



trethowan 

Heritage Interpretation Plan

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Benalla Signal Hut A

Corner of Mackellar Street and Nunn Street, Benalla

Author Trethowan Architecture

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1 Introduction

This Heritage Interpretation Plan (HIP) has been commissioned by Andrew Long and Associates, on behalf of the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC).

Inland Rail is a 1,600km freight rail line that will connect Melbourne and Brisbane via regional Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland. As part of the project, significant works are required in Benalla for future rail and pedestrian infrastructure. As the works have been identified to conflict with the viability of the now-disused Benalla Signal Hut due to clearance and sight distance issues, the building must be removed. A structural engineering report confirmed that the Signal Hut is in a state of dereliction, relocation is unfeasible, and it was recommended that the structure be removed within six months to ensure public health and safety.

As ARTC is seeking guidance on the salvageability of heritage elements part of the Signal Hut, Trethowan Architecture has been engaged to provide options for a possible heritage interpretation plan for these elements, which would enable the reuse of salvageable elements and convey the place's history and significance.

1.1 Site Details

The Benalla Railway Station is located to the north of the Benalla city centre, parallel to Mackellar Street. The surrounding context is largely residential in character, with sporadic hospitality establishments nearby. Nearby *locally significant* heritage places that abut the Benalla Railway Station include the North Eastern Hotel (HO62), the Victoria Hotel and Stables (HO57), and the Farmers Arms Hotel (HO59).

The Benalla Signal Hut A is located near the corner of Mackellar and Nunn Streets along the level crossing, to the west of the railway station platforms. The two-storey, timber-framed building is rectangular in plan. It is supported on masonry brick and concrete footings, with yellow-painted steel faux-weatherboard cladding and a corrugated galvanised gable roof. A separate, elevated structure housing a small bathroom adjoins the south elevation and is accessible via external stairs.

Internally, the ground floor is a single space with a steel signalling level frame and shelving units that hold electronic equipment. The first floor comprises two rooms, one where the signal levers are installed, and the other vacant.



Figure 1: Aerial view of subject site, Signal Hut A indicated in yellow and Railway Station building indicated in red. Source: Nearmap, 2023.

1.1.1 Statutory Listing

The Signal Hut A is graded as *locally significant* in the Benalla Planning Scheme. It is protected by an individual, site-specific Heritage Overlay *HO63: Signal Boxes (A & B boxes) adj. Mackellar Street, Benalla*. Signal Hut B is no longer extant. External paint controls and solar energy systems controls apply. A relevant place citation has not been located.

The wider Benalla Railway Station is graded as *locally significant* in the Benalla Planning Scheme. It is protected by an individual, site-specific Heritage Overlay *HO60: Benalla Rail-way Station, Mackellar Street, Benalla*. External paint controls, tree controls, and solar energy systems controls apply. A relevant place citation has not been located.

The Signal Hut A and the Benalla Railway Station are both not listed on the Victorian Heritage Register.

1.1.2 Non-Statutory Listing

The Signal Hut A is not specifically subject to any non-statutory heritage listings.

The wider Benalla Railway Station is listed on the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Heritage Register (Property No. B2478). Such listings have no formal or legal weight in the planning scheme but are customarily considered when making planning decisions and are representative of heritage values in the community. The National Trust description of the railway station is as follows:

Built 1874 with extensive changes 1889-90.

An imposing building for the country in a difficult architectural period. Notable for its meticulous patterned brickwork.

Classified: 04/03/1971

Refreshment Rooms and Bell Tower Demolished: November - December 1974.

1.2 Reference Documents

This HIP refers to the following supporting documentation:

- *Urban Design Guidelines: Euroa and Benalla*, prepared by AECOM for ARTC Inland Rail in September 2021
- *Victorian Inland Rail Urban Design Framework*, prepared by AECOM for ARTC Inland Rail in October 2021
- *Benalla Signal Hut Interpretation – Potential Location*, prepared by ARTC
- Architectural drawings and renders shared by ARTC
- Email correspondence shared by ARTC

This HIP should be read in conjunction with the following documentation:

- *Benalla Railway Station Signal Box Archival Recording*, prepared by EMM in April 2023
- *Benalla Signal Hut Building Inspection Report*, prepared by Sterling in September 2023
- *Division 6 Hazardous Building Materials Survey (HBMS) – Benalla Railway Station Signal Box, Benalla, Vic*, prepared by JBS&G in November 2023

1.3 Opportunities and Limitations

The opportunities and limitations of the subject site should be understood prior to the development of an interpretation strategy. These are addressed below:

- **Terminology**

A signal hut is a structure that houses mechanical signalling equipment that controls the movement of rail traffic. It can alternatively be referred to as a 'signal box'. This structure is only to be referred to as a signal hut in this HIP.
- **Redevelopment plan**

The proposed redevelopment concept should be considered throughout the development of the interpretation strategy and options for interpretation should consider how they link into the overall redevelopment plan.
- **Urban Design Framework (UDF)**

The interpretation strategy should respond to the overall design principles for the Victorian Inland Rail Project and more specifically, the key objectives for Benalla, as set out in the *Victorian Inland Rail UDF* and the *Urban Design Guidelines: Euroa and Benalla*. Note the relevant key objective for Benalla is to become 'a heritage precinct that increases the prominence of the existing heritage buildings and celebrates the heritage character of central Benalla'.
- **Ability to salvage specific elements**

A building inspection report and a hazardous materials report were prepared. These reports form the basis of this HIP, which provides high-level options and should be referenced when assessing the appropriateness of elements for reuse. Further testing for hazardous materials may also affect the appropriateness of elements to be salvaged. It could be considered that a suitably licensed removal contractor and qualified materials conservator referred by the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material (AICCM) be consulted to determine the suitability of display and proper handling method of each element.
- **Community involvement**

In August 2023, ARTC engaged with the Benalla community relating to the proposed Benalla Railway Station Precinct, as well as the removal and interpretation of Signal Hut A. Feedback was received from community members, including relocating elements within the signal hut such as interlocking levers to a museum or within the new station precinct; or celebrating the history of the railway station and signal hut in mural form. Additionally, feedback was received from an advocacy group, which requested the relocation, restoration, and repurposing of the Signal Hut. This feedback was deemed unachievable per the structural engineering report.
- **Relevant Heritage or Cultural Interpretation Initiatives**

Heritage or cultural interpretation initiatives in Benalla or the wider region may be relevant to this HIP and should be referenced when formulating the interpretation scheme. The proposed interpretation scheme may be integrated with existing walking tours or self-guided tours with specific themes such as street art or history. Besides, there is also an opportunity for the interpretation scheme to be a part of the annual Benalla Street Art Wall to Wall Festival.
- **Asset Management**

The final interpretation option(s) are subject to agreement with the relevant asset managers.

