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## Australian Heritage Database

### Places for Decision

#### Class : Historic

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### Identification

**List:** National Heritage List  
**Name of Place:** Echuca Wharf  
**Other Names:**  
**Place ID:** 105777  
**File No:** 2/06/208/0008

**Nomination Date:** 09/11/2004  
**Principal Group:** Water Transport

### Status

**Legal Status:** 09/11/2004 - Nominated place  
**Admin Status:** 25/10/2006 - Assessment by AHC completed

### Assessment

**Recommendation:** Place meets one or more NHL criteria  
**Assessor's Comments:**  
**Other Assessments:** :

### Location

**Nearest Town:** Echuca  
**Distance from town (km):**  
**Direction from town:**  
**Area (ha):**  
**Address:** 52 Murray Esp, Echuca, VIC 3564  
**LGA:** Campaspe Shire VIC  
Murray Shire NSW

#### Location/Boundaries:

52 Murray Esplanade, Echuca, comprising:

1. the area bounded in the east by the edge of the wharf platform; in the south and west by the picket fence and in the north by the edge of the wharf platform and its alignment (between the timber walkway and souvenir shop) to its intersection with the picket fence;
2. Two old retaining walls extending for approximately 36 metres from the northern edge of the wharf;
3. Remnants of old piles extending approximately from MGA point 297280mE

6000244mN to 297308mE 6000195mN;

4. Old retaining wall extending approximately from MGA point 297321mE 6000137 to 297363mE 6000079mN;and

5. Old retaining wall extending approximately from MGA point 297383mE 6000092mN to 297399mE 6000102mN.

**Assessor's Summary of Significance:**

Echuca Wharf is an outstanding survivor of the booming Murray River trade of the late 1800s, which during the pastoral boom transformed Australia's economy, and contributed to the forces which ultimately led to Federation.

The building of the original wharf was commenced in 1864 and completed in 1867.

The construction of the wharf and the rail link to Melbourne transformed both pastoralism, and the economy. Echuca Wharf serviced the pastoral districts of the Riverina and Western New South Wales. By providing cheaper and more direct access to markets it facilitated the expansion of pastoralism in these districts, thereby increasing the demand for river trade. Echuca Wharf quickly became the pre-eminent port on the Murray River, and the second biggest port in Victoria. At its peak in the early 1880s, over 200 vessels used the wharf each week and over 93 000 tons of goods were transported annually.

The wharf was extended several times, reaching its ultimate length of 332 metres, until the river trade began to decline in the 1880s, as the financial crisis of the 1890s hit the local economy hard, and the extension of the railway network in New South Wales and Victoria took away valuable trade.

The giant red-gum timber structure towers above the river and the surrounding landscape. 75.5 metres in length, the wharf is three stories high, allowing for the possible 10 metre variation in river height between summer and winter, and enabling the wharf to operate year round. The longest extent of the wharf (332 metres), is evidenced by some remnant pylons which are visible at low water.

The infrastructure on the wharf, including the railway lines, cargo shed, cranes and jib reflect the crucial relationship between the railway and the river, which facilitated the passage of trade from the Riverina through to Victoria's sea-ports. These elements, together with the paddle-steamers which still operate from Echuca Wharf, now servicing the tourist trade, contribute to the sense that Echuca Wharf retains, of a 'working port'.

**Draft Values:**

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Rating</i>
A Events, Processes	Echuca Wharf reflects the importance that the Port of Echuca played in the economic growth experienced by the colonies of Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia in the second half of the 19th century. The construction of the wharf and railway at Echuca in the late 1860s facilitated the movement of goods to and from the pastoral districts of the Riverina and western NSW to the ports of Melbourne and Adelaide. More direct access to markets led to a rapid expansion in the scale and value of these pastoral districts, and in turn to increased river trade, requiring the extension of the wharf. The Port of Echuca became the pre eminent port for Murray River trade (estimated to be £5 million per annum in 1882), and	AT

Victoria's second largest port up until the 1880s. The wharf and railway at Echuca were crucial in the process of Melbourne wresting the status of Australia's economic capital from Sydney. The massive red gum structure of the wharf in its current configuration, the timber remains showing the longest extent of the wharf and the visual dominance of the wharf within a relatively undisturbed setting together provide evidence of the importance of Echuca as a pre-eminent trading port. The cargo shed, cranes, jib, fence and railway track, although not original, contribute to an understanding of the functioning of the port, the use of the wharf by paddle-steamers, and the relationship between the port and the railhead.

