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# FORMER EMU RAILWAY STATION

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## Location

EMU ROAD EMU, NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

## Municipality

NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7524-0118

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 10, 2023

### What is significant?

Features likely to be present at the Former Emu Railway Station site comprise the remains of platforms, station buildings, platforms and other related structures, along with the former crossing loop, which were formerly present within the station grounds.

### How is it significant?

The Former Emu Railway Station site is of local archaeological significance.

### Why is it significant?

There is moderate potential for archaeological features and other previously unidentified historical heritage places to be present within the Project Investigation Boundary in relation to the Former Emu Railway Station site. This is based on the Emu Railway Station background history, and by the results of the aerial imagery review.

Interpretation of Site

The Former Emu Railway Station site meets the definition of an archaeological site under the Heritage Act, as a site that is likely to contain artefacts, deposits or features 75 or more years old, that would provide information relating to the former use of the site, that requires archaeological methods to reveal such information. There are numerous surface features related to former structures at the site. There is limited historical documentation about the site and no site plans or layouts found to date. While some of the former structures were photographed as still standing in 2004 and related to 20th century construction, other features such as the westernmost brick and concrete slab may be earlier. The limited amount of ground disturbance across the platforms indicates there is potential for archaeological features and potentially artefacts to be present. This is likely to contribute to an understanding of early small Victorian railway stations, particularly related to the operation of goods transportation. As such, the Former Emu Railway Station meets Threshold A (archaeology). As there is limited historical information about the Former Emu Railway Station site, archaeological investigation and detailed recording could provide information not available elsewhere, particularly in relation to its layout and usage. The limited historical information suggests it was a very minor stopping point, but the number of structures and the provision of substantial ablutions facilities potentially suggest otherwise. While no features were identified to the south of the railway line, historical imagery and the size of the station grounds suggests that the station once had infrastructure on the south side of the line which is no longer extant. Regardless of its size, archaeological investigation could provide information about smaller but still important stations along the Murray Basin line, particularly related to the transport of goods and how this has changed over time. This use for freight is still the main focus of the line today and the reason for the current project. The site is significant in a local context under the 'linking Victorians by rail' (Theme 3.3) in Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes (Heritage Council of Victoria 2010). As such, the Former Emu Railway Station site meets Threshold B (place history).

Other Names Emu Station, Emu Railway Station,

Hermes Number 209355

Property Number

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## History

A railway station was established at Emu when the line between Dunolly and St Arnaud was constructed in 1880. However, it appears that it may have been largely focussed for the loading of goods, in particular grain. In July 1882, a Mr Dow MLA introduced a deputation to the Minister of Railways who were seeking shed accommodation and a crane at the Emu Railway Station due to increased traffic (The Age, 14 July 1882, p.3). On 19 October 1882, in the Legislative Assembly, a Mr Bent, on behalf of Mr Dow, said that a crane would be sent to Emu Railway Station in a few days but shed accommodation was not required at that place (The Argus, 20 October 1882, p.4). Apart from the stop's proximity to the grain centre at Dunolly, the role of the stop as a grain transshipment point is reinforced by a report in the local paper, the Bealiba Times, which reported that Mr A Evans "had an exciting time carting wheat" when his horse took fright at a train entering the gate at Emu Railway Station, smashing the fore carriage of his wagon (Bealiba Times, 18 February 1916, p.2), and that on "Wednesday the first load of the season's wheat was brought to the Emu Station by George Bicknell". Some form of station building would have been located at Emu, as The Age reported on a court case in 1904 between two parties of gold miners over who had rights to a particular mining lease at Emu. The report notes that the race to be the first to peg out, or claim, the lease was initiated by a telegram being received at the station suggesting that there must have been a building present (The Age, 23 December 1904, p.8). A photo of Emu Railway Station dated to 1971 shows that the station then comprised a light green coloured station building with a gabled roof, housing three light cream/white chimneys and white window trim, and a corrugated iron verandah with iron posts. A wooden fence is present adjacent the platform, behind which two water tanks can be seen adjacent to the railway station. A wooden shed with a red oxide coloured roof and door is adjacent to the tanks, accessible from the platform, and appear to comprise a van goods shed. This building appears to have been demolished, and the complex replaced by a much simpler railway station layout. The platform length also appears to have been

reduced (Lee and Phillips n.d.). This small station complex was recorded in the Shire of Northern Grampians Stage 2 Heritage Study in 2004 which stated: 'The former Railway Station, Emu Road, Emu, has a rural setting. The complex consists of a modestly scaled and rudimentary gabled building with a galvanised corrugated iron roof (painted deep red) and vertical boarded wall cladding, together with a nearby galvanised corrugated iron toilet block and railway platform with timber retaining walls fronting the dual railway line. There are some exotic trees adjacent the complex, including a large pine' (Jacobs et al. 2004). The form and construction of the station buildings suggests that they were built during the middle to later part of the twentieth century. The double track referred to in the Heritage Study was in fact the Emu Loop, which was located at 277.736 km. The loop was removed from service in February 2014, following the derailment of a grain train en route from Birchip to North Geelong at Emu. Five wagons overturned, damaging 210 m of track. The subsequent stock recovery and track repair lasted five days but the Emu loop was not reinstated as a crossing location after this (Australian Transport Safety Bureau 2020). The line was converted to standard gauge in May 2018 (VicSig 2022). As noted above, historical evidence shows that Emu Railway Station originally had a large passenger platform, station building with a corrugated iron verandah, and associated railway structures. This was extant in 1971; however, by 1989 it had been demolished and replaced by a small stopping place with little built fabric beyond a single platform and a rudimentary station hut and toilets. Historical aerial imagery shows an approximately 130 m platform which is discernible in modern imagery from 2017 as an earth bank. The platform appears to have been lined along its north boundary by trees. Opposite this is a worn area with a possible structure to the southeast of the station building, immediately adjacent the railway line in the south. The aerial imagery is too low quality to identify the building, but a path appears to be leading to it from the south, through the trees. This suggests that the railway station facilities once extended to the south of the railway line. The structure shown in the 2004 photograph of the Emu Station is not discernible in either the historical or modern imagery, suggesting that it was constructed after 1971, when the historical aerial photograph was taken, and removed sometime between 2004 and 2017. A comparison of the 1971 and 1989 photos shows that the power pole adjacent to the west of the station buildings is the same in both shots, as is a small concrete area immediately adjacent to the west of the pole. The 1989 photograph also shows where the platform has been removed, and a small set of stairs (one on each end of the platform) has been added as part of the reconstruction of the platform wall, as the bolt holes do not align perfectly with that shown in 1971. The 1971 photograph of a larger platform matches the aerial imagery from 1946, which shows what appears to be a full-length platform along the north side of Emu Railway Station. As such, it is unclear as to whether the platform has been lowered, or whether the track has been raised, but only three courses are visible in 1989, but it was truncated prior to 1989. The modern imagery shows that there is a collection of small trees in the approximate location of the 1989 structure, suggesting that the buildings were removed some time ago.

*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/>*