2 The Interpretation Process

2.1 Why We Interpret

Interpretation at heritage sites is an integral form of the conservation process, especially when a site's ongoing use is disrupted or changed. Article 25 of *the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 2013* (the Burra Charter) states the following on the matter:

The cultural significance of many places is not readily apparent, and should be explained by interpretation. Interpretation should enhance understanding and engagement, and be culturally appropriate.

Presently, Signal Hut A is a currently disused building in a derelict state that has been assessed to be a health and safety risk if the structure is to remain. However, some elements that form part of the building have been identified to be salvageable. A robust and nuanced heritage interpretation scheme that allows for the retention of these elements will be an effective tool in ensuring the historical location and function of Signal Hut A can be understood in the future.

2.2 Approach to Interpretation

The formulation of an effective HIP is broken down into three distinct stages, which must be followed sequentially.

2.2.1 Stage 1: Interpretation Plan

This is the current stage, which forms the basis of the entire scheme. In this stage, we seek to do the following:

- Set the parameters of what is being interpreted (the site)
- Explore on what is being interpreted (historical overview)
- Draw out historical themes and key stories that arise from the site's history
- Identify the objectives of the plan
- Identify the opportunities that present at the site, including audience, media and locations
- Provide options and suggestions on the most appropriate initiatives with which to proceed

2.2.2 Stage 2: Content Development

Once the direction of the interpretation scheme is set in the HIP, the process moves to content development. This includes drawing together all the materials required for the chosen interpretive media. Any written material that will be presented is researched and drafted. Other formats (such as sculptures or art) are designed and commissioned.

2.2.3 Stage 3: Implementation

This stage sees the physical implementation of the HIP, including the production and installation of all physical elements at the site.

2.3 Interpreting Benalla Signal Hut A

The interpretation scheme for Signal Hut A will form an important element in the public realm design of the new Benalla Railway Station, part of the Inland Rail Project. The program should be informative, engaging, enjoyable, and should successfully link in with the wider redevelopment project at Benalla.

Noting that this interpretation scheme is one of the key manners in which Benalla's railway history can be conveyed, the HIP needs to be rigorous. To achieve these ends, heritage interpretation should follow some guiding principles:

- Ensure that audiences are engaged with the interpretation scheme in a positive manner.
- Ensure that interpretation material is accurate and thoroughly researched.
- Ensure that all information obtained through research is kept as a package that can be accessed at a later date should further/alternative interpretation schemes be sought.
- Ensure that the scheme is accessible to a range of audiences, and includes parallel formats to avoid the exclusion of some users.
- Continually evaluate the scheme and identified media during the development process to ensure it stays on course to achieve its aims.
- Ensure there is a plan for the continued maintenance of the scheme at the site following its installation.

3 Historical Overview

The following timeline provides an overview of the development of Benalla Signal Hut A, the Benalla Railway Station Precinct, and the North-Eastern Railway Line.

Year	Event
1848	Benalla is founded as part of Sir Thomas Mitchell's exploration.
1858	Department of Railways is formed following the passing of the Main Trunk Line and Railway Acts of 1857.
1860	The Melbourne and Essendon Railway Company opens the North Melbourne to Essendon railway line, the first section of what would later become the North-Eastern Railway Line.
1867	The Victorian Colonial Government purchases the Melbourne and Essendon Railway Company assets. Construction of the North-Eastern Railway line to Wodonga begins.
1868	Railway Loan Act passes in response to previous expenditure on railway infrastructure.
1871	Styles, Murray, Styles, Beauchamp Ltd. is awarded the construction contract to build the second section of the North-Eastern Railway line from Seymour to Benalla.
1872	First section of the North-Eastern Railway Line, from Melbourne to Seymour, opens.
1873	Second section of the North-Eastern Railway Line, from Seymour to Benalla, opens. Third section of the North-Eastern Railway Line, from Benalla to Wodonga, opens. This is the final Victorian section of the Line.
1883	The North-Eastern Railway Line is connected to the New South Wales Government Railway Line at Albury with a break of gauge. On 18 August, the Benalla Railway Station is officially opened with only a temporary structure. An opening ceremonial ball is held at the adjacent goods shed.
1884	The first permanent Benalla Railway Station building is constructed.
1888	The Benalla Railway Station building is expanded to include a bell tower and other facilities. Two signal huts (A and B) are built to the east and west ends of the Benalla Railway Station.
1914	Modifications are made to the two signal huts.
1972	The Benalla Railway Station is classified by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria).
1975	The bell tower and some rooms at the Benalla Railway Station are demolished.
Late 1980s to early 1990s	Signal Hut A is decommissioned.

4 Themes and Key Stories

4.1 Victorian Historical Themes

Heritage interpretation schemes aim to convey a place's history in an informative and interesting manner, while remaining accessible to its audiences. The most practical foundations on which to base an interpretation scheme are the key themes and stories that arise out of Benalla's railway history.

The Heritage Council of Victoria and Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council developed the *Framework of Historical Themes* in 2010 (Framework). This Framework was created with the aim of increasing awareness and appreciation of the State's heritage, and to ensure that places are understood within a broader theme rather than individually. In summary, the *Framework* is intended to enrich our understandings of heritage places in Victoria.

These themes sit alongside, and largely replicate, the *Australian Historic Themes Framework*, developed by the Australian Heritage Commission in 1993. The Victorian document provides for State-specific contexts.

The following theme has been identified to assist in the interpretation of Signal Hut A. This theme helps place it within the broader context of historical development in Victoria:

03 Connecting Victorians by transport and communications

[This theme] traces the networks of routes and connections by which goods and people were moved and linked including an ambitious state-wide rail system...