### **Historic Themes:**

#### **Nominator's Summary of Significance:**

This giant timber riverside wharf is unique in Victoria, perhaps Australia and is an outstanding survivor of the period of river traffic when Echuca was the busiest port on the Murray River and the second Port in Victoria. It was the focus of the city's maritime activity. The giant timber structure towers above the river and the surrounding landscape. The timber bracing gives a superb rhythm down the long river frontage.

The Echuca wharf was erected 1865-7 by the Public Works Department and the contractor was G Dwyer and Co. Additions were made in 1877 and 1879. The wharf is constructed entirely of timber and was once five times its present length. Its great height allowed for the ten metre variation in the winter and summer levels of the Murray and enabled a year round unloading of goods. Cranes, wool press and bond stores were accommodated on the uppermost level.

#### **Description:**

The Echuca Wharf is 75.5 metres in length (its previous ultimate length was 332 metres, before parts of the wharf began to be dismantled) and is over ten metres, or three stories, high, enabling the wharf to operate in both high and low rivers. The wharf is constructed from river red gum (felled and milled locally). Various parts of the wharf and associated infrastructure have been renewed and/or restored throughout the years. Remnant timber pylons (visible only at low water) some distance from either end of the current wharf demonstrate its ultimate length.

The remaining wharf structure is the central section of the original structure, largely original but with repairs over time. Within the main wharf frame, several piles, braces and beams have been replaced. The catwalk has been reconstructed and the staircases to the north and south ends are presumed to include early elements. The wharf decking is replacement fabric (using the same type of timber as the original), date unknown. The northern crane occupies the site of an earlier crane and is different to the original cranes on the wharf. The southern crane is similar to one of the original cranes installed in 1865; it was sourced from a station yard at Wacool. The jib closely matches evidence of an earlier crane at the wharf (from the 1877 extension) and may have originally been part of wharf. The post and chain fence along the edge of the

wharf is a reconstruction of the original fence, although the eye through which the chain passes appears to be smaller than the original. There were originally many more railway tracks than those currently represented.

The nominated area also contains a relocated cargo shed (now used for interpretation purposes) which is not original but is of the same style and vintage of sheds which were on the wharf, a relatively recently constructed railway platform and relocated station building, a relocated pedestrian overpass, a small shed (not original), several relocated early lamp-posts and numerous introduced props.

Echuca/Moama is regarded as the home of the largest number of paddleboats in the world

(<http://www.murrayriver.com.au/boating/paddlesteamers/portofechuca/default.htm>). The wharf is still operational, open to the public 364 days of the year, with three tourist cruising paddle-steamers (P.S. Adelaide, P.S. Alexander Arbuthnot and P.S. Pevensey) leaving from the wharf daily.

**Analysis:**

*CRITERION (a)*

*The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's cultural history;*

The nominator asserted that Echuca Wharf met this criterion, but made no supporting claims.

The construction of the Echuca Wharf changed the course of Australian economic history. The development of the port and its connection to the railhead facilitated the movement of goods through Echuca from points throughout the entire Murray Darling catchment (Ward, 1992). This partnership which developed between the railway and the river port became the lynchpin of Echuca's economic supremacy over its inter-colonial rivals from 1864 into the 1880s (Ward, 1992). It was an important stage in the process of Melbourne wresting the status of Australia's economic capital from Sydney, and contributed to the development of the strength of colonies outside of New South Wales, a shift which contributed to the forces which ultimately resulted in Federation (O'Keefe and Pearson, 1998, p9).

The roughly simultaneous construction of the wharf and railway enabled Echuca to become the entry point for much of the interior of the continent, and created for Melbourne a vast commercial empire in the southwest of New South Wales, unchallenged for nearly 20 years until the opening of the railway from Junee to Hay in 1882 (Lee, 2003). Echuca was a location favoured by nature, since it was where the Murray is closest to Melbourne and also the head of year-round navigation on the river. By astute railway building, the Victorian government was able to use this location very effectively, making Echuca Australia's largest inland port (Lee, 2003).

The Murray Darling system had navigable waters stretching from the Snowy Mountains to the Queensland border and from the mouth of the Murray to the far west of New South Wales. Trading vessels were able to navigate from Goolwa near the mouth of the Murray as far as Albury on the Murray River itself, up to Gundagai on the Murrumbidgee River and Walgett on the Darling River.

