

# **Assignment 2 – Conservation Management Plan**

*Heritage Planning Unit (PLA4HP)*

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Conservation Management Plan for

# The Tramway Signal Cabin, Waiting Shelter and Conveniences at Swanston Street & Victoria Street, Melbourne

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# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1 BACKGROUND

This conservation management plan (CMP) has been commissioned to inform conservation and management of the Tramway Signal Cabin, Waiting Shelter and Conveniences at Swanston Street and Victoria Street, Melbourne (hereafter referred to as the 'Tramway Shelter'). Situated in the growing City North precinct, the site is surrounded by accelerating development and nearby the Melbourne Metro Rail project will be under construction and in operation. In the context of these pressures, it is crucial that the heritage listed Tramway Shelter is appropriately managed and protected. The site is covered by a heritage overlay (HO911) pursuant to the City of Melbourne Planning Scheme and is also on the Victorian Heritage Register (H1686).

## 1.2 PURPOSE

The present CMP aims to understand the Tramway Shelter site, assess its significance and propose specific policies to preserve and enhance its cultural heritage value.

## 1.3 STUDY AREA

The study area for this site reflects the buildings and land registered in the Victorian Heritage Register. This comprises the shelter building and raised level it sits upon, which distinguishes it from the surrounding footpath. Beyond the adjacent footpath, the study area borders Swanston Street, Victoria Street and a tramway siding.

## 1.4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of the land on which the study area is located. Wurundjeri people maintain an important connection to their land, and their cultural heritage must be respected.

The author would particularly like to thank Warren Doubleday at the Friends of Hawthorn Depot for his valuable contribution to the research of the Tramway Shelter and his interest in the project.

## 2. History

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### 2.1 MELBOURNE'S TRAMWAY HISTORY

The first tramway of any kind developed in Melbourne was horse drawn, established in 1884. However, horse trams were a challenge due to high operating costs and bad odours associated with the horses (Jones 2003<sub>a</sub>). Additionally, they were slower than cable trams, less clean, less comfortable and overall provided a worse service (Fiddian 1993, p. 10). Many of these lines were converted to electric traction in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the 'Zoo line' being the last to close in November 1923 following the destruction of its tram depot and stables (Jones 2003<sub>a</sub>).

The cable tram system was developed through the 1880s and helped propel Melbourne into being a world city with a growing central business district (Jones 2003<sub>b</sub>). The establishment of cable trams also allowed Melbourne to become a centre for culture, sport and entertainment (Jones 2003<sub>b</sub>).

However, the popularity of cable trams eventually overwhelmed their capacity and a shift to electric traction was initiated (Jones 2003<sub>b</sub>). The development of electric tramways from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw residential and retail expansion into the suburbs. This had a significant impact through to the 1950s, which saw raised car ownership (Jones 2003<sub>b</sub>).

Despite the first trams of any kind in Melbourne being introduced in the 1880s, tram shelters only started appearing in 1910 with the establishment of the Prahran & Malvern Tramways Trust. This was in response to longer wait times on outer-suburban lines operated by the Trust (Jones 2006).

Through 1918 suburban councils were becoming more open to the idea of "an elective tramways board running the system rather than independent trusts or municipalities" (Fiddian 1993, p. 40). This eventually led to the founding of the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board (M&MTB) in 1919, which merged the several tramway bodies operating the system at the time. The organisation was charged with converting the remaining cable tram system to electric traction (Jones 2004), and this was commenced under the leadership of M&MTB Chairman Alex Cameron and completed by his successor Hector Hercules Bell by 1940 (Jones 2009; Jones 2008).

## 2.2 ARCHITECTURE

The Tramway Shelter (see Figure 1) was designed by Alan Gordon Monsborough. Monsborough headed the Architect's Department of the M&MTB during the rapid expansion of Melbourne's electrical tram network through the 1920s and 1930s (Jones 2014). He used what is considered a "stripped Greek Revival style" for his designs during this period and is responsible for numerous tram-related structures across the city besides the Tramway Shelter, including depots, substations and shelters (Jones 2014).