4.2 Key Stories

The following key stories drawn from Signal Hut A relate directly to the theme selected from the Framework. These stories flesh out the different facets of the theme and will be researched in greater depth during the content production stage of the overall interpretation scheme. The information contained here is included to illustrate the general direction of each key story.

4.2.1 Victoria's North-Eastern Railway Line

The construction of Victoria's first rail lines began in the 1850s. Inspired and enthused by the great railways of Britain, an influx of young British emigrant engineers began to lead the development of the colony's early rail lines.¹ These first railways were largely constructed by private railway companies however with the formation of the Government Railway Department in 1856, the construction of a series of trunk lines and purchase of some private companies, the government expanded its rail network across the colony.

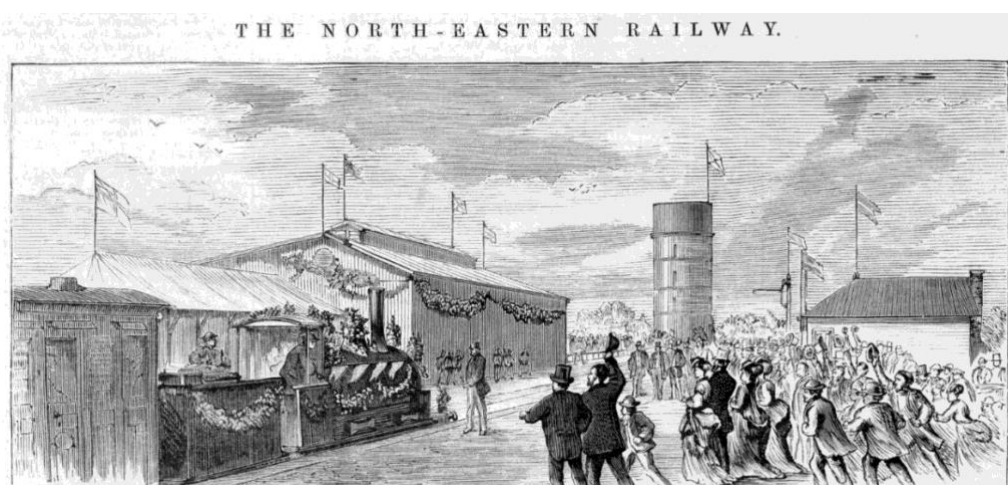


Figure 2: Engraving of train arriving at Wangaratta Station on the North-Eastern Railway Line. Artist unknown, n.d. Source: State Library of Victoria.

¹ *A Story of Stations*, Andrew Ward, 2019, pp. 13-50.

The first suggestion of a railway to north-eastern Victoria came in 1862, when it was proposed to build a line between Beechworth and Albury, New South Wales.² After years of negotiation, the plan for building the North-Eastern Railway Line was finally approved in Parliament in 1868, and the Construction Bill passed in the following year. The development of the Victorian section of the line followed much controversy over government spending on the earlier trunk lines. Owing to this the Railway Loan Act was enacted in 1868 and spending on the initial construction of the proposed new line was capped.³

The Victorian part of the North-Eastern Line comprised three sections: from Melbourne (Essendon) to Seymour, Seymour to Benalla, and Benalla to Wodonga. Specifically, the Seymour to Benalla section comprised Seymour, Mangalore, Avenel, Longwood, Euroa, Violet Town, and Benalla.

The construction contract for the section from Seymour to Benalla was awarded to Styles, Murray, Styles, Beauchamp Ltd. in 1871. Major civil engineering projects on the 60-mile route were the crossing of three watercourses at Avenel, Euroa, and Benalla. Work commenced in May 1871 without any ceremony and met with multiple difficulties in the following year. The Victorian part of the Line was completed and opened to Wodonga in November 1873. However, the construction of several station buildings along the line would not be completed in some cases until as late as 1887 and it would take another ten years before a connection with Albury would be made in 1883.⁴ Despite the delays and differing gauges in rail between the Victorian and New South Wales sections, the Line was Australia's first ever interstate railway connection.

Later in the 1960s substantial works would be undertaken to construct a standard gauge track parallel to the original tracks. The works would be completed early in 1962 with the first train travelling continuously between Melbourne and Sydney in January of that year.



Figure 3: Bradshaw's Guide Railway Map of Victoria c. 1884 illustrates the development of several early trunk lines throughout Victoria. Source: State Library of Victoria.

² Six and a half inches, 15.

³ *A Story of Stations*, Andrew Ward, 2019, pp. 125-140.

⁴ *Ibid*



Figure 4: The Southern Aurora Passenger Train ran between Melbourne and Sydney from 1962. Photo by Rose Stereograph Co. n.d. Source: State Library of Victoria.

4.2.2 Origins of Railway Signalling in Victoria

Railway safe working systems have historically been used since the emergence of rail transportation to ensure their safety operation. In the early days of safe working, detailed timetabling separated trains from collisions with one another by creating intervals of time, and railway workers holding flags stood on the tracks to separate trains by creating intervals of distance. Train conductors drove 'on sight' and had to pay attention to every sign of obstacles in front so they could stop before a collision were to happen. Although these two systems are theoretically feasible, they were not always reliable, as trains often broke down between stations, and rear-end collisions often happened. Even if train conductors were alert, the vehicle did not have enough braking capacity to avoid a collision.

It was not until the 1880s when mechanical railway signalling was first introduced to Australia from the United Kingdom. Mechanical signalling controls the movement of rail traffic approaching and leaving a railway station by using fixed signals that prompted trains to stop or proceed. Each track is divided into a block, and a signal is installed at its entrance. To prevent potential accidents, it is common knowledge that each block should only be occupied by one train at a time. If the block is occupied, the operator would control the signal using the interlocking levers at the signal hut to indicate when to stop or proceed.

Typically, at a highly visible location at stations or level crossings, signal huts bring together in one place all the communication and instrumentation necessary to the safe functioning of the railway station. They streamline the workload and ensure the safety of railway workers who otherwise would have to stand on the tracks. The elevated structure also ensured a better visibility of oncoming traffic. A typical signal hut is a simple, raised structure with large, glazed windows enabling the signal operator to maintain a lookout at the railway tracks. It generally comprises two levels, with an operating room with interlocking levers controlling points and signals on the first level, and a locking room on the ground level, housing the lower part of the lever frame.

