



Colour Schemes

for Heritage Items and Heritage Conservation Areas

This fact sheet provides guidance on painting and colours schemes for a property that is listed as a heritage item or located within a Heritage Conservation Area.

Consent requirements

Painting or re-painting the exterior of a property which is listed as a Heritage Item or within a Heritage Conservation Area is a change to the 'fabric finish and appearance' and requires consent but can generally be considered under the maintenance and minor works heritage exemptions under [Clause 5.10\(3\) of the Byron LEP 2014](#). Internal repainting consent applies only to [State Listed Heritage Items](#).

You need to submit the minor works application, or e mail a request to Council with information about your proposed work including the colour scheme and materials. If Council is satisfied that the work is in keeping with the heritage values, it may approve it in writing. This must be in place before you start work.

Traditional uncoloured metal roofing

The predominant built character of this region is timber and iron, and unless the building has an original tile roof, retaining or reinstating uncoloured traditional metal roofs is recommended to maintain unity to the building stock and streetscapes. This avoids a mismatch of different coloured metal roofing and allows new infill buildings to blend with the historic dwellings. Uncoloured metal also is neutral and a useful base for a variety of colour schemes.

Understand the place before making changes

The use of traditional colours and finishes is important to maintain the significance and character of historic buildings, and to ensure that new infill development is sympathetic to the heritage setting. Inappropriate paint schemes can substantially change the character of buildings and streetscapes by introducing colours and textures which could not have been produced over 100 years ago.

Historical background

Up until WW1, paints were made by hand and often on site, and continuing to the 1960s traditional paints were still used on most Australian buildings. Oil paints were generally applied on timber, metal and plaster, while water-based washes and distempers were generally used on plasters and masonry surfaces.

The colour palette was made from pigments readily available at the time. This included stone and earth colours, dark reds, greens, creams and browns. Lime white was the traditional white, rather than brilliant white.

Gloss finishes were based on natural oils such as linseed and fish oil. These paints were used to repel water from wood surfaces as well as protecting structural and decorative cast and wrought iron from corrosion.

During the 1920s, ready-mixed, industrially made paints emerged as petroleum products and synthetic resins became available. From the late 1940s acrylic paints became available which were water based and easier to use but many painters continued to mix their own paint until the late 1960s.

In more recent years there has been renewed interest in paints such as Limewash which is based on traditional mixes and include the heritage colour palette, and which is more suited to historic buildings in aesthetic finish.



Wall colours

- Face brick or stone should always remain unpainted;
- Stucco or cement renders were either untreated or finished with pigmented lime wash to emulate a stone colours, especially facades with a classical design;
- Timber weatherboards were painted in various shades of stone colours, creams, yellows and occasionally a red oxide or venetian red to emulate brick.

Example	Description
	A traditional paint scheme for a timber dwelling based on original paint scrapes
	Bangalow A & I Hall. A late Victorian building with pressed metal clad walls



Joinery/trim colours

- Architectural details were highlighted in colours such as Indian Red, Venetian Red, Brunswick and Carriage Green, Tobacco, and Chocolate Brown. Off White and Creams were also used to contrast against brick and stone.
- Black is not a colour represented on the heritage palette although black pigments were added to create colours.
- Dark green or red was generally used for cast iron balustrade to make it look robust although some historic photographs show evidence of light colours with dark handrails and other trims.

Example	Description
	This colour scheme uses traditional colours to highlight the architectural detail of the façade
	This façade would benefit from a heritage colour scheme and contrast trim colours to highlight the architectural details



Roof colours

- Unpainted galvanised roofs characterise heritage precincts and should remain unpainted or replaced 'like for like' when necessary.
- In the late 1890s metal roofs were sometimes painted with red oxide to resemble terracotta tiled roofs which were becoming fashionable. The paint also had the effect of further preserving the metal. If already painted, they may be repainted to match the original.
- Terracotta roofs should be retained where they are original or appropriate to the era of the building.

Example	Description
	<p>Example of a board and batten timber cottage with red oxide painted roof</p>
	<p>Terracotta roof to All Souls Anglican Church, Bangalow</p>

Fence colours

- Light stone colours were historically found on early timber picket fences. Off white and creams are also commonly used. Bright and dark colours should be avoided for timber fencing.
- Side fences were often left to weather or were protected with oil.
- Cast iron balustrades were usually painted in dark colours.

Example	Description
	<p>Traditional picket fence</p>
	<p>Side fence left in traditional timber left to weather off</p>

Signage

Signage can include a range of colours, including modest areas of corporate signage, providing that it does not dominate the building, and is within the original fascia depth and not above awning level. Traditional hand painted signage adds vitality to the streetscape. Illuminated signage needs consent but can enhance a building if well designed.


Example	Description
 <p>ORIENT COFFEE PALACE, BYRON BAY, N.S.W. SPECIALLY EQUIPPED FOR THE CONVENIENCE AND COMFORT OF VISITORS AND TRAVELLING PUBLIC</p>	<p>Old black and white print of Orient Coffee Palace, Byron Bay</p>
	<p>Photo of shop front signage of Balcony bar & oyster co.</p>
	<p>Photo of shop front signage of Bangalow Hairdressing and Helix</p>
	<p>Photo of shop front signage of millar&more</p>

Heritage colour schemes

A wide range of traditional colours are available! Council's Heritage Advisor has a portfolio of heritage colour palettes which are available for discussion and use at site meetings with examples of colour schemes for three main eras of historic development: Victorian (1837-1901), Federation (1901-1914) and Interwar- Post War (1914-1950). The use of schemes typical to the era is strongly encouraged.



Victorian (1838-1901)

Buildings of the Victorian era tended to be more ornate and decorated than the Colonial period. In line with the prosperity of the period, they often boasted intricate decoration using a great variety of colours. Architectural trims were picked out in contrasts. Subtle shades and tones were used to highlight mouldings. Paint effects of marbling, stencilling and wood graining were popular for interiors.

Example	Description
	Photo of a Victorian style train platform, Mullumbimby.



Federation (1901-1914)

Federation era fashion for red brick was popular but timber and iron buildings still dominated in this region. Examples include the Uniting Church Bangalow 1916. Decoration was less ornate than the previous period but contained quality joinery work.

Example	Description
	Federation style house, Mullumbimby
	Federation style Uniting Church Bangalow 1916

Inter war and post war

The period from 1914-1945, covered a range of architectural styles including a continuation of Federation styles to the Art Deco designs of the 1920s and 1930s and the Californian bungalow designs. Colours saw some shift from the Federation and Victorian Palettes to include more variety with the development of ready-made paint and more choices after the 1930s. The brick bungalows of the 1950s are particularly representative of the post war era and should remain unpainted. Hotel Brunswick built in 1949 displays traditional paint colours to the joinery.

Example	Description
	Inter war and post war style buildings, Bangalow
	Inter war and post war style, Hotel Brunswick

Advice

You can seek general advice through our website [Development Advice Services](#) page or contact the Development Support Officers on 02 6626 7025..

Heritage advisory service

For more specific questions, heritage advice is available using the [Heritage Advisory Service](#) online form.

E2021/118697 November 2022