**Figure 1:** An official M&MTB photograph of the Tramway Shelter from the late 1920s.

*Source: <http://www.hawthorntramdepot.org.au/papers/monsborough.htm>*

## 2.3 THE ROLE OF SIGNAL BOXES AS PART OF MELBOURNE'S TRAM NETWORK

Signal boxes help traffic flow and allow trams to cross busy intersections. The controls were manually operated by a signalman and indicated to tram drivers by coloured lights and small semaphores (Bailey 1966). This equipment was manufactured in the United States for the M&MTB. On the Tramway Shelter itself, six lights numbered 1-6 were used to indicate to drivers which crossover a terminating car was to use (see Figure 2). The year 1946 saw the introduction of vehicular traffic signals and modifications to the original signals of the building (Breydon 1972). Later, considered a "recent addition" by 1972, a 'Q' was added to direct cars to the Queensberry

Street shunt (Breydon 1972). A buzzer mounted to the signal cabin gave the departure signal. The job of signalman was considered vital and busy, particularly in peak periods.



**Figure 2:** A photograph dating from December 1969 showing the six numbered lights (with the '4' illuminated) and a person waiting at the shelter. Note that the structure is not majorly different from its earlier days shown in Figure 1.

Source: [http://tdu.to/a12123/589\\_Swanston\\_at\\_Franklin\\_13Dec1969.jpg](http://tdu.to/a12123/589_Swanston_at_Franklin_13Dec1969.jpg)

## 2.4 CHRONOLOGY

The Tramway Shelter was constructed in 1928 by B F Vorwerg as part of the electrification of Swanston Street and St Kilda Road tramways (M Larsson [Heritage Victoria] 2016, pers. comm., 14 December 2016). With the introduction of electric trams to Swanston Street, tram routes to southern suburbs such as Camberwell, Glen Iris and Toorak could be connected to the city via St Kilda Road (Fiddian 1993, p. 50). More specifically, the Tramway Shelter was built to control the terminus and junction at the top of Swanston Street (Jones 2006, see Figure 3). Following the relocation of the Swanston Street terminus to Melbourne University and the use of modern driver operated points and traffic light systems, the building is no longer used for its original purpose





**Figure 3:** The Tramway Shelter shown in front of RMIT's Design Hub, in its once crucial position at the top of Swanston Street.

*Source: Y Gaouilil, taken 3 December 2016*

and became redundant in 1991 (Jones 2006; M Larsson [Heritage Victoria] 2016, pers. comm., 14 December 2016). Nevertheless, the addition of a steel staircase after 1991 (see Figure 4) suggests the signal box may still have been used following its supposed redundancy (W Doubleday [Friends of Hawthorn Depot Inc.] 2016, pers. comm., 16 December 2016). This staircase remained until at least 2008, after which it was removed. Modern technology has meant that combined tram signal box/shelter buildings are no longer necessary (Jones 2006). Public toilets for women have been provided since construction of the Tramway Shelter, with public toilets for men only added ten years later in 1938 (M Larsson [Heritage Victoria] 2016, pers. comm., 14 December 2016). These facilities are still available to the public and are listed as Toilet No. 146 by the City of Melbourne.