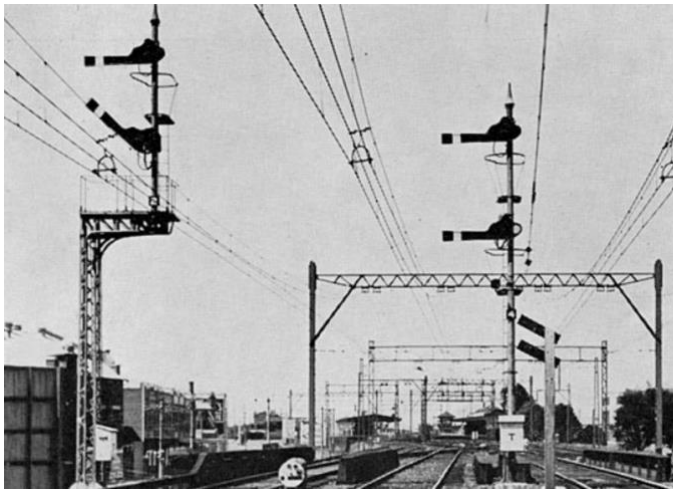


Figure 5: Signals over the railway tracks near Caulfield Railway Station, as published in a 1958 *Victorian Railways Newsletter*. Source: Victorian Railways.



Figure 6: Staff manually operating signals by pulling the lever, as published in a 1958 *Victorian Railways Newsletter*. Source: Victorian Railways.

4.2.3 Development of the Benalla Railway Station

Benalla was originally known as Benalta, which is derived from the Aboriginal term meaning ‘crossing place’, ‘big water holes’, or ‘musk duck’. Due to a clerical error in the Sydney Survey Department, the township that sprang up around the camping place for travellers was named Benalla.⁵ The town centre was built around the crossing of Broken River as early as 1848. However, after the floods of 1870 that engulfed the town, it was decided that the new railway station was to be situated far away from the river crossing to its current location.

On 18 August 1873, the Benalla Railway Station officially opened. It was a great innovation that connected the rural town to Melbourne, making it possible for the transportation of passengers and goods in just four hours. Excited for the introduction of the new mode of transport to Benalla, an opening ceremonial ball was held at the Benalla Railway Station’s goods shed the same night. The first train from Melbourne arrived on a murky night before the local reception committee was able to greet the passengers. With the Railway Station and good shed unlit, confused guests from Melbourne had to find their way to the town centre in the dark on their own. They were later taken to a nearby hotel for refreshments. Despite the unfortunate misunderstanding, the ball at the goods shed was otherwise described as ‘gorgeous’, with the interior decorated with paper lanterns, flags, and shields. Having invited the Chapman’s Band from Melbourne as performing guests, the rough floorboards were temporarily covered with pine flooring to provide a springy dance floor. The celebration was considered as a huge success with more than 400 guests in attendance.

At the time of the opening, the Railway Station was nothing more than a temporary booking office with a small waiting room for intending passengers, and a temporary residence for the stationmaster. The first stationmaster was W. H. Francis, who later became the Chairman of Railway Commissioners. Solomon Mirrls was the first loco-foreman, who was then promoted to the position of Locomotive Superintendent. Despite the humble scale of the temporary Station, the arrival of the railway line led to a minor local building boom where new businesses were set up, including the nearby North-Eastern Hotel, which continues to operate until today.

⁵ *Benalla Standard*, 9 October 1906, 3.

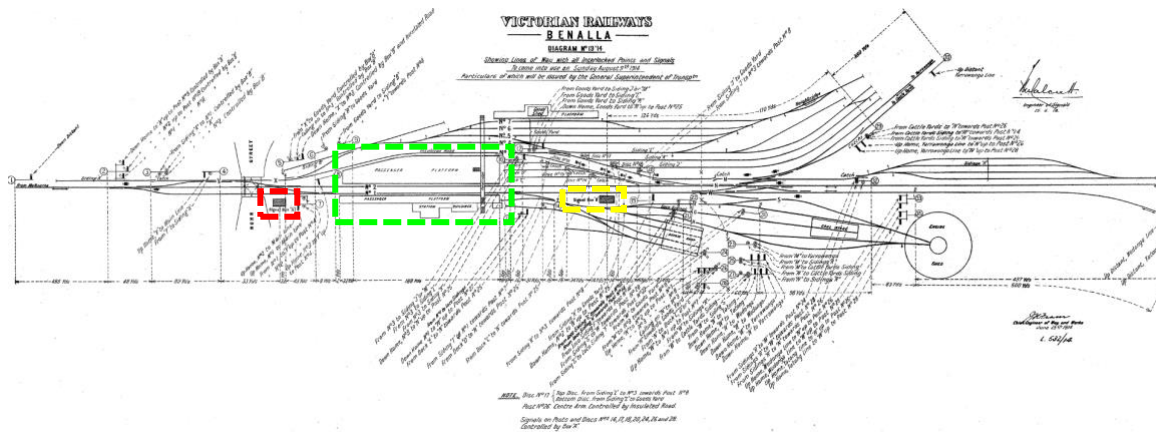


Figure 7: A 1914 diagram showing interlocked points and signals at the Benalla Railway Station. Note Signal Hut A (indicated in red) and Signal Hut B (indicated in yellow) in relation to the passenger platforms (indicated in green).



Figure 8: View of the Benalla Railway Station in the 1910s, note Signal Hut A indicated in red. Source: Flickr.

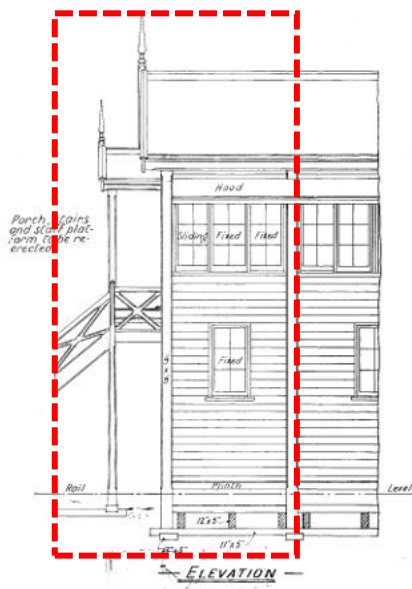


Figure 9: Partial elevation of Signal Hut A, the extended portion indicated in red. Source: Victorian Railways.