By September of 1864 Echuca was second only to Melbourne in the value of imports received into the colony of Victoria. Imports to the value of £536, 238 entered through Echuca, in comparison to £210,139 for the Port of Geelong. The importance of Echuca also becomes apparent in a comparison of cargo entering through other river ports at the same time – Wodonga £73,064, Wahgunyah £60,000, and Swan Hill £18,624 (Ward, 1992). The amount of cargo being transhipped through Echuca rose gradually from 1864, until by 1870 it had risen to 49,591 tons, and by 1880 just before river trade started to decline it peaked at 93,604 tons (Ward, 1992). Over the same period the number of vessels entering the port of Echuca each week rose steadily from an average of 189 to 202 (Ward, 1992). Similar figures are reflected in the use of the railhead at Echuca. In 1864, 4,601 passengers and 6,893 tons of cargo were moved through the railhead, while by 1880 this had increased to 49,401 passengers and 66,610 tons of cargo (Ward, 1992).

Not only the townships but also many pastoral properties were serviced by the river vessels, and cargo and produce were distributed from the majority of settlements in western NSW and the Riverina (Ward, 1992). The western NSW pastoralists were the key to Echuca's economic pre-eminence. One third of NSW (101,946 square miles or 264,039 square kilometres) is closer to Melbourne than it is to Sydney. Wagga Wagga, for example, is only 433 kilometres from Melbourne whereas it is 517 kilometres from Sydney (Williams, 2003). It was more economical, both in terms of cost and in terms of time, for these pastoralists to ship their clip downriver through Echuca to Melbourne, than it was to send it by bullock dray overland to Sydney. They dispatched their livestock and produce through its ports and received through Echuca all of their living requirements. By 1880, NSW produced a total of 772,616 bales of wool, roughly half the national clip, but the NSW Government noted that only 53% of this clip was being exported through NSW ports and that the balance was being exported down river (Painter, 1979).

The construction of the Echuca wharf and railway represent a major change in the political and economic life of the nation, transforming pastoral activity, establishing a major trade route, and contributing to the shift of colonial economic power out of Sydney for the first time.

The necessity of paying Customs dues on cargo transshipping between the colonies of NSW and Victoria at the port was one of the factors that gave impetus to the movement to federate the colonies into a coherent Commonwealth. Confident of winning the Riverina trade when the rail link to Echuca was completed, in 1863 the Victorian government precipitated the collapse of an 1857 tripartite customs agreement (O'Keefe and Pearson, 1998, p9). By 1864 Murray River trade was governed by customs duties collected by three colonies; NSW, SA, and Victoria. Inter-colonial rivalry was rife, and Victoria declared an increase in the number of materials that were taxable. Victoria, soon facing the prospect of losing the Riverina trade despite its investment in the railway line to Echuca, agreed to negotiate on the issue. In 1867 the New South Wales and Victoria signed a free trade agreement for a period of five years. This agreement collapsed in 1873 when Victoria adopted a protectionist policy. This, together with the passage of the Australian Colonies Duties Act ushered in a period of fierce economic competition between the colonies (O'Keefe and Pearson, 1998, p9-11).

By the early 1880s, it was cheaper for dried fruit produced in the NSW Riverina to be transported by steamer downriver to Murray Bridge in SA, thence by rail to Adelaide, then by coastal steamer from Adelaide to Melbourne, than by sending it directly across the river and by rail to Melbourne (SLSA, no date). NSW and Victoria continued to engage in tariff wars until the new Federal Government, which had been given constitutional responsibility for the control of Customs and excise duties, finally abolished internal customs in 1903 (O'Keefe and Pearson, 1998).

Because of its importance in the economic and political development of south-eastern Australia in colonial times it is considered that Echuca Wharf does have outstanding heritage value to the nation due to its importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's cultural history.

*CRITERION (b)*

*The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's cultural history*

While Echuca Wharf is the largest remaining wharf on the Murray River, it is not considered to be uncommon or rare. There are also structures at Swan Hill and Mildura (Vic), and Morgan and Goolwa (SA).

The Darling River also retains some wharves and infrastructure, at Bourke and Wilcannia (NSW). Wharf structures, bond warehouses and a customs house survive at Wilcannia NSW.

Echuca is not the only place on an Australian river where the interface between riverine and rail transport remains intact. Similar infrastructure remains at Goolwa, although not on the same scale, and its impact is compromised by the Hindmarsh Island Bridge which dominates the scene (Lee, 2003).

Echuca is the home of the largest paddle-steamer fleet in Australia (<http://www.murrayriver.com.au/boating/paddlesteamers/portofechuca/default.htm>), with three paddle-steamers operating from the wharf on a daily basis. As such, it represents an uncommon example of 19th Century trade. However other historic wharves also operate paddle-steamers (eg Mildura, Swan Hill, Goolwa and Morgan).