**Figure 4:** The Tramway Shelter pictured in 2008 showing the added steel staircase.

Source: <http://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/5324>

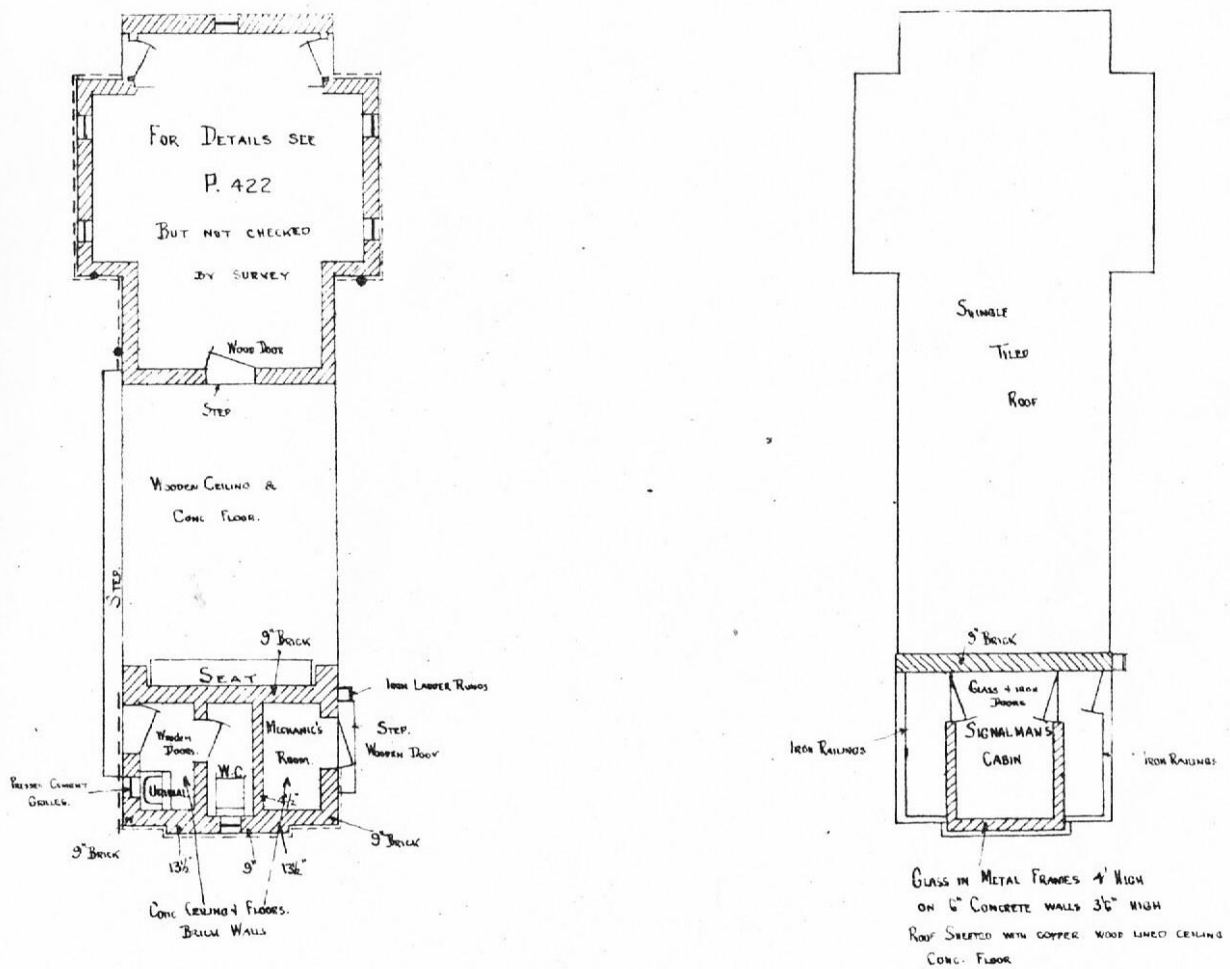
### 3. Description

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#### 3.1 BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

The Tramway Shelter is a rendered brick structure, topped with a hipped roof made of terracotta tiles. The ground floor at the northern end contains public toilets, accessible through two doors from the street and a now locked wooden door opening onto the sheltered area (see Figure 5). The ground floor at the southern end contained the workers' toilet, which was accessible via a (formerly) wooden door on the western side of the building. Also on the southern end is the mechanic's room, accessible via a wooden door on the eastern side of the building.

Since the construction of the Tramway Shelter, original signal equipment has been removed. Iron step rungs were used to reach the first-floor signal cabin. With their kit bag it was difficult for



SCALE 10' TO 1"

**Figure 5:** Extract of a 1938 site plan for the Tramway Shelter (see Appendix B for larger extract).

Source: W Doubleday [Friends of Hawthorn Depot Inc.] 2016, pers. comm., 8 December 2016

signalmen to access the cabin using the step rungs, so a rope was provided (W Doubleday [Friends of Hawthorn Depot Inc.] 2016, pers. comm., 16 December 2016). Today, only the upper two rungs remain (see Figure 6), and without the steel staircase there does not currently appear to be any access to the signal cabin at all. Steel awnings on the windows of the elevated signal cabin have been added since original construction.

### 3.2 CONDITION

The structure of the Tramway Shelter appears sound and of reasonable condition. There is damage to a wooden box attached to the western face of the structure (see Figure 7). The paintwork on the structure has minor wear, but is largely consistent. The structure suffers from notable graffiti.



