undertaken, as part of the desktop review we also considered whether there is evidence of contemporary community attachments to the place to suggest social significance.

While we consider the above approach to be the correct approach, we further understand that Council wishes to have an appraisal as to whether the place in its current state meets the threshold of local heritage significance against the applicable criteria. We have therefore included a statement evaluating the place against the currently applicable HERCON criteria as an alternative expression of our Stage 3 (Findings and recommendations).

## Heritage status and significance

The site of the former *Parklea* pastoral complex is included in the Heritage Overlay to the Melton Planning Scheme as HO74 (Figure 1). According to the statement of significance:

Parklea is significant as an intact example of a modest interwar Bungalow style house, and for its association with the locally prominent Robinson family. The rear outbuildings may be earlier than the Interwar Bungalow. (Shire of Melton Heritage Study – Volume 4 (2007), Citation 199)

The statement of significance further elaborates the basis of its significance, as follows:

- architectural significance for its interwar bungalow as demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of Australia's cultural environment (Former Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) Criterion D.2);
- historical significance as a scarce remaining example of an interwar farming property and for its association to the locally prominent Robinson family (Former AHC Criteria B.2 and H.1); and
- the visual aesthetic qualities associated with its setting, defined by the long drive flanked by mature peppercorn trees, cypresses, and rear outbuildings (Former AHC Criterion E.1).

The statement of significance further notes that 'The outbuildings, tank stand and huts and plantings constitute noteworthy evidence of an earlier farming complex'.

# EXTENT

## HERITAGE ADVISORS

Melton City Council Toolern PSP  
Review Heritage Overlay

 Melton Heritage Overlay

**Drawn by:** Alexander Murphy  
**Checked by:** Benjamin Petkov  
**Date:** 28 February 2020  
**Projection:** GDA 2020 MGA Zone 55  
**Data sources:** Extent, Nearmap, DELWP  
**LGA:** Melton  
**Parish:** Kororoit

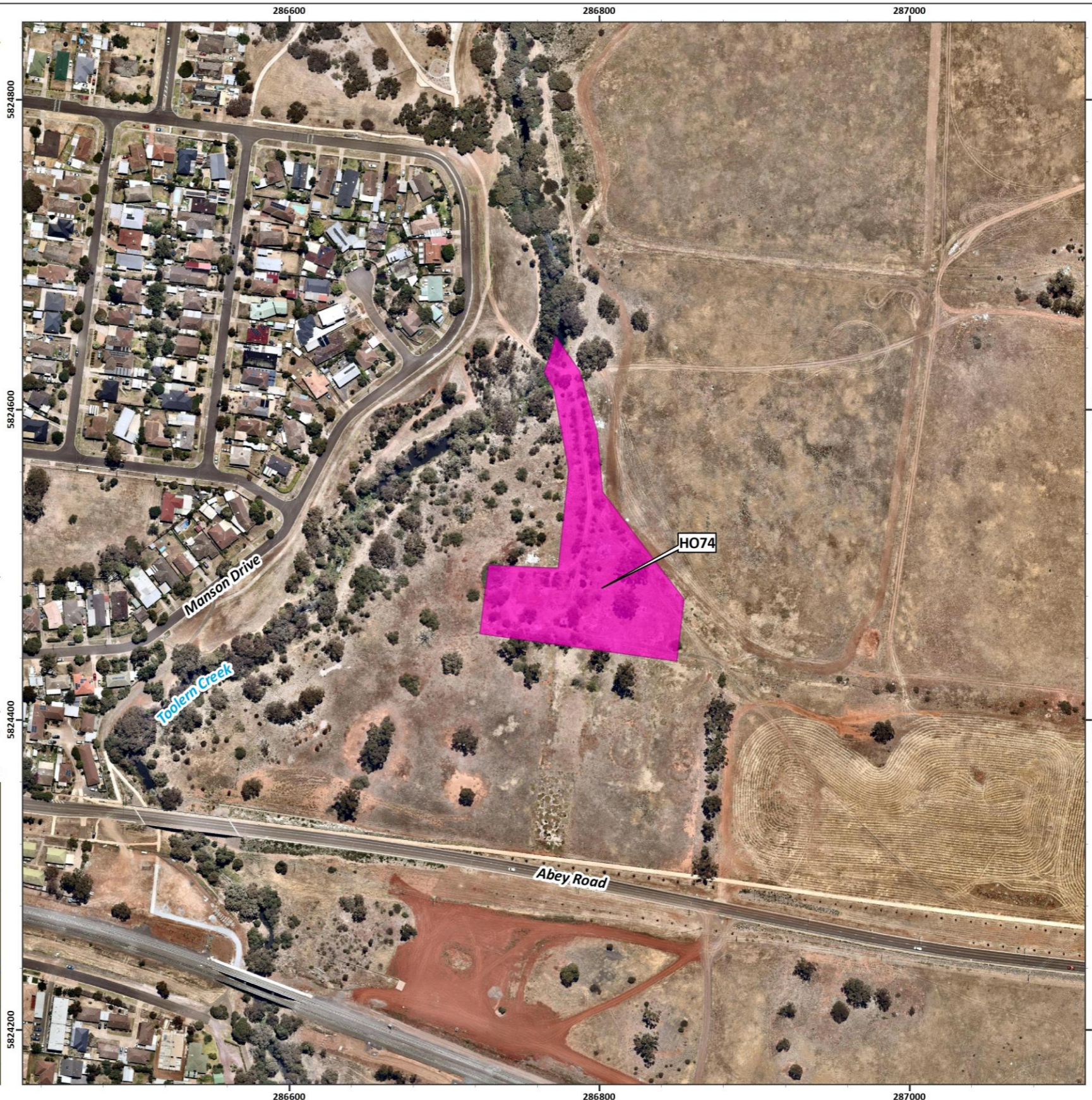
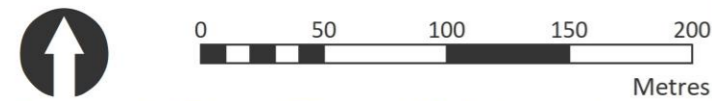


