

## INTRODUCTION

The paint finishes of a heritage building or structure contribute to its aesthetic values and can also play an important part in protecting the fabric of the place.

Incorrect choice of colours and paint types can have a detrimental impact on the significance of a place and can damage its physical fabric.

## APPLICATION

This policy applies to all places included in the State Register of Heritage Places. The principles can also be used for decision making affecting places included in local heritage lists.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

To provide guidance for owners and managers of State Registered places consistent with the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 2013, (the Burra Charter). An extract of relevant principles is provided at Appendix A.

To improve the consistency of decision making for painting proposals affecting State Registered heritage places through:

- the identification of the main issues
- the consideration of Burra Charter principles
- a policy for decision making.

## IDENTIFICATION OF MAIN ISSUES

The main issues are:

- the contribution of paint colour and finishes to the significance of the place
- the availability of physical and documentary evidence of early colour schemes
- identifying the appropriate paint type for use for different substrate materials

## SIGNIFICANCE

The overall colour scheme of a building can often form an important part of the aesthetic and historical values of a heritage place. The appropriate use of colour can place a building in its true historical context by presenting the place as it was originally intended to be seen. Paint is an effective tool to highlight significant details and to de-emphasise intrusive elements.

If a place is located within a precinct, a specific colour scheme may be part of the significance of the wider place. Individual places within precincts need to consider their contribution to the immediate context and the impact that an inappropriate colour scheme may have on the broader values of the precinct.

Contemporary colour schemes may suit particular building types, especially if there has been a change of use and significant upgrade works; however, buildings on the State Register should always seek to respect the original style of the place.

Paint is not purely decorative. Appropriately used, it serves as a protective coating over some materials to guard against deterioration. Different materials are compatible with different types of surface treatments and the wrong type of paint can contribute to the deterioration of significant fabric.

Some fabric was never meant to be painted; for example, face brick and stonework were often chosen for their contribution to the overall design of a place and their finish, texture and colour were not meant to be hidden by paint. Some buildings may have been painted only because they looked dirty or because fashions changed. In these cases, stripping the paint may be an appropriate course of action and in the long term is likely to provide a positive economical outcome. Paint can inhibit the intended physical performance of a building, detrimentally affecting the substrate material, and its removal will simplify its maintenance, as it will no longer need to be repainted every few years.

Often buildings were painted for practical reasons. Cheaper, less attractive, more permeable bricks may have been used with the expectation that the building would be painted, or painting might have been used to cover badly patched stone walls. Stripping may therefore reveal ugly bricks, mismatched repairs and additions and possibly expose the building to damage by removing its protective rainproof coating. As such, the removal of paint should always be preceded by careful investigation (through physical test patches and documentary research) and a thorough understanding of the cultural significance and historical context of the place.

Care should always be undertaken in stripping back oil-based paints on any building and particularly those constructed prior to 1970, due to the possible presence of lead-based coatings. The current code of practice for removing lead-based paints should be followed.

For more information about paint removal, refer to the brochure *Removal of Paint from Masonry – Maintenance Series* available on the State Heritage website.

## DOCUMENTARY AND PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Evidence of early colour schemes often remains underneath existing layers of paint. Careful scraping back of these layers in inconspicuous locations can reveal numerous different colours, and depending on the paint type, can be dated to particular periods of the place's history. Paint scrapes should be undertaken to inform decisions about repainting, preferably by professionals experienced in the technique.

Historical photographs and artworks can also provide information regarding early colour schemes. Even black and white photographs are useful as they can provide evidence of the tonal relationships of the paint colours. While it is not always a requirement that original colour schemes be exactly replicated in the modern day, this evidence helps to provide information regarding the historical placing of light and dark colours and assists in preparing contemporary colour schemes that respect the original design intent of a place. Paints marketed as 'heritage' colours are based on traditional colour schemes but are often used inappropriately. The palette of

‘heritage’ colours as depicted by paint manufacturers include many different colours from different building styles within overlapping periods. It is easy to apply these colours in the wrong combinations, and also to use too many colours.

## APPROPRIATE USE

Paint types have differed over time and between manufacturers and while paints are still available in traditional compositions, modern variations are available that display similar properties to the early products. These products need to be carefully selected to ensure they perform appropriately with the substrate material.

The most important factor when selecting paint type is ensuring that the paint has the right level of ‘breathability’ appropriate to the substrate<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> A breathable paint is one that allows water vapour to travel or permeate through it. Paints with high rates of permeability allow water to quickly evaporate while those with a low permeability can trap moisture. Permeability is measured as an Sd value. The Sd value is defined as the “equivalent air layer thickness”, it measures how much of a barrier the material is to water vapour. The lower the Sd value, the more breathable the material is. Typical vapour permeable or breathable paints have an Sd value of around 0.02m to 0.5m (Cornish Lime Company Ltd, ‘Breathable Paints Explained’ <http://www.cornishlime.co.uk/breathablepaints.php>).