**Figure 6:** The eastern face of the building at the southern end, showing the remaining step rungs.  
*Source: Y Gaouil, taken 3 December 2016*



**Figure 7:** The damaged wooden box.  
*Source: Y Gaouil, taken 3 December 2016*

## 4. Significance

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### 4.1 PREVIOUS ASSESSMENTS

A statement of significance has previously been done for the site, dating from 13 January 2000. The full statement can be found in Appendix C.

### 4.2 CRITERIA

There are five values outlined in Article 1.2 of the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter (2013<sub>a</sub>, p. 2) that are used to determine the heritage significance of a place. These are aesthetic, historic, scientific, social and spiritual values.

Historic value is of most relevance to the Tramway Shelter. According to Australia ICOMOS (2013<sub>b</sub>, p. 3), "a place may have historic value because it has influenced, or has been influenced by, an historic event, phase, movement or activity, person or group of people".

### 4.3 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Tramway Shelter is one of only three major signal boxes to ever be built for Melbourne's tramway network, and of these is the only one still standing. The others were located at St Kilda Junction and Batman Avenue. The St Kilda Junction signal box was demolished in the late 1960s following the reconstruction of the junction and a shift to automatic signals (Bailey 1966). The Batman Avenue signal box, like the signal box at Swanston and Victoria Streets, was also combined with a shelter but was demolished as a result of the Federation Square development (Jones 2006). Signal boxes were more prevalent in Australia's other tramway cities, however most of these have been removed since the closure of tram services in these cities. Of those constructed in Sydney only one remains, though relocated from its original position at the intersection of Elizabeth and Liverpool Streets (see Figure 8) to the Sydney Tramway Museum (Sydney Tramway Museum 2016). Similarly, Brisbane's Valley Junction signal cabin, as the lone surviving box in the city, was transported to the Brisbane Tramway Museum in 1969 and

subsequently reused as the museum's ticket office (West 2017). Neither structure resembles the one subject to this plan, nor do they combine multiple functions into a single complex.



**Figure 8:** The signal box at Elizabeth and Liverpool Streets (foreground) during the construction of Museum Station in Sydney.

Source: Australian Railway Historical Society NSW - <http://www.arhsnsw.com.au/lunchclubnotes/1605St%20James.pdf>

#### 4.4 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The following adds to the statement of significance developed in 2000:

*What is significant?*

The complex was constructed in a period of accelerating expansion of the electric tram network in Melbourne during the 1920s and 1930s.

*How is it significant?*

(same as statement dating from 2000)

### *Why is it significant?*

While tramway signal boxes themselves were already more uncommon in Melbourne than in other Australian cities, the Tramway Shelter further stands out as a particularly rare complex of signal box, shelter and conveniences. Following the destruction of another combined structure in Batman Avenue it became a unique example. The signal box also demonstrates a key custom in Melbourne tramway operation no longer practised and worth remembering. Finally, the Tramway Shelter has contributory local significance as a lasting example of Monsborough's architectural legacy, particularly of his earlier industrial and tramway-related work.

#### 4.5 ASSESSMENT BY CRITERION

The Tramway Shelter satisfies the Australia ICOMOS criterion for historic value due to its strong association with a key phase in Melbourne's tramway history, its representation of a historic activity and its belonging to the architectural work of Monsborough.

#### 4.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF COMPONENTS

Many elements of the Tramway Shelter are important to the significance of the site. These elements include (but are not limited to):

- the external form, materials and detailing of the structure, comprising the signal box, store, shelter and conveniences.
- the hipped terracotta roof
- the remaining metal step rungs on the eastern face of the building
- the location of the Tramway Shelter at the top of Swanston Street between Franklin and Victoria Streets and adjacent to the tramway siding

The following elements have negligible or no significance:

- the steel window awnings
- the metal bench alongside the eastern face of the building
- all other modern additions to the structure

## 5. Key Issues

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### 5.1 LEGISLATION AND ASSOCIATED POLICIES

The site is registered on the Victorian Heritage Register (H1686), which lends it significance at a state level. The heritage overlay (HO911) covering the site does not impose external paint controls or internal alteration controls, and does allow prohibited uses.

### 5.2 OBLIGATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS ARISING FROM SIGNIFICANCE

The importance of the external form, structure and features of the Tramway Shelter to the significance of the site means attention must be placed on the protection of these elements.