Figure 1: Melton City Council HO. Former Parklea Complex outlined in red.

## Site description

Prior to the demolition of the house and outbuildings, *Parklea* was a surviving example of a complete inter-war pastoral complex. The curtilage of the area including in HO74 included the following attributes described in further detail below: the house, tank stands, and outbuildings, a partially cobbled driveway lined with mature peppercorns, and a portion of a ford.

The curtilage also included other mature plantings and evidence of past plantings, including the presence of several cypress trees (now dead), overgrown or dead succulents, mature sugar gums and additional interspersed peppercorns.

### *House, houseblock and outbuildings*

The former interwar bungalow was burnt down and subsequently demolished. The footprint of the house is recognisable for its remnant timber footings, remnant brick flooring and terracotta plumbing.

The house block includes two remnant tanks and tank stands. One is a corrugated iron tank on a raised stand which appears to be intact. A tank pad constructed of basalt floaters and concrete, likely to be the one referred to in the statement of significance, also remains intact. The underground brick and cement tank with raised timber platform and windmill is similarly intact, though partially scorched and reconstructed with later fabric. The tank itself is partially filled with refuse.

There remained some recognisable evidence of the outbuildings, with a small portion of overgrown flooring comprising reinforced concrete and some masonry. All traces of outbuildings, where recognisable, were overgrown.

Furthermore, the cypresses noted in the original Statement of Significance as being near the house and outbuildings have either died or are dying (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Site of the demolished bungalow. Note the dead cypress to the far left.

### *Driveway and ford*

The driveway is described in the current Statement of Significance as comprising a ‘long driveway from the Toolern Creek ford ... flanked by mature peppercorn trees that would appear to date from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century’. The majority of the peppercorns (*Schinus molle*) are still present, though some have died and a large portion of the others are struggling with dieback. The drive is cobbled in part, and a large cattle grate is still present. The driveway was described in the Melton Planning Scheme Amendment C71 Panel Report (2009), as comprising, ‘concrete for a short section after crossing the ford, then crushed rock, then “cobblestones” from a local source of stone’.