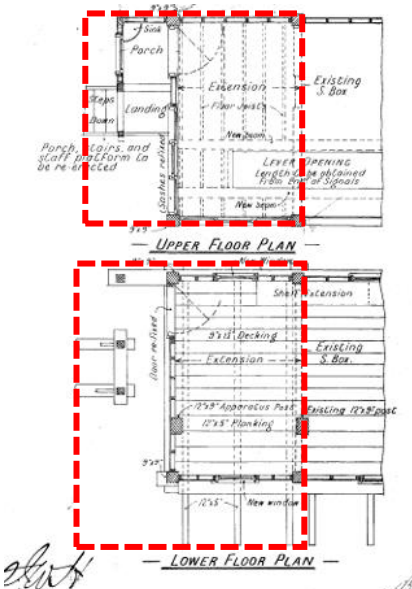


Figure 10: Partial plans of both floors of Signal Hut A, the extended portions indicated in red. Source: Victorian Railways.

The first permanent station building was erected by A.P. Vincent one year later. It was of identical design to that at Seymour and built by T. Julian & Co. As the town of Benalla expanded over time, the Railway Station had also gradually increased in importance and its structure built in phases. In 1888, contractor H. Cuttance was commissioned to modify the existing station by building a bell tower, dining room, bedrooms, and refreshment room facilities. Additionally, it also served as the district headquarters for the Victorian Railways Institute. There had historically been two signal huts at the Benalla Railway Station. To obtain the full vista of trains approaching the station, the extant but derelict Signal Hut A is located at the south end; and the no longer extant Signal Hut B was at the north end. Both huts were built in 1888 by T. Bennett and extended in 1914. To this day, the identity of T. Bennett remains unknown. However, a person of the same name is known to have built multiple railway signal huts in Melbourne and regional Victoria in the late 1800s. Some examples include Salisbury, Camberwell, Baddaginnie, Royal Park, and Ararat.

As steam locomotives were gradually phased out in the mid-twentieth-century, Benalla slowly lost its importance as a railway administration centre. Most parts of the railway station fell into disrepair in the 1970s. Despite being classified by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) in 1972, the bell tower at the station was demolished in 1975. Signal Hut B was demolished previously. On the other hand, Signal Hut A was decommissioned in the late 1980s to early 1990s. It remains intact until today but is in a state of dilapidation.



Figure 11: View of the Benalla Railway Station in the 1960s, note Signal Hut A indicated in red. Source: Victorian Railways.



Figure 12: View of Signal Hut A in 1990. Source: Flickr.



Figure 13: View of Signal Hut A in 2007. Source: vigsig.net.

5 Interpreting the Site

5.1 Objectives

An effective interpretation scheme must identify the specific objectives it wishes to achieve, which effectively act to guide its structure alongside the thematic framework. The identified objectives for this interpretation scheme have been formulated as a set of concise ideas, which will ensure a clear message is conveyed to audiences. The objectives are as follow:

- To highlight the significance of Signal Hut A not as a standalone structure but a part of the historic Benalla Railway Station by outlining the history of the North-Eastern Railway Line and Benalla's role in it. Links are to be drawn to broader themes to contextualise the railway station's place in Australia's railway history.
- To enable a deeper understanding of the function of signal huts as part of the basis of the modern signalling practice, which ensures the safeworking of Victoria's railway system.
- To ensure the interpretation scheme responds effectively to the principles and objectives set out in the *Victorian Inland Rail UDF*.
- To offer an enriched experience of the future Station Precinct for all audiences, by allowing them to engage with interpretation materials both actively and passively.
- To ensure that the interpretation scheme remains relevant into the future.
- To ensure that the interpretation scheme is accessible to a diverse audience, with varied connections to the future Station Precinct.

5.2 Opportunities for Interpretation

This section outlines the various opportunities that have been identified for interpretation at the site.

5.2.1 Identified Audiences

The Benalla Railway Station complex is to be redeveloped as part of the broader Inland Rail Project. The redevelopment will encompass substantial infrastructure and landscaping works. Given the extent of the proposed works, opportunities for interpretation are vast and varied, a target audience is identified as follows:

- Local community members
Residents who frequently use the railway station are likely to experience the interpretation scheme daily, whilst local history enthusiasts, interested residents and advocacy groups are likely to experience the interpretation scheme occasionally. They may have a personal connection to or feel strongly about the railway station or the subject site.
- Visitors
Visitors include tourists visiting Benalla and surrounding areas, those using the town as a stopover on a longer journey, and those visiting the town to partake in heritage and art tourism trails. Some visitors may be first-time visitors to the area.
- Employees and staff
Staff members who work at the railway station are likely to experience the interpretation scheme daily. Other rail transport workers and visiting staff will experience the program sporadically. Specifically, those involved in the Inland Rail Project who may frequently visit the site over its pre-commencement, construction, and opening phases.

- Train and transport enthusiasts

In Victoria, and more broadly across Australia, there exists a large community of people interested in trains, transport, and railway history and heritage. These individuals are likely to visit the Benalla Railway Station Precinct and experience the interpretation scheme occasionally. They may not be particularly familiar with the history of Benalla and its railway station but may generally possess extensive knowledge of the development of the North-Eastern Railway Line. A prominent example of such groups is the Australian Railway Historical Society.

Local Benalla residents are the most likely group to benefit from the interpretation scheme as they are likely to frequently use the Benalla Railway Station Precinct. This group may come into contact with the interpretation scheme every time they travel via train, simply pass by the vicinity, or spend time in one of the open spaces located close by. As such, it is important to ensure that interpretation materials are provided at various locations at the complex, but at the same time visually recessive.


Given the nature of a railway station, most users are likely to be constantly moving through the Station Precinct and therefore experience the interpretation materials through brief interactions. For this reason, the interpretation scheme needs to be accessible and quickly digested as the subject makes their way through the space. Materials that require them to actively engage in reading and comprehending should be broken into smaller ideas that are informative yet easily grasped. These materials are best placed at the beginning of a visitor's route into the Station Precinct.