It is considered that Echuca Wharf does not meet the threshold of outstanding heritage value to the nation for criterion (b).

*CRITERION (c)*

*The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's cultural history*

Like many similar timber structures of its age, many elements of Echuca Wharf have been substantially renewed since its original construction, resulting in a gradual loss of original fabric.

Echuca Wharf has a rich history, with a wealth of documentary and photographic evidence to support it. The outstanding heritage value to the nation of Echuca Wharf's potential to yield information has, however, not been demonstrated.

It is considered that Echuca Wharf does not meet the threshold of outstanding heritage value to the nation for criterion (c).

*CRITERION (d)*

*The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of: a class of Australia's cultural places; or a class of Australia's cultural environments;*

The period of 1860-1915 is regarded as the epoch period of construction of great timber infrastructure works in Australia. Of these, the most recognised symbols of achievement in timber were bridges. (Nolan, no date). Timber long span construction began in 1860 when William Bennet, the Chief Engineer of the NSW Public Works Department designed the first of NSW's major timber truss bridges. Bennet pioneered long span timber truss bridges and this was the most widely used timber bridge form in Australia. Originally designed for spans up to 15 m, it was later adapted to achieve a 30.5 m span in a bridge built in 1878 at Clarence in NSW, and which remains standing. Techniques similar to those developed in the construction of bridges were used in large timber structures all over the country, such as wharves, warehouses and wool stores (Nolan no date).

The innovative large span techniques developed in the 1860s were used in the construction of the Echuca wharf. However, the wharf is now only approximately a quarter of its original length, and in comparison with other large timber constructions built using the same techniques that have retained their full length (eg. Woolloomoolloo Finger Wharf, Busselton Jetty, Carnarvon One Mile Jetty), Echuca Wharf is not considered to be remarkable as a representative class of large span timber constructions, either in its construction materials or techniques.

Echuca's rail and river transport infrastructure demonstrates the characteristics of a large inland port and an important country rail terminal, and together with Goolwa, South Australia, represents a class of place which reflects the interface between riverine and rail transport. However the nature of this class of place is not considered to be of outstanding heritage value to the nation.

It is considered that Echuca Wharf does not meet the threshold of outstanding heritage value to the nation for criterion (d).

*CRITERION (e)*

*The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group;*

Echuca Wharf is regarded by many as being of aesthetic value. The National Trust

notes that “(t)he giant timber structure towers above the river and the surrounding landscape. The timber bracing gives a superb rhythm down the long river frontage” (National Trust Echuca Wharf citation FN B1993). The wharf itself is in an attractive location, and for many visitors, the paddle-steamers themselves also have great aesthetic value.

Echuca Wharf and its associated paddle-steamers are often photographed and painted, and also featured in the novel and subsequent television series ‘All the Rivers Run’. Images of both the wharf and the paddle-steamers are prominent in Victorian tourism literature. However to many people, these images evoke the romance of the ‘age of the paddle-steamers’, rather than specifically associating them with Echuca.

The picturesque romance of the ‘Age of the Paddle-steamer’ is not confined to Echuca. While Echuca has the largest paddle-steamer fleet, there are also paddle-steamers at Goolwa, which as previously discussed also retains its historic wharf. Murray Bridge, Waikerie, Mannum, Renmark, Mildura, Swan Hill and Albury also have paddle-steamers on display ([www.murrayriver.com.au/boating/paddlesteamers/default.html](http://www.murrayriver.com.au/boating/paddlesteamers/default.html)).

The paddle- steamers were celebrated in 2003 by an Australia Post stamp edition featuring images of five different paddle-steamers berthed at various places on the Murray, commemorating the 150th Anniversary of Murray River Shipping.

It is considered that while Echuca Wharf is highly valued by the local, state and wider community, it does not meet the threshold of outstanding heritage value to the nation due to its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group.

#### *CRITERION (f)*

*The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place’s importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period;*

The period between 1860 and 1915, when Echuca Wharf was constructed, is regarded as the epoch period of construction of great timber infrastructure works in every state of Australia. Of these, the most recognised symbols of achievement in timber and the majority of long span timber applications were bridges. (Nolan, no date)

Echuca Wharf is not considered to be remarkable in its construction methods. Nor is it considered remarkable that it is constructed from river red gum, as it was common practice to build such structures from appropriate locally available materials.

