

MELBOURNE CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1772

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO908

## VHR Registration

February 18, 1999

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - March 3, 2000

### What is Significant

The Sidney Myer Music Bowl project came about through the auspices of the Sidney Myer Charitable Trust which was established upon the death of the founder of the Myer Department Store empire, Simcha Baevski (Sidney) Myer. Myer's nephew Norman Myer oversaw completion of the project in his role as chairman of the Trust.

The provision of a sound shell in the Domain area had been publically mooted as early as the late 1940s but this had not amounted to any substantial action. The Myer project was discussed in the mid-1950s with the architectural firms of Yuncken, Freeman, Griffiths and Simpson and Grounds, Romberg and Boyd being invited to participate in a joint design exercise. In September 1956 Yuncken Freeman Architects, Griffiths and Simpson took control of the project following a joint meeting of the two firms. The project architect was Barry Patten.

The Sidney Myer Music Bowl was constructed throughout 1958 to Patten's design and involved the integration of a tensile structure and landscape into an organic and harmonious relationship. The construction system consisted of cables laced together and covered with aluminium faced plywood sandwich panels. Many new techniques were developed throughout construction to ensure that the structure remained aerodynamically stable yet flexible and watertight. Ground anchors were developed to be corrosion resistant. The shell was also required to be acoustically correct and its construction saw the employment of Italian migrant riggers who had previously worked on the construction of Australian television towers.

The bowl was officially opened by Prime Minister Robert Menzies on 12 February 1959 to an audience of some 30,000. Later the same month the American evangelist Billy Graham drew crowds in excess of 70,000 to the bowl. The Sidney Myer Music Bowl has remained in continued use since its opening, drawing large crowds to cultural and sometimes evangelical events.

### How is it significant

The Sidney Myer Music Bowl is of historic, cultural, aesthetic (architectural) and technical importance to Victoria.

### Why is it significant

The Sidney Myer Music Bowl is of historical importance for its association with the Sidney Myer Charitable Trust established after the death of the founder of the Myer Department Store empire Simcha Baevski Myer, and for its association with the Myer family particularly Norman Myer the chairman of the Trust who oversaw the completion

of the project.

The Sidney Myer Music Bowl is of cultural importance to Victoria as a major and long serving location for a wide range of open air cultural events and performances and is a well known venue through-out Australia.

The Sidney Myer Music Bowl has architectural importance and is rare as the largest, purpose built, permanent outdoor performance venue in Australia. The Bowl was constructed during a period of experimentation in new forms of construction and since completion its tensile structural system has not been surpassed in scale or complexity. The development of the venue also embodied remodelling the surrounding Domain which was sculptured into a bowl with the sound shell providing an umbrella like roof over part of that landscape. The design sought to integrate built and natural elements in a harmonious and organic whole. The audience was provided for in an egalitarian manner with simple timber bench seats arranged under the permanent structure and an open sloped lawn beyond it.

The Sidney Myer Music Bowl is of technical importance for its contribution to the development of engineering and construction techniques which were required to complete this large scale and technically unusual project.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

**Places of worship:** In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must [notify](#) the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

**Subdivision/consolidation:** Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

#### General Conditions:

1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.
2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible.
3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it.
4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or

building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

#### Exemptions

- \* Demolition of the un-registered structures on the registered site (eg the toilet block)
- \* Removal of intrusive, non-significant elements as defined in the Sidney Myer Music Bowl Draft Conservation Management Plan 1996 by Allom Lovell & Associates.
- \* Non-structural alterations to areas of contributory or no significance as defined in the Sidney Myer Music Bowl Draft Conservation Management Plan 1996 by Allom Lovell & Associates provided those alterations have no affect on areas of primary significance.

Construction dates        1958,  
Architect/Designer        Yuncken Freeman,  
Heritage Act Categories    Registered place,  
Hermes Number            1528  
Property Number

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## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including the Heritage Register Number 1772 in the category described as a Heritage Place:

Sidney Myer Music Bowl, St Kilda Road, Melbourne, City of Melbourne.

#### EXTENT:

1. The whole of the Music Bowl structure marked B-1 (including stage, timber bench seating and the retaining walls to the side of stage and rear of seating, and the 3 commemorative plaques on each of those retaining walls), on diagram number 600379 held by the Executive Director.
2. The whole of the land marked L-1 on diagram 600379 held by the Executive Director being all of the land excised from the Domain and managed by the Victorian Arts Centre Trust.

Dated: 4 February 1999.

RAY TONKIN

Executive Director

[Victoria Government Gazette G 7 18 February 1999 pp.444-455]

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*