For open spaces and landscaped areas, most users are likely to be local residents or visitors using public spaces as meeting places or for recreational purposes. Interpretation materials in these areas may also be used to facilitate their use by providing shelter or street furniture.

5.2.2 Identified Media

Interpretive media is essentially the how of an interpretation scheme, as it is the tangible manner in which the themes are conveyed to an audience. Interpretive media can require active participation from an audience (such as written material on a sign), or passive interactions (such as artistic elements that invite the audience to reflect or investigate). A mix of both approaches can result in a richer audience experience.

The following table includes suggested media formats that have been identified as the most effective for conveying the interpretation at the site:

Medium	Example	Description
Wall mural	 <p data-bbox="459 1733 932 1816">Figure 14 Pedestrian tunnel wall mural in Colorado, United States, by artist Yulia Avgustinovich. Source: Yulia Avgustinovich.</p>	<p data-bbox="978 1379 1348 1682">Large-scale mural artworks can be used to conceptually interpret the history of the site, whilst also enlivening infrastructure. This medium provides an opportunity to reinstate community artwork in the new station precinct and for local artists to be involved in the interpretation strategy.</p>

Signage (large format)



Figure 15: Large-format signage at Weymouth Station, UK, showing the silhouette of a signal operator holding flags in both hands. Source: <https://www.dorsetcoasthaveyoursay.co.uk/>.



Figure 16: Large format light box signage at the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library at Deakin University. Source: SHP.

Information can be presented in one large scale format. This is best suited to an expanse of wall with passing audiences, such as in the pedestrian accessway. This can allow for the presentation of historical information in a chronological format, along with other interpretation materials.

This format offers some room for experimentation with shape, materials and finishes. A common method includes using lightboxes, which serve a double purpose of adding ambient light to an area. Materials can be explored, such as the use of brick or stone elements between or framing the light boxes.

Signage (small format)



Figure 17: Signage at the Sunset Heritage Precinct. Source: Turner Design.



Figure 18: Signage at Substation 164 by Trigger and GBA Heritage. Source: Trigger and Built.

Information can be broken into smaller format signs that address individual topics. This type of signage could be used to address specific elements, giving a brief explanation of their purpose, history or similar. Signage may take the form of a self-supporting sign, or mounted plaque. This format offers some room for experimentation with materials and finishes.

Should elements of the Benalla Signal Hut A be salvaged, small format signage should accompany remnant elements, explaining their historic function and connection to the site's history.

Retention and re-use of salvaged elements and materials



Figure 19: Industrial fan at the Burnley Maltings was repurposed to create a sculptural table. Source: Hin Lim Photography.



Figure 20: 'Memory of Place' by Petrus Spronk interpretive sculpture with accompanying signage at Hepburn. Source: Hepburn Shire Council Art and Heritage Collection.





Figure 21: Outdoor seating and water features created by salvaged bluestones at the former Pentridge Prison, by Aspect Studios. Source: Dianna Snape.

Salvaged elements from the removed structure may be reused to create sculptural elements incorporated into the landscape scheme of the redeveloped station. This medium provides an opportunity for local artists and artisans to be involved in the interpretation strategy, connecting the community to their heritage.

Sculptures may be accompanied by explanatory signage to enhance the audience's understanding of the salvaged material and its connection to the site's history.

Salvaged material from the demolished structure may be repurposed and incorporated into the landscape design of the redeveloped station. Should materials be reused, signage interpreting the element's historical function and connection to the site's history should accompany the landscaped element.

Additionally, a shelter structure resembling the form of Signal Hut A may also be designed and installed within the landscape scheme. The shelter should be accompanied by signage interpreting the new structure and its connection to the site's history.

	 <p>Figure 22: Interpretive shelter structure at Daylesford Lake. Source: Daylesford Lake.</p>	
<p>Artefacts in display cases</p>	 <p>Figure 23: Artefacts in display cases at 200 George Street, Sydney. Source: GML Heritage.</p>	<p>There are opportunities to showcase moveable heritage items removed from the building to allow audience to visualise their previous functions. These items can be exhibited in display cases within the site or at local hubs such as museums and libraries.</p> <p>Well-conserved pieces that are closely associated with the significance of the place should be selected for displays. Note that items that contain hazardous materials may still be able to be displayed, subject to the assessment by a materials conservator.</p> <p>Display cases can be freestanding or installed as part of the wall or floor structure.</p>

5.2.3 Identified Locations

The proposed interpretation location plan has identified five key areas for the long-term placement of interpretation materials, subject to asset ownership agreements. While the Benalla Railway Station Precinct is a large complex, these locations have been chosen as they are likely to result in the highest amount of audience engagement in shared spaces. These locations are outlined below, followed by a proposed interpretation location plan:

- Lawns to the south and southwest of the Railway Station building

The lawns provide an opportunity for audiences travelling between the Railway Station building and the Benalla town centre to access interpretation materials. The south lawn is a prominent and publicly accessible location that is likely to be frequented not only by passengers using the railway station, but also pedestrians who use the lawns as a meeting place. Signs, sculptures, and furniture can be located here.

- Lawn close to the location of Signal Hut A

This is an important area that indicates the location of Signal Hut A. It is suitable to provide context for the structure's historical function, as its relationship with the railway stations, tracks, and nearby roads can be visually demonstrated. There is an

opportunity to locate a sign, plaque, and/or sculpture to commemorate the structure and its role in the functioning of the North-Eastern Railway Line. Additionally, this lawn can be named in a way that highlights the heritage of Signal Hut A.

- Benalla Railway Station building

Not only does the Benalla Railway Station building have a direct association with the heritage of railway signalling and the North-Eastern Railway Line, it is also a transit hub frequented by locals, visitors, and staff alike. Interior areas have the potential for locating signs and displaying heritage items.

- Pedestrian underpass

There will be a pedestrian underpass that connects the north and south sides of the Station Precinct. As they will likely be areas of high traffic, ceilings and walls may be used to display interpretation materials. For example, large-format signage, murals, or wall display cases containing heritage items removed from the signal hut can be installed incorporated as part of the walls. The integration of lighting can also help enliven the potentially dark underpass space and provide further ambient lighting.