### 5.3 OPPORTUNITIES AND ASPIRATIONS

The location of the Tramway Shelter at the fringe of the CBD presents an opportunity to demonstrate and interpret a key phase of Melbourne's electric tram history in a convenient and relevant location. Further to this, the position of the Tramway Shelter isolated from surrounding buildings renders it a noticeable landmark and invites potential complementary works for its curtilage.

### 5.4 THREATS

The site's urban location also brings challenges. As an exposed and open building in a busy area, the Tramway Shelter is easily accessible to the public. The disadvantage of this is made most clear by the graffiti found on the walls and windows of the structure (see Figure 9). Another potential threat to the site is weather, which has potential to damage or diminish the appearance of the building. Construction, whether directly associated to the Tramway Shelter or otherwise indirectly relevant, could pose a threat if procedures are not followed correctly.





**Figure 9:** Graffiti on the face of the Tramway Shelter.  
*Source: Y Gaoulii, taken 3 December 2016*

## 6. Policy

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### 6.1 POLICY STRUCTURE

The following policies are recommended for the conservation and management of the Tramway Shelter. They will focus on five key areas:

- setting
- buildings and structures
- uses and activities
- adaptation
- interpretation

Delivery of these policies is outlined in the subsequent *Implementation* section.

## 6.2 SETTING

It is recommended that the Tramway Shelter be retained in its current location at the top of Swanston Street between Franklin and Victoria Streets. This is because of the significant and longstanding role the signal box had there in ensuring the smooth operation of Melbourne's tram network.

It is also recommended that the Tramway Shelter's profile within the streetscape be maintained as much as is reasonable. Any new development or infrastructure in the immediate vicinity of the structure should avoid generating unreasonable visual impact.

## 6.3 BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

The overall condition of the Tramway Shelter is good. However, because the signal box component of the building is no longer used, it is essential that regular maintenance of the structure is undertaken to ensure it does not fall into disrepair.

Mechanisms should be implemented to prevent and manage graffiti at the site.

All elements of the structure earlier deemed significant to the site's heritage value must be protected.

No modern additions are required to be removed. Judgement for these may rest with the responsible authorities.

Future additions must enhance the value of the site and/or be sympathetic to its character.

## 6.4 USES AND ACTIVITIES

The Tramway Shelter is currently used for its public toilet facilities at its northern end (see Figure 10). This is considered an acceptable use given it fulfils one of the original purposes of the site and, in any case, provides a useful function.

The elevated signal box has not been in use for over 25 years and is no longer needed for that purpose. Its small space and limited access suggest no alternative use will be able to occupy the space in the near future, though it should be preserved for its historical value and potential later reuse.



**Figure 10:** The eastern entrance to toilet facilities.  
*Source: Y Gaouilil, taken 3 December 2016*

The undercover section of the building should continue its role as a shelter open to the public, and the addition of seating would improve the use of this this space. Historically the shelter provided seating for waiting passengers (evident on the site plan shown in Figure 4), but this has since been removed.

The site is poised to be used for interpretative and/or educational purposes.

## 6.5 ADAPTATION

Physical adaptation of the Tramway Shelter structure, in the form of building modifications or built additions, is inappropriate given the significance of the structure and space constraints.

However, toilet facilities should be assessed for whether they require upgrades and be monitored periodically.

Potential to retrofit the shelter section for disability access should be investigated.

Opportunities to better integrate the area surrounding the site (see Figure 11) with the site itself should also be investigated.



**Figure 11:** The area surrounding the Tramway Shelter, facing southwest.

*Source: Y Gaouli, taken 3 December 2016*

## 6.6 INTERPRETATION

While physical adaptation is largely unsuited to the preservation of cultural heritage values at the Tramway Shelter, interpretation of the site would deliver major benefits. There is great potential here to provide insight into a key piece of Melbourne’s transport history, in an area populated with other historic and heritage sites.

The site should be enhanced as a site for interpretation and education.

## 7. Implementation

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### 7.1 OVERVIEW

For each of the policies listed in the previous section, actions are required to put these into practice. These along with approximate timeframes have been developed in the following tables to form implementation action plans. Timeframes are in effect from the formal adoption of this document.