## Which paint where?

Building Fabric	Paint Type
<p><b>Lime and early cement rendered exterior walls, internal lime plastered walls and ceilings</b></p>	<p>Traditional lime wash and clay based paint. Mineral-based paint with equivalent demonstrated breathability and porosity characteristics can be considered.</p>
<p><b>Interior joinery</b>  (eg skirting boards, architraves, mouldings, door and window frames, doors)</p>	<p>Oil-based semi-gloss enamel or oil-based primer with compatible modern acrylic equivalent or water-based enamel top coats.</p> <p>Care should be taken to use an appropriate primer as changing the topcoat layer to acrylic over a previously enamel based surface can lead to poor adhesion. Oil-based paint conditioners can be used to assist penetration characteristics of the primer.</p> <p>Note: acrylic paint should be used with care on operable items such as window frames and doors, as it has a tendency to stick. Acrylics also build up the surface to a greater extent than oil-based enamels and can cause loss of detail.</p>
<p><b>External joinery</b>  (eg balustrades, timber verandah details, door and window frames, doors)</p>	<p>Oil-based gloss enamel or <i>oil-based primer</i> with compatible modern acrylic equivalent or water based enamel top coats.</p> <p>Care should be taken to use an appropriate primer as changing the topcoat layer to acrylic over a previously enamel-based surface can lead to poor adhesion. Oil-based paint conditioners can be used to assist penetration characteristics of the primer.</p> <p>Note: acrylic paint should be used with care on operable items such as window frames and doors, as it has a tendency to stick. Acrylics also build up the surface to a greater extent than oil-based enamels and can cause loss of detail.</p> <p>Note: Acrylic paint or water-based enamels have a greater life span than oil based enamels. Oils tend to harden as they age and repainting should be considered every five years. Acrylic paint or water-based paint, due to its elasticity, will bridge gaps and voids where timber has shrunk, preventing water ingress. Oil-based enamels are prone to chalking at a much faster rate than acrylics or water-based enamels.</p> <p>Note: washing down annually and inspecting timber substrate for paint failure is paramount in extending the life span of the coating.</p>

Building Fabric	Paint Type
<p><b>Metal work</b> (eg gutters, downpipes, balustrades, decorative lacework)</p>	<p>Gloss enamel or modern acrylic equivalent. (Note: water-based paints can cause iron to rust). Where a painted surface has deteriorated and/or metal rusted, this should be cleaned back to sound, near white metal. Coat with penetrating oil and wipe off surplus. Follow immediately with a high-build primer to 200 microns (approximately five coats).</p> <p>Can be coated over with acrylic, oil- based enamel or two pack polyurethane re-coatable coatings (for high corrosive environments such as coastal areas).</p>
<p><b>Masonry surfaces</b> (other than those not intended to be painted)</p>	<p>Traditional lime wash, clay-based paint, or other mineral-based paint with equivalent demonstrated breathability and porosity characteristics.</p>
<p><b>Concrete and modern cement rendered surfaces</b></p>	<p>Surface treatments to prevent/delay concrete deterioration and reinforcement bar corrosion including but not limited to acrylic paints, silane-siloxane anti-carbonation barrier and aliphatic acrylate protective coatings.</p>

Anti-graffiti coatings and other sealants are available to protect walls and aid the removal of graffiti but they can create problems by trapping moisture and salts on porous surfaces, behind an impermeable membrane, causing surface ‘blooms’ and damage to substrate. Generally, coating of masonry is not recommended, but if such a repellent is necessary, it should be one that permits the passage of moisture and is easily reversible if required. These products can also have a variety of visible finishes and test panels should always be trialled in inconspicuous locations to determine if the finished appearance is appropriate for the place. Each case should be individually evaluated by a suitable qualified and experienced practitioner.

## BURRA CHARTER PRINCIPLES

The Burra Charter (the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013) and its accompanying guidelines are considered the best practice standard for cultural heritage management in Australia.

The articles set out in The Burra Charter form ‘first principles’ on which assessments of proposed developments to State Registered Places are made.

Articles from The Burra Charter that are relevant to re-painting proposals are as follows:

Burra Charter Articles	First Principles
<p><b>Article 2.2 – The aim of conservation is to retain the cultural significance of a place.</b></p>	<p>The principles of conservation should guide any decisions affecting the fabric and/or significance of a heritage place.</p> <p>Colour and paint type often contribute to the cultural significance.</p>
<p><b>Article 3.1 – Conservation is based on a respect for the existing fabric, use, associations and meanings. It requires a cautious approach of changing as much as necessary but as little as possible.</b></p> <p><b>Article 3.2 – Changes to a place should not distort the physical or other evidence it provides, nor be based on conjecture.</b></p>	<p>Colour schemes should not detract from the significance of the place or become a primary focus where it was not part of the original intent of the place.</p> <p>Careful investigations should be undertaken based on an understanding of the cultural significance.</p> <p>New colour schemes should be respectful of the place, and options for reinstating early colour schemes should be investigated as a preferred outcome.</p>
<p><b>Article 4.2 – Traditional techniques and materials are preferred for the conservation of significant fabric. In some circumstances, modern techniques and materials which offer substantial conservation benefits may be appropriate</b></p>	<p>Paint types should be applied in a like-for-like manner, providing the existing finish is appropriate for the place.</p> <p>Traditional tonal relationships should be respected, ie appropriate contrasts of colours should be used on architectural features.</p> <p>Modern products can be used where they perform in a traditional manner and will benefit the significant fabric. Modern products should be tested before being applied</p>