The ford appears to be constructed of both concrete and cut bluestone. However, due to heavy rains around the time when fieldwork was undertaken much of the ford was in flood and its condition could not be fully assessed. The condition of the ford however is not material to the ultimate recommendations in this report.

### Condensed history of the site

The land on which the former *Parklea* pastoral complex was established on was first purchased by J. Salisbury in 1853. Salisbury used the land for dairy for approximately 5 years before selling it to Robert McIlwraith. It was cropped for oats and wheat till it was sold a number of years after to Armstrong and Russell – American bootleggers. The land then went to a Mr. Farren in 1883, when the land comprised 202 acres complete with outbuildings and a small timber residence. Farren sold it to Dr. Charles Duret who is shown to be the owner in 1896, when the land was again sold to John Robinson. Robinson sold to Alex Fraser, who in turn sold the property to a different John Robinson in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This new Robinson constructed the bungalow formerly onsite. The Robinsons were a well-regarded family within the shire, with a constant position in local council from 1900-1985. George Errol Robinson served as Shire President for 1938-39, 1941-42, 1947-48, and 1956-57.

The land has been used for agricultural purposes since first purchased in 1853 until approximately early mid-2000s. As noted above, in recent years the buildings were destroyed by fire and subsequently demolished, and the property is currently unoccupied.

### Site inspection

Sarah Janson, Heritage Advisor and archaeologist and Benjamin Petkov, Research Assistant from Extent Heritage Pty Ltd (Extent) inspected the place on 23 January 2020 with; Matthew Milbourne, Senior Strategic Planner, Melton City Council; Sera Jane Peters, Heritage Advisor, Melton City Council; and Anastasia Badina, Strategic Planner, Melton City Council.

The following photographs document the current integrity and condition of the place:

**Former houseblock and outbuildings**



Tank stand, underground brick tank and burnt car.



Site of the former house.



Detritus associated with dumping on the site.



Tank pad constructed of basalt floaters and concrete.



An overgrown portion of brick flooring associated with a former outbuilding.



An overgrown portion of brick flooring associated with a former outbuilding.



Site of the former house. Note the dead cypress to the far left.



Site of yard behind the former house. Note the dead peppercorns and raised tank.

### Driveway and ford



Ford obscured by flooding.



Bluestone blocks and concrete linked to the ford.





Start of the drive.



Middle portion of the drive.



Remnant cattle grid.



Remnant basalt cobbles.



Fork in the drive.



Southern fork of the drive.



South eastern fork of the drive.



Mature *Eucalyptus cladocalyx* which would have separated the house from the outbuildings.

## Recommendation and analysis

Following the investigation set out above and subsequent analysis, **it is recommended that Parklea (HO74) be removed from the City of Melton Heritage Overlay** for the reasons set out below.

### *Justification for removal of HO74*

For the reasons discussed in the methodology section above, the existing statement of significance is taken in the first instance as the basis for assessing whether the site contains sufficient heritage significance to remain on the Heritage Overlay. Considering each of the bases for significance outline above, the following assessment is made:

- *architectural significance for its interwar bungalow as demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of Australia's cultural environment (Former AHC Criterion D.2, equivalent to current HERCON criterion B)*

As most of the built structures onsite have been adversely affected by fire and demolition, the site has lost many of the attributes associated directly with the significance of the built fabric. None of the attributes associated with the architectural significance of the interwar bungalow remain. Accordingly, the place no longer meets the threshold of local significance under this criterion.

- *historical significance as a scarce remaining example of an interwar farming property and for its association to the locally prominent Robinson family (Former AHC Criteria B.2 and H.1; equivalent to current HERCON criteria B and H)*

As noted above, as most of the built structures onsite have been adversely affected by fire and demolition, the site has lost many of the attributes associated directly with the significance of the built fabric. With the loss of the bungalow and outbuildings, the degree to which it remains an example of an interwar farming property is negligible. Some attributes remain, including the water tanks (with some loss of authenticity and in poor condition), a tank stand, and some recognisable evidence of the outbuildings including footings. The continuing significance of the association of the property with the locally prominent Robinson family is more challenging to reassess. On one hand, the place remains the physical location where the Robinson's resided for most of the twentieth century and gained their reputation as 'Melton's pioneering hay making farmers'. Yet all substantial evidence of this residence and activities, including the bungalow and attributes associated with the farming complex including outbuildings, no longer remains. The place could only be described as having an associative relationship with the Robinsons, disconnected with the remaining fabric that could convey the substance of their occupation of the land. On balance, the place no longer meets the threshold of local significance under these criteria.