### 7.2 PRIORITIES

The first priority for preservation of the Tramway Shelter is maintaining the integrity and character of the existing structure. These actions should be completed within six months. Subsequently, priority will shift to enhancing and evolving the site into a valuable, enduring resource. These actions should be completed or underway within 18 months. Many aspects of the implementation process will be ongoing.

### 7.3 SETTING

Implementation of <i>Setting</i> policies		
POLICY	ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME
Retain Tramway Shelter in its current location	---	---
Maintain the profile of the Tramway Shelter within the streetscape as much as is reasonable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ensure the heritage overlay covering the site is enforced to prevent unsatisfactory outcomes</li></ul>	Ongoing

## 7.4 BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

Implementation of <i>Buildings and Structures</i> policies		
POLICY	ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME
Undertake regular maintenance of the structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arrange yearly internal and external inspections of the structure</li> </ul>	Ongoing
Implement mechanisms to prevent and manage graffiti at the site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage professional graffiti removalists to remove graffiti with minimal consequence to the building's significance</li> </ul>	Within 6 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate and establish 'cues to care' as a way of discouraging graffiti</li> </ul>	Within 18 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage the community to report incidences of graffiti</li> </ul>	Ongoing
Protect all elements significant to the site's heritage value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the state of significant elements as part of yearly inspections</li> </ul>	Ongoing
Future additions must enhance the value of the site and/or be sympathetic to its character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thoroughly evaluate proposed additions based on need, function and impact on character</li> </ul>	Ongoing

## 7.5 USES AND ACTIVITIES

Implementation of <i>Uses and Activities</i> policies		
POLICY	ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME
Continue the use of public toilets at the northern end of the Tramway Shelter	---	---
Preserve the elevated signal box for its historical value and potential reuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yearly inspections to monitor the internal and external state of the signal box</li> </ul>	Ongoing
Add seating to the undercover section of the building to improve use of the space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish well-designed seating that complements interpretation efforts</li> </ul>	Within 18 months
Introduce interpretation/education as a use for the Tramway Shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See <i>Section 7.5</i></li> </ul>	Within 18 months

## 7.6 ADAPTATION

Implementation of <i>Adaptation</i> policies		
POLICY	ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME
Physical adaptation in the form of building modifications or built additions is inappropriate	---	---
Assess toilet facilities for whether they require upgrades and monitor periodically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(same as policy statement)</li> </ul>	Within 6 months to ongoing
Investigate the potential to retrofit the shelter section for disability access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Melbourne City Council and engineers to assess the viability of accessibility measures (e.g. pavement modification, ramps etc.)</li> </ul>	Within 18 months
Investigate opportunities to better integrate the area surrounding the site with the site itself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Melbourne City Council and other groups to assess potential urban design responses</li> </ul>	Within 18 months

## 7.7 INTERPRETATION

Implementation of <i>Interpretation</i> policies		
POLICY	ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME
Enhance the site for interpretation and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement signage, other on-site communication and passive 'cues to care'<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	Within 18 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate the potential to restore and reinstate original (or possibly replica) elements of significance</li> </ul>	Within 18 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involve tram heritage enthusiasts and groups in the development of interpretive and educational materials</li> </ul>	Ongoing

1. 'Cues to care' is a concept often applied to landscape or environmental planning which describes the use of cultural cues to influence perceptions of a place. In the case of a garden, mown grass, lawn ornaments and well-kept structures are examples of cues that influence real and perceived pride, social cohesion and low crime (Nassauer & Raskin 2014, p. 6). This concept could reap benefits for the preservation of the Tramway Shelter through small-scale physical and design elements.

