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# Former Panoramic Drive-In Dandenong



B7373 Dandenong Drive In  
Entrance

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## Location

115 South Gippsland Highway,, DANDENONG VIC 3175 - Property No B7373

## Municipality

GREATER DANDENONG CITY

## Level of significance

Regional

## Heritage Listing

National Trust

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - December 28, 2007

The Dandenong Drive-in opened in May 1956 in the first wave of drive-in construction, just two years after Australia's first, the Burwood Skyline. Built by a local syndicate, it was located on a land-locked industrial site, could hold 634 cars, had a typical lightweight fibro-clad ticket box and diner, a screen supported on a timber structure, a 'walk-in' (a fibro shed for patrons without cars), and was named the Panoramic Dandenong. A row of cypress trees was planted along the south boundary to screen the lights of exiting cars. In the 1960s, the diner was extended forward and the sides re-clad in concrete block. In 1973 the site was purchased by Village, who renamed it the Village Dandenong and replaced the timber supported screen with a steel one. Trade was good despite competition from other subsequent drive-ins in the outer eastern suburbs. However, with the introduction of multi-screen cinema complexes and the VCR in the late 1970s, patronage dropped substantially across nearly all drive-ins in Australia and Dandenong closed in 1984.

It was sold intact to Trash & Treasure P/L, who have run successful markets there on Sundays ever since, the only alteration being the removal of the speaker posts. Nearly 20 years after closing, a new syndicate took up a

lease and invested in reopening it again as a drive-in in 2002. The screen was replaced, a second screen added, and the diner/bio box building was updated, painted in a bright and dark blue colour scheme. Renamed the Lunar Drive-in, a third screen was added in 2003, and capacity expanded to close to 1000 cars. It has become a successful operation, attracting a new generation of drive-in patrons, many too young to remember a time when there were drive-ins dotted right across Melbourne and Victoria.

How is it significant? The Dandenong Drive-in is significant for historic and social reasons at the Regional level.

Why is it significant? The Dandenong Drive-in is historically and socially significant as one of only three drive-ins in Victoria to survive and still operating out of the 60 that once existed, and is the oldest site still operating. These three, in Coburg, Dandenong, and Dromana, are the last remnants of a once extremely popular cultural phenomenon, one that appears to have had a real impact only in the US, Canada and Australia. Inspired by American cultural trends, drive-ins, like motels, were a new type of private or domestic space, a mobile extension of the family living room, and characterized a trend in personal behaviour to be less formal and inhibited in public spaces. They grew out of the extraordinary popularity and increasing affordability of cars, and provided a novel and easy form of entertainment. They catered to a wide range of audiences, allowing a whole family with young children the convenience of staying in their car, for teenagers to socialize apart from their parents and especially for young adults who were attracted to particular film genres and the intimate private space provided by the car. Today Dandenong is Australia's oldest drive-in site currently operating, and since 2003, with a capacity of nearly 1000, is the largest drive-in in Victoria. Compared with the other surviving drive-ins in Victoria, only a few of Dandenong's built structures are intact, notably the 1956 ticket booth, walk-in, cypress tree row and parts of the diner. The walk-in is one of only two surviving in Victoria, perhaps nationally.

EXTENT: The whole of the land, but specifically the ticket box, the original parking ramps, the diner, walk-in building and cypress tree row.

Classified: 03/12/2007

Other Names	Lunar Drive-in, Originally Dandenong Panoramic'', Trash & Treasure P/L, Village Dandenong,
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Hermes Number	71757
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*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/>*