It is considered that Echuca Wharf does not meet the threshold of outstanding heritage value to the nation for criterion (f).

#### *CRITERION (g)*

*The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place’s strong*



*or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;*

While Echuca wharf has a strong association with the 'Age of Paddle-steamers' for many in the community, its outstanding heritage value to the nation has not been demonstrated. Echuca Wharf is not the only place in Australia which has such associations. Goolwa (SA) is regarded by its local and state community for the same reasons.

Echuca Wharf is regarded as being of state, regional and local significance for its regard by the general community as being associated with the 'Age of Paddle-steamers', celebrated in 2003 by an Australia Post stamp edition featuring five different paddle-steamers, commemorating the 150th Anniversary of Murray River Shipping.

It is considered that Echuca Wharf does not meet the threshold of outstanding heritage value to the nation for criterion (g).

*CRITERION (h)*

*The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Australia's cultural history*

Echuca Wharf is associated with many people involved in both the establishment of Echuca itself, and the construction and operation of the wharf. These people include ex-convicts James Maiden and Henry Hopwood, both of whom established punts in the area, leading to the further development of Echuca, and William Randall, master of the *Mary Ann*, and Captain Francis Cadell, noted steamboat operator, both of whom successfully navigated the Murray, beginning the era of commercial navigation.

None of these people, however, are considered to be of outstanding importance in Australia's cultural history.

It is considered that Echuca Wharf does not meet the threshold of outstanding heritage value to the nation for criterion (h).

*CRITERION (i)*

*The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance as part of Indigenous traditions.*

There is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that Aboriginal stories or traditions associated with Echuca Wharf and surrounding area are different to Aboriginal creation and post-contact stories associated with other landscapes in Australia.

It is considered that Echuca Wharf does not meet the threshold of outstanding heritage value to the nation for criterion (i).

**History:**

Archaeological evidence indicates that by the early nineteenth century, the central and lower Murray River and the lower Darling were among the most densely populated areas of Aboriginal Australia (Mulvaney and Kamminga, 1999, p69). In 1841, pioneer settler E.M. Curr estimated the Bangerang people of the region to have numbered 1200 and to have been divided into a number of localised groups including the Woollathara (Wollithiga), who were particularly associated with Echuca (Howitt, 1996, p53). Introduced disease reduced the numbers of Aboriginal people in the region throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Following the establishment of the colony of South Australia in 1836, navigation of the Murray River seemed to offer the new colony favourable economic prospects. Recognising this, in 1850 the government offered a prize of £2000 each to the captains of the first two iron vessels to reach the junction of the Murray and Darling Rivers (Lee, 2003). The prizes were successfully claimed in the spring of 1853, though an amendment to the prize conditions was made, making timber hulled boats eligible. All of the steamers active during the period of intense commercial navigation proved to be timber-hulled (Lee, 2003).

Between 1855 and 1859, various voyages established the practical limits of trade, taking vessels up the Murray to Albury, the Murrumbidgee to Gundagai, and, amazingly, up the Darling to Walgett, 1,650 miles (2,660 km) upstream from the Murray Darling junction. Trade was, however, dependent on highly variable water levels. (That variability being reflected in the 10 metre height of Echuca Wharf, built to accommodate three dock levels, to service the river both in flood and low water.) In drought, most of the Darling and the Murrumbidgee Rivers were rarely navigable, and even on the Murray the only reliably navigable waters were from Echuca downstream (Lee, 2003).

The Murray River trade quickly became economically important. The river was recognised as an easy route for transporting produce to service the expanding markets of the Victorian goldfields. By 1857, merchandise from Adelaide carried by steamer to Albury exceeded 1 million pounds sterling. By 1866 there were 36 steamers plying the Murray River. The trade was varied. Steamers carried passengers, mail and supplies to the stations and returned with station produce for coastal markets. By 1870 the Murray was the main channel bringing inland wealth to the coast. The establishment of the river trade transformed inland pastoral industries. Station owners began to change from cattle, a good option when the only transport to market was overland, to sheep, because river transport of wool made sheep farming a better economic option (Murray Darling Basin Committee).

Echuca quickly became the key centre for this burgeoning trade. The town of Echuca, the nearest point on the Murray River to Melbourne, was established in 1854 at a prominent river crossing with transport by punts to Moama, NSW, on the north bank of the river. As early as December 1855 it was recognized by the Victorian Government that Echuca was located on one of the most important roads in the colony, being at a crossing point to New South Wales, from where Victoria gained stock for food (Lee, 2003).