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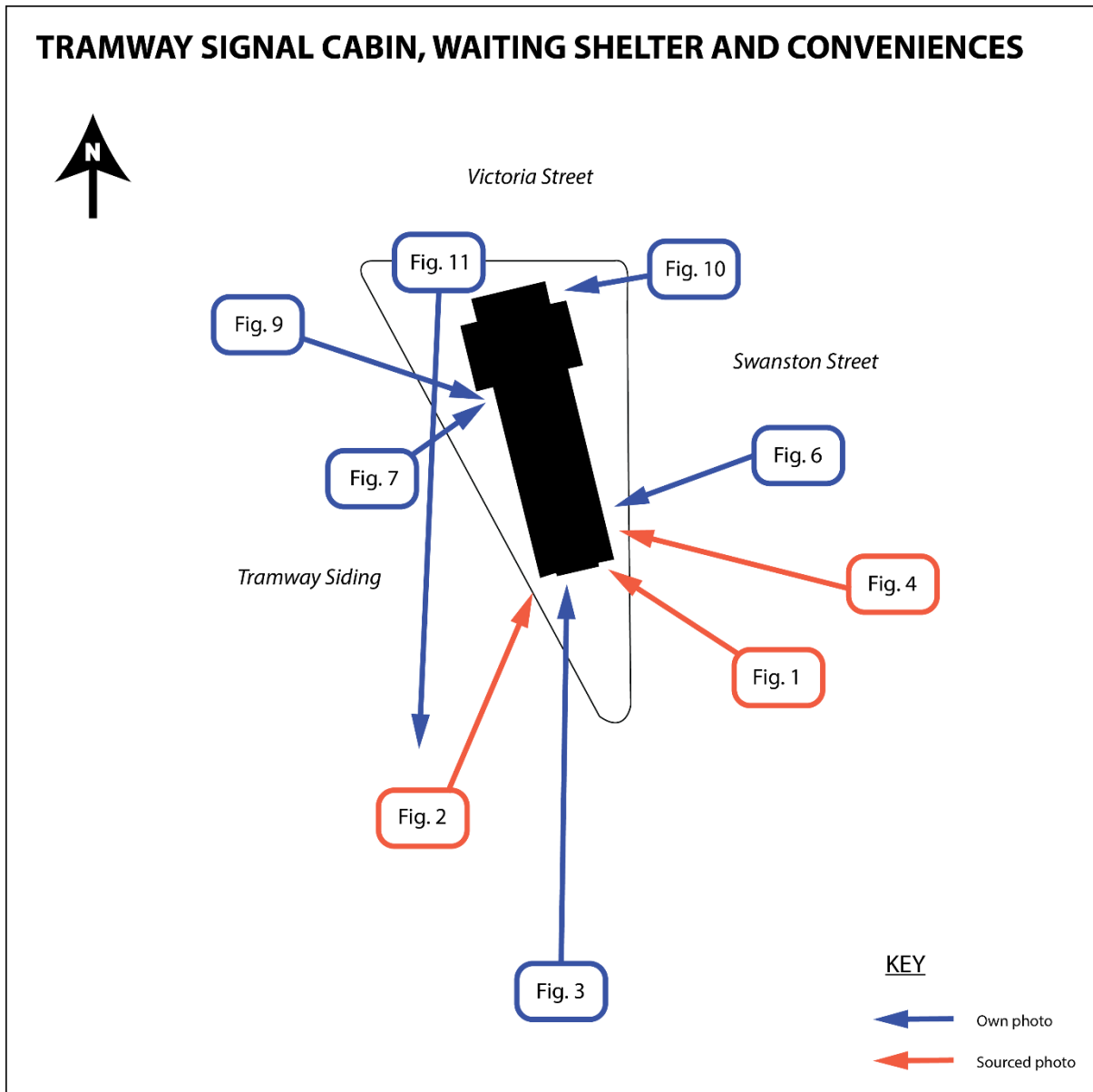
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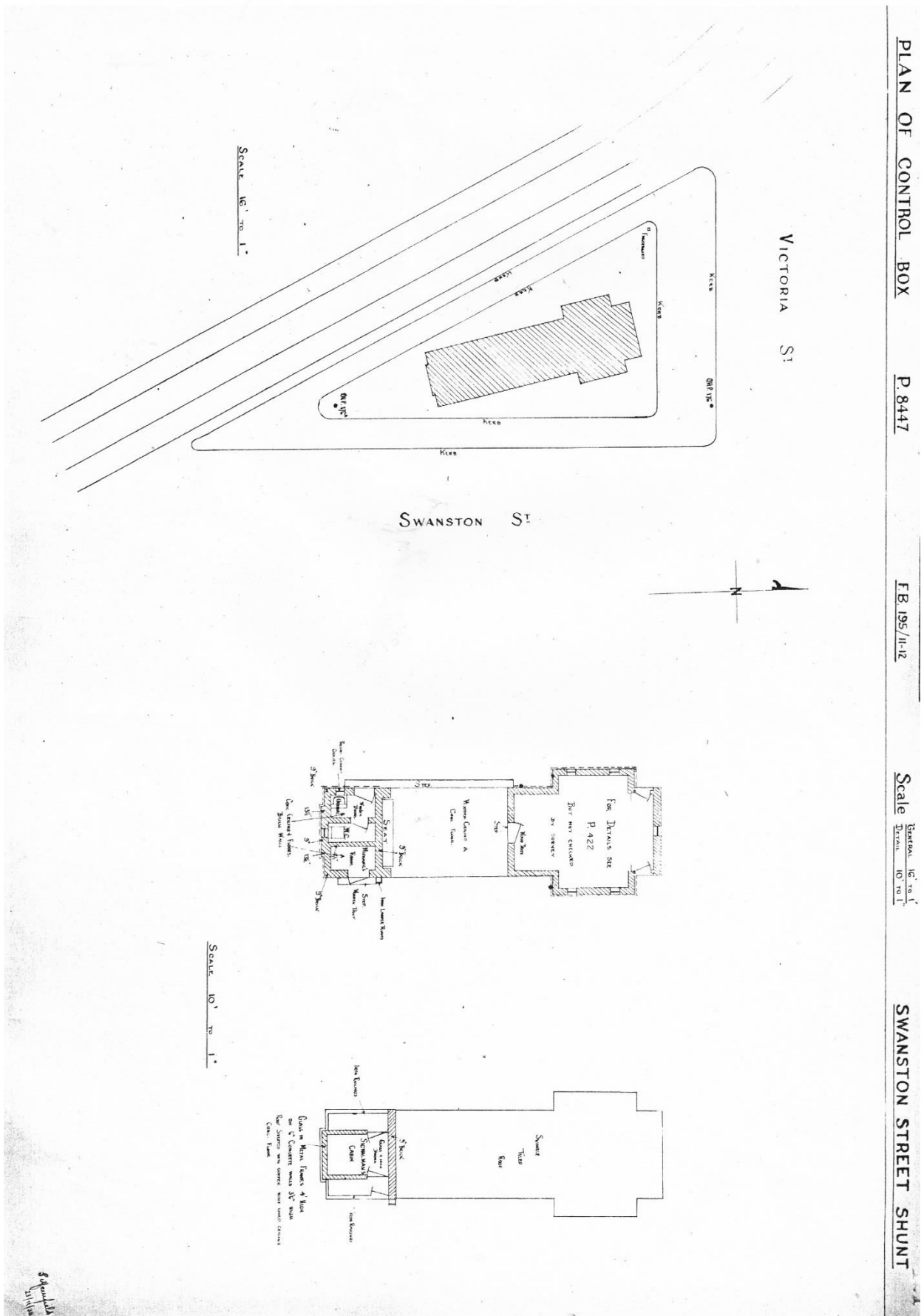
# 9. Appendices