- *the visual aesthetic qualities associated with its setting, defined by the long drive flanked by mature peppercorn trees, cypresses, and rear outbuildings (Former AHC Criterion E.1; equivalent to current HERCON criterion E).*

Those attributes that once comprised the setting of the place include the, 'long drive flanking mature peppercorn trees, mature cypress trees nearby the house and the rear outbuildings'.

The *setting*, according to the Burra Charter (2013), constitutes the ‘immediate and extended environment of a place that is part or contributes to its cultural significance and distinctive character’. In this case, the setting comprising the drive and plantings once offered external context to the built elements, and gained much if not all of their significance in conjunction with those elements. With loss of the primary attributes that convey the significance of *Parklea*—principally the house and outbuildings—the remnant attributes left on the site are now removed from their context and are no longer able to express the significance of the place. In addition, some of the specific attributes of the setting, i.e. the mature *Cupressaceae*, are affected by dieback or have completely died, and as such no longer contributory to the aesthetic qualities of the site. The aesthetic qualities of the drive have similarly been affected by dieback of many of the mature peppercorns. Again, on balance the place no longer meets the threshold of local significance under this criterion.

- *The outbuildings, tank stand and huts and plantings constitute noteworthy evidence of an earlier farming complex (General statement, no direct reference to criteria)*

As noted above, as most of the built structures onsite have been adversely affected by fire and demolition, the site has lost many of the attributes associated directly with the significance of the built fabric. The outbuildings and huts no longer remain. However the tank stand and some recognisable evidence of the outbuildings, including footings, remain in situ. The plantings associated with earlier farming complex are not specified, however it is likely to refer to the cypresses and peppercorns, as no other significant remnant plantings from the late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century were observed. On its own, the evidence of any earlier farming complex is insufficient to reach the threshold of local significance. (See further below discussion of archaeological potential)

As an overall assessment, the site is too compromised to be considered intact enough to retain its local significance such as to remain on the Heritage Overlay.

### *Archaeological potential*

It was noted in the site visit that much of the site had been subject to illegal dumping. This dumping compromised the integrity of the site – and as outlined in Heritage Victoria’s *Guidelines for Conducting Historical Archaeological Surveys*, ‘Archaeological significance is a measure of the integrity of an archaeological site’. As the integrity of the site has been compromised by both dumping and fire, the potential for archaeological significance has similarly been compromised. The remnant landscape features, visible site fabric and other information available do not indicate a likelihood for the site to contain significant archaeological remains. Any archaeological remains, if present, are unlikely to be in a condition or context that will allow information to be obtained that will contribute or enhance an understanding of the site.

*Reassessment against HERCON criteria*

As an alternative expression of the reassessment above, below is an assessment of the place in its current state against the HERCON criteria:

