

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

Name	Big Hill Railway Precinct (Murray Valley Railway, Melbourne to Echuca)		
Address	Calder Highway Big Hill	Grading	Unknown
Building Type	Rail Transport Precinct		
Assessment by	Context Pty Ltd		

Recommended Heritage Protection	VHR - HI - PS -		
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History and Historical Context

The Big Hill Railway precinct forms part of the Murray Valley Railway (Melbourne to Echuca line). Opened in five stages from February 1859 to September 1864, the Murray Valley Railway was the largest of the Colony's first two main trunk lines. The inability of the line's original private promoters - the Melbourne, Mount Alexander and Murray River Company to raise sufficient funds to construct the line, led to the government purchasing the company and embracing a public railway system. The Government's decision to construct the line in 1856 was accompanied by the formation of the Victorian Railways Department. The building of the line during the early 1860s reflected the strategic economic issues of the day: servicing the important goldfields of Castlemaine and Bendigo, and capturing the Murray River and Riverina trade for the Port of Melbourne. With a labour force of more than 6,000 men, the Melbourne to Echuca line was the Colony's largest capital works project of its time. The line is still used today for public transport and freight services and comprises a very large number of structures and facilities of varying ages, conditions and degrees of operational and business significance.

References:

Victorian Heritage Register

Relevant Historical Australian Themes

Moving goods and people - railway

Description

Physical Description

The Big Hill Railway precinct comprises the Big Hill tunnel, five culverts, cuttings, embankments, archaeological deposits, mullock heaps and a section of the main Coliban system water race system.

Statement of Significance

Victorian Heritage Register: Extent of Registration: To the extent of all of the railway engineering works known as granite semi-circular culvert; south portal of Big Hill tunnel; north portal of Big Hill tunnel; brick culvert; Coliban system water race and railway culvert; box culvert; brick semi-circular culvert; all associated mullock dumps, cuttings,

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embankments, archaeological objects and deposits as specified; and the land as defined by the Heritage Council.

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The Big Hill Railway precinct is of historical, scientific and archaeological importance to the State of Victoria.

The Big Hill Railway precinct (comprising the Big Hill tunnel, five culverts, cuttings, embankments, archaeological deposits, mullock heaps and a section of the main Coliban system water race system) is historically and scientifically significant as an integral part of the railway line and is an important representative sample of one of the earliest and grandest capital works projects in Victorian history. The identified features comprising the precinct are all substantially intact and provide a crucial reminder of the adoption of English engineering and architectural standards and the role of the Victorian Railway Department in developing the Colony's engineering expertise.

The Big Hill tunnel is significant as an one the largest construction undertakings on the line being of similar size and design to the Elphinstone tunnel. The associated railway engineering works are excellent examples of the range of materials, building techniques and design types used on the Kyneton to Bendigo section of the line. The precinct makes an important contribution in defining the character of the Victorian Railway network.

The Big Hill Railway precinct also has the potential to contain buried evidence of the workers' camp that accommodated the massive work force undertaking the major works.

HO15 Calder Highway, Big Hill Big Hill Railway Precinct

HO711 Railway Reserve, Big Hill Big Hill Railway Precinct

Recommendations

External Paint Controls

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Internal Alteration Controls

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Tree Controls

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Fences & Outbuildings

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Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted

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Incorporated Plan

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Aboriginal Heritage Place

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