## APPENDIX A



**Appendix A:** A 'mud map' showing the layout of the Tramway Shelter and perspectives of photos used in the document (both own and sourced).

APPENDIX B



Appendix B: Full extract of the Tramway Shelter site plan dating from 1938.

## APPENDIX C

The existing statement of significance developed for the site, dating from January 2000, reads as follows:

### *What is significant?*

*The Tramway Signal Cabin, Waiting Shelter and Conveniences were built in 1928 to the design of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board architect Alan G Monsborough (sic). It was built soon after the electrification of the Swanston Street and St Kilda Road cable tramways and controlled the shunting and dispatch of the increasing volume of electric trams arriving from the southern suburbs. The complex originally comprised female public toilets at the north end, a roofed passenger waiting area, a small store and toilet for staff at the south end, and a first storey enclosed signal cabin with balconies, reached by rung ladder. Construction is of concrete, rendered brick and a hipped roof of terra cotta tiles. The side awning roofs and the steel staircase are later additions. The interlocking signal system was supplied by the General Railway Signal Company of Rochester, New York. The signal cabin became redundant in 1991.*

### *How is it significant?*

*The Tramway Signal Cabin, Waiting Shelter and Conveniences complex is of historical significance to the State of Victoria.*

### *Why is it significant?*

*The Tramway Signal Cabin, Waiting Shelter and Conveniences complex is historically significant as the only surviving elevated signal cabin associated with an operating tramway system in Australia. It is significant for its ability to demonstrate the development of Melbourne's electric tramway system.*