HERCON Criteria Assessment	
A. Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history.	<p>The site has some historical value as the site of a former pastoral complex whose evolution demonstrated the changing rural landscapes from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century associated with pastoral expansion. However the attributes associated with this historical value are no longer intact enough to convey this significance.</p> <p>The place does not meet this criterion.</p>
B. Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history.	<p>Intact former twentieth century pastoral complexes are rare within the municipality, however the property is no longer intact.</p> <p>The place does not meet this criterion.</p>
C. Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history.	<p>An assessment of the archaeological potential suggests the place lacks sufficient integrity due to a recent history of dumping to yield information to aid understanding.</p> <p>The place does not meet this criterion.</p>
D. Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments.	<p>The place does not possess the attributes required to demonstrate the principal characteristics of a pastoral complex.</p> <p>The place does not meet this criterion.</p>
E. Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.	<p>The place contains some attributes that evoke a substantial rural pastoral complex, including arrangements remnant plantings including a peppercorn-lined former driveway. However, such elements are now in poor condition and disconnected from their former context.</p> <p>The place does not meet this criterion.</p>
F. Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.	<p>The place does not meet this criterion.</p>
G. Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions.	<p>While a detailed social value assessment has not been performed, from a review of the available sources it is noted that the fire and demolition of the bungalow and outbuildings was not recorded as a significant event for the local community such as to suggest a strong or special association with a particular community group.</p> <p>The place does not meet this criterion.</p>
H. Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.	<p>The site of the former pastoral complex and residence is associated with the locally prominent Robinson family that occupied the site after several other owners and had local associations with Council for much of the twentieth century. Yet all substantial evidence of this association, including the bungalow and attributes associated with the farming complex including outbuildings, no longer remains. The place could</p>

	only be described as having an associative relationship with the Robinsons, disconnected with the remaining fabric that could convey the substance of their occupation of the land.  The place does not meet this criterion.
Significance Level	DOES NOT MEET THRESHOLD

### *Integrity and condition*

As noted above, the results of fire, demolition and tree dieback mean that the built fabric and plantings that might serve as attributes of significance are either in poor condition or missing. Accordingly, the place demonstrates **low integrity** and is generally in **poor condition**.

### *Comparative assessment*

A review of sites already included on Melton's Heritage Overlay was conducted to find comparative examples to *Parklea*. The comparative assessment used the existing state of the place as its point of reference, meaning a rural or pastoral complex or site without substantial extant above-ground built fabric.

The only two recorded sites on the Heritage Overlay that were comparable to *Parklea* in this regard are HO95 (Former Robinson House Tank, The Bullock Track), and HO109 (Old Rockbank Middle Road (Cobblestone Road)). Each can be compared to particular items at *Parklea* that remain in situ. No comparable pastoral or rural complex without substantial extant built fabric was located.

The *Former Robinson House Tank* is significant as an intact example of water management in West Melton in the late nineteenth century. While the structure does not have substantial above-ground presence, it demonstrates historical significance in its own right and substantial intactness. By comparison, the remnant underground tank at *Parklea* does not have significance in its own right, has been altered to such a degree its original form is no longer discernible, having been reconstructed using introduced fabric thus compromising the authenticity of the structure. It is also currently in a state of disrepair from fire.

The *Old Rockbank Middle Road* is significant as a 'scarce surviving remnant of early composite Telford and Macadam style stone road construction techniques' that was 'likely part of an early alternative route used by squatters situated on the Kororoit Creek to the lower crossings of the Maribyrnong River'. While the driveway at *Parklea* contains remnant cobbled sections, both the claims to historical significance and the level of intactness of the Old Rockbank Middle Road is substantially stronger than for the *Parklea* driveway. In particular, both the integrity and condition of the drive at *Parklea* have been compromised through the introduction of concrete and gravel.

The comparative assessment reveals that places in the Melton Heritage Overlay with superficially similar extant fabric to remnant parts of *Parklea* can be clearly distinguished, reinforcing the assessment that the place does not meet the threshold for local significance.

### *Concluding recommendations*

Though it is the recommendation of this report that the site be removed from the Heritage Overlay, it remains a place of local historical interest and there is the potential for measures that would help mitigate the loss of the heritage fabric on site, for the benefit of the local community. These include:

- The development of interpretation for the site, which could include signage panels located on the road verge (on Council land) or otherwise (with the property owner's consent) on the site. This would be most appropriate if sited in the vicinity of any extant historical fabric (such as the ford through the waterway, and driveway cobblestones) that may be incidentally subject to protection from development through other provisions in the Melton Planning Scheme or other environmental controls.
- We understand the site is within the Toolern Precinct Structure Plan area. The Toolern Precinct Structure Plan is currently being reviewed. We also understand that the site could also be the subject of further attention in a future thematic history of the municipality. We recommend (to the extent that it is possible) to allow for recognition of the history of the place and its items of local interest in such documents.