- Railway shelters and elevator shafts

Enclosures of railway shelters and the exterior of elevator shaft are prominent areas within the Station Precinct that can be used by audiences to make an immediate association to the history of the Benalla Railway Station. Large-format decal or perforated metal signages that display historical photos of the station, for example, the no longer extant bell tower, can be used.

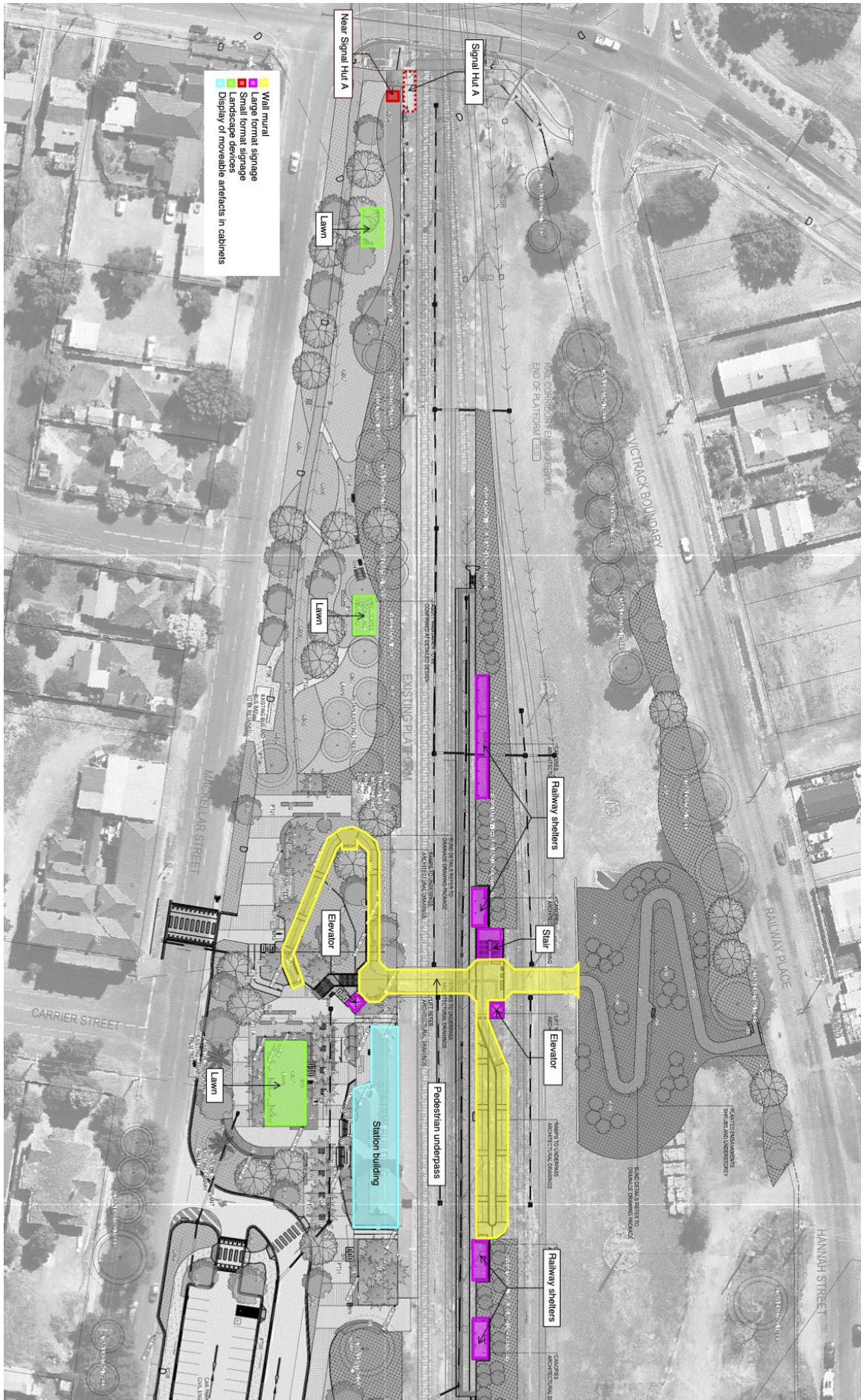


Figure 24: Proposed interpretation location plan for the new Benalla Railway Station Precinct.

6 Interpretation Options

The interpretation options for the Station Precinct can be expressed in several linked formats, as outlined below. All formats will allow for an authentic celebration of the history of the site, while referencing the relevant themes and key stories that have been identified in this HIP. The following options have been chosen for their common potential to celebrate the heritage of the Station Precinct and specifically, the Signal Hut. At the same time, they can effectively convey the history of the wider site and offer opportunities for the repurposing of salvaged elements.

Noting the identified audience is the general public and workers who may or may not have prior knowledge about the history of the site and the historical function of a signal hut, the proposed interpretation options have been formulated to provide engagement to all groups. There will be opportunities for both active and passive engagement.

6.1 Interpretation Initiatives

6.1.1 Installation of large format signage or wall mural

It is suggested to install a large format set of signage or commission a mural along the wall of the pedestrian underpass. The signage or mural may incorporate the following elements:

- A brief account of the key stories associated with the site, including the development of the North-Eastern Railway Line, the history of mechanical railway signalling in Victoria, and the Benalla Railway Station
- Historical images and drawings associated with the North-Eastern Railway Line, Benalla Railway Station, its connection with other railway stations along the line, and trains that were used in the line.

If signage was to be chosen, it should exhibit a degree of creativity through its graphic design and use of material. Options such as printed Perspex, light boxes, printed metal, carved stone etc, for setting the information should be explored in the content development stage.

The installation of a mural provides an opportunity to create artworks closely associated with the local community in the new Station Precinct. Should this option be developed further, the chosen artist and artwork should be decided with input from the local community. Small format signage should accompany the mural to best enable a clear interpretation and its connection to the history of the site. As Benalla is known as an up-and-coming street art destination in Australia with more than eighty street murals, and events such as street art trails, guided tours, and an annual street art festival are held, there is an opportunity to engage in the community to incorporate this wall mural as part of the visitors' experience.

Some examples of the use of large format signage are included below for reference:



Figure 25 Large-format signage at Weymouth Station, UK, showing the silhouette of a signal operator holding flags in both hands. Source: <https://www.dorsetcoasthaveyoursay.co.uk/>.