Burra Charter Articles	First Principles
<p>Article 8 – Conservation requires the retention of an appropriate visual and sensory, as well as the retention of spiritual and other cultural relationships, that contribute to the cultural significance of the place.</p> <p>New construction, demolition, intrusions or other changes which would adversely affect the setting or relationships are not appropriate.</p>	<p>Colour schemes should not detract from the significance of the place or become a primary focus where it was not part of the original intent of the place.</p>
<p>Article 15.1 – Change may be necessary to retain cultural significance, but is undesirable where it reduces cultural significance. The amount of change to a place and its use should be guided by the cultural significance of the place and its appropriate interpretation.</p> <p>Article 15.2. – Changes which reduce cultural significance should be reversible, and be reversed, when circumstances permit.</p>	<p>Opportunities for reinstating historical colour schemes should always be investigated.</p> <p>New colour schemes may be acceptable to support a new use, but should always be considerate to the significance of the place.</p> <p>Where paint has been inappropriately applied, it should be carefully removed and appropriate finishes should be reinstated as per the original design intent.</p>
<p>Article 26.1 –Work on a place should be preceded by studies to understand the place which should include analysis of physical, documentary, oral and other evidence, drawing on appropriate knowledge, skills and disciplines.</p> <p>Article 26.2 – Written statements of cultural significance and policy for the place should be prepared, justified and accompanied by supporting evidence. The statements of significance and policy should be incorporated into a management plan for the place.</p>	<p>Any changes should be based on a sound understanding of the cultural significance of the place.</p> <p>Existing documentation should be used to inform decisions about proposed changes to the place.</p> <p>Paint scrapes should be undertaken and the results recorded.</p>

Burra Charter Articles	First Principles
<p><b>Article 27.1 – The impact of proposed changes, including incremental changes, on the cultural significance of a place should be assessed with reference to the statement of significance and the policy for managing the place. It may be necessary to modify proposed changes to better retain cultural significance.</b></p> <p><b>Article 27.2 – Existing fabric, use, associations and meanings should be adequately recorded before and after any changes are made to the place.</b></p>	<p>Any proposal for repainting should be analysed against the Statement of Significance and the Conservation Plan (if prepared) of the place.</p> <p>If any change is made to the original intent of the building, the change is required to be recorded. Evidence of early colour schemes should be retained on site for future reference.</p>
<p><b>Article 30 – Competent direction and supervision should be maintained at all stages, and any changes should be implemented by people with appropriate knowledge and skills.</b></p>	<p>Advice should be sought from professionals experienced in the use of paint on heritage buildings before undertaking any work.</p> <p>Paint scrapes and other investigative work should be undertaken by professionals with experience in this technique.</p>



## THE POLICY

The Heritage Council of Western Australia applies the following policy when evaluating proposals for the repainting of State Registered places (for places on a local heritage list a similar policy can be adopted):

- All previously unpainted surfaces should remain unpainted.
- Paint should be removed from surfaces that were not intended to be painted. Removal of any paint should only occur after careful assessment of the fabric to avoid damage to the underlying surfaces. Test patches should be undertaken to ascertain the most appropriate method to use.
- The reapplication of inappropriate paint finishes that are causing deterioration of the underlying material, is not supported except where the removal of paint is demonstrated to cause significant damage to the heritage fabric. In these instances, the maintenance of the existing paint finish may be appropriate.
- If the colour of the place or an element of the place is deemed by the Heritage Council to be significant to its heritage values, the significant colours should be retained and maintained.
- Painting proposals that are based on evidence of original or early colour schemes (eg paint scrapes or historical photographs) are preferred. These proposals can be dealt with by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH) under delegated authority from the Heritage Council.
- Where evidence does not exist, painting proposals that are based on typical colour schemes of similar building types from similar eras are appropriate. These proposals can be dealt with by the DPLH under delegated authority from the Heritage Council.
- Contemporary colour schemes may be appropriate. Where contemporary schemes are proposed that are interpretations of known or typical colour schemes, and respect the typical arrangement of the tonal contrasts of traditional schemes, the matter can be dealt with by the DPLH under delegated authority.
- New decorative treatments such as mural art need to be considered against the individual heritage values of the specific place. Artworks proposed for secondary facades, which have already been painted, can be considered by the DPLH under delegated authority from the Heritage Council.
- Buildings within registered precincts should use colour schemes that maintain the significance of each place within the precinct. Colour schemes that draw undue attention to one part of a precinct are not appropriate.
- Modern paint products and surface treatments may be used where it is demonstrated that the product has a similar and/or superior performance to a traditional coating, while allowing the original underlying material to perform as intended.
- The Heritage Council and its Committees may consider alternatives to the above requirements of the policy. However, this would only occur where there are extenuating circumstances and only in order to achieve a significant overall conservation outcome for a place.