Figure 26 Large format light box signage at the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library at Deakin University. Source: SHP, n.d.

Some examples of the use of wall murals are included below for reference.



Figure 27 Pedestrian tunnel wall mural in Colorado, United States, by artist Yulia Avgustinovich. Source: Yulia Avgustinovich.



Figure 28 The Southern Aurora Memorial mural in Violet Town. Source: The Euroa Gazette.

6.1.2 Partial retention and display of salvaged materials

The second initiative to be implemented is the retention and display of heritage items associated with the mechanical signalling system historically a part of Signal Hut A. Such items include interlocking levers, battery or electrical equipment, or windows of Signal Hut A. Noting that these elements contain asbestos and/or lead, it is generally suggested that a suitably licensed removal contractor and qualified materials conservator referred by AICCM be consulted to determine the suitability of display and proper handling method.

Should it be advised that the display of the elements is safe, they can be placed in display cases in a sheltered environment away from direct sunlight, such as inside the Benalla Railway Station or along the walls of the pedestrian underpasses. If the removal of hazardous materials and sealing of the element can be undertaken, and the element can be safely handled regularly by the audience, there may also be an opportunity for the element to be displayed without cases and free to be contacted. They should be accompanied by a small format signage that explains the history and logic behind mechanical railway signalling, with textual and diagrammatical explanations to provide further information.

Suggested elements to be retained and displayed are as follows:

Identified elements for Potential Display		
No.	Item (image source: EMM)	Description
A.01		<p>Interlocking signalling levers and associated mechanism.</p> <p>The re-use of elements affected by hazardous materials is subject to the feasibility of appropriate rectification methods. The Hazardous Building Materials Survey should be consulted for further information.</p>

Some examples of the display of salvaged materials are included below for reference.



Figure 29 Signal levers on display at the Railway Museum in Williamstown. Source: Trip Advisor.



Figure 30 Artefacts on display at the Doncaster Rail Heritage Centre in the UK. Source: Danum Gallery, Library, Museum.

6.1.3 Partial retention and adaptive reuse of salvaged materials

While many components of the signal hut are deemed unfit for retention due to the presence of hazardous materials, there may be elements fit for use. Where appropriate, the design, location and arrangement of salvaged elements should be explored and developed further in the content development stage. Each salvaged element should be presented in a vignette that achieves the following:

- Displays the element/material clearly.
- Includes an accompanying small format sign that briefly explains the history and former use of the material, along with an image of the material in its original position (such as the archival imagery undertaken by EMM).

Subject to the liaison with ARTC and any relevant future asset managers, it may be possible to create a shelter structure which resembles the form of Signal Box A. Small format signage should accompany the shelter to best enable a clear interpretation of the structure and its connection to the history of the site.

Some examples of the adaptive reuse of salvaged materials are included below for reference.



Figure 31 Outdoor seating and water features created by salvaged bluestones at the former Pentridge Prison, by Aspect Studios. Source: Dianna Snape, n.d.



Figure 32 Architectural remnants conserved and displayed along a walkway at St. Barnabas Church, Broadway. Source: GBA Heritage and Simon Wood Photography, n.d.

6.1.4 Installation of small format signage

Small format signage can be located in various locations of the Benalla Railway Station Precinct, and contents should be arranged in a way that is location-specific to allow for contextualisation of information. This format offers some room for experimentation with design, materials, and finishes.

Some examples of the use of small format signage are included below for reference.



Figure 33 Signage accompanying an object at Substation 164 by Trigger and GBA Heritage. Source: Trigger and Built, n.d.



Figure 34 Interpretive signage at Honeysuckle Station. Source: Artefact, n.d..

6.2 Further Considerations

Consideration will need to be given to the following matters in the implementation stage:

- Integration with landscape design
The interpretation scheme should be integrated into the wider landscape design for the new Benalla Railway Station Precinct.
- Connectedness to nearby heritage places
The interpretation scheme should not overwhelm nearby heritage places and should participate in celebrating the heritage character of central Benalla.
- Community consultation
The options included in this report are high-level strategies. Should further exploration and development of these options be undertaken, consultation with the local community should occur to achieve a final interpretation scheme that addresses community aspirations.
- Technical language and jargon
It is important to inform the audience the basic principles of mechanical railway signalling to enable a deeper understanding of the cultural heritage significance of signal huts to Benalla and Victoria's wider railway network. Acknowledging that the concept of railway signalling is complex and may involve many technical terms and jargons, it is important that the language used for interpretation materials should be succinct, clear, and easy to understand for laypeople without specific knowledge in the subject.
- Adaptive reuse and legibility
While the adaptive reuse of salvaged elements is encouraged, it should be mindful that the element should be presented in a manner that retains its existing configuration as closely as possible. If this is not feasible, the existing configuration should be documented before the change, and a description plaque included as part of the reused element to provide context.
- Health and safety
If necessary, parts that are deemed to be health and/or safety hazards should be rectified before presenting to the audience. Rectification methods that minimally affect the understanding of the element's cultural heritage significance should be prioritised. Further testing for hazardous materials may also affect the appropriateness of elements to be salvaged. If safety hazards associated with a salvaged element are identified, consider consulting a qualified materials conservator referred by AICCM to determine the suitability of display and proper handling method.
- Structural reinforcement
The installation of fragile and heavy elements may require additional reinforcement to ensure their safety.
- Lighting
Artificial lighting may be used to highlight interpretation materials in areas with access to little natural light and during twilight hours. Lighting should be considered, and provisions developed during the content development phase.
- Repairs and long-term maintenance
Long term maintenance should be taken into consideration when proposing the implementation of interpretation materials. As such, durable materials, finishes, colours, and secure installation and display methodologies should be prioritised with the proviso that they do not negatively affect the understanding of any interpretive materials.

- Asset management

The final interpretation option(s) are subject to agreement with the relevant asset managers.

- Donation to other institutions

If any salvaged elements from Signal Hut A are to be donated to other institutions such as museums or libraries, this HIP should be circulated, and the above aspects considered in a similar approach.

- Statutory requirements

Planning or building permits may be required for certain works and should be investigated further. Refer to the Benalla Planning Scheme and any relevant documentation.