By 1864 two essential factors in the growth of Echuca were in place: the port of

Echuca and the railway linking to Melbourne. Their construction ended South Australia's short dominance of the Murray River trade. The Echuca port and the river trade for which it was built facilitated the movement of goods through Echuca, from points throughout the Murray Darling catchment, including the rich pastoral districts of the Riverina, to the salt-water ports of Melbourne. The partnership which developed between the river trade and the railway locked in Echuca's, and subsequently Melbourne's economic supremacy over its inter-colonial rivals until well into the 1890s (Lee, 2003).

The building of the wharf was commenced in 1864 and was completed in 1867, reaching 303 feet 6 inches (92.4 metres) in length (Ward, 1992). The Wharf was erected by the Public Works Department, and constructed by G. Dwyer and Co (National Trust citation FN B1993). As the trade grew, so did the wharf, being extended in 1877 and 1879, and sheds and cranes added. Final extensions to the wharf were completed in 1884, the wharf ultimately reaching 332 metres in length (Ward, 1997). Echuca became the second busiest port in Victoria (Lee, 2003).

By 1882, trade being conducted on the rivers was estimated at £5 million per annum, a large amount of that being in wool imported into Victoria from NSW. It was the more densely settled areas of the Darling and Albert districts and the Riverina that provided trade advantages, and it was to these areas that trade was directed. Prior to 1882 runs in these areas of 45,000 to 50,000 sheep were considered large, but the more direct access to markets and competitive advantage provided by river traffic, resulted in stations like 'Dunlop' and 'Tirale' running more than half a million sheep each in that year (Painter, 1979).

In addition to facilitating the shipment of western NSW produce through Echuca and Melbourne, another factor contributing to the development of Echuca was the difficulty experienced by South Australia in establishing a viable river trade. The sand bar at the mouth of the Murray necessitated the transportation of goods by railway from Goolwa on the river to Port Elliot, and after 1854 to Victor Harbour. From these ports the cargo had then to be shipped to Adelaide. In all it was a cumbersome and expensive operation (Ward, 1992).

After the 1880s the river trade started to decline, with the financial crisis of the 1890s hitting the local economy hard. The extension of the railway network in both New South Wales and Victoria also took away valuable trade. The NSW rail network was expanded south to reach Wagga and Narrandera in 1881, and ultimately Hay in 1882. By 1885, the rail line also reached the Darling River at Bourke and began to siphon off the lucrative wool trade from the area (Ward, 1992). In Victoria railway lines reached Wodonga in 1873 and Wahgunyah in 1879, cutting off most of the short haul river traffic between Echuca and Albury (Ward, 1992). While the extensions of these rail networks affected the previously prosperous river trade, the most significant feature of railway operations on both sides of the border was the application of preferential rates. All traffic west of Hay and Mossgiel was subject to a lower rate by the NSW Railways if it went to Sydney. Southern and Western Line consignors were similarly advantaged. The effect of this was that wool from the areas east of Hay and in the vicinity of Bourke, which had previously been exported through Echuca and Melbourne, now went to Sydney via the new railway (Ward, 1992).

The population of Echuca began to decline in the 1880s and the wharf fell into disrepair, though it still saw some commercial use. During World War II, Victorian Railways began to demolish the wharf to provide firewood for Melbourne, reducing it to only 75.5 metres, one quarter of its ultimate length. The original spur railway line to the port was removed in 1971 (Lee, 2003).

Since the 1960's, the wharf and paddle-steamers have found a new life, servicing the ever increasing tourist trade, attracted to the romance of the river and the 'Age of the Paddle-steamers'.

By 1971 Campaspe Shire Council had received two government grants and had a committee in place to manage the development of the Port Precinct. The aim of this body, now the Port Authority, is to undertake development compatible with maintaining the historical integrity of the Precinct. In May 2000, a grant of \$150,000 was allocated by the State Government to help rebuild the spur line from the railway station.

**Condition:**

The wharf has been restored to its appearance during the river port era. Substantial works have taken place over the years on the portion of wharf which remains, including the renewal of original piles, braces, beams, cross-heads and sheeting (Ward, 1997).

The railway and wharf are both intact although not complete. The red gum wharf was at its greatest extent 332 metres in length. About a quarter of it remains, although this is the original quarter, and is thoroughly representative of what was demolished. The wharf has had a continual renewal of fabric (of the same material) and further repairs are required and planned.

In order to ascertain the integrity of the structure, a major engineering study was undertaken in 2001. This study found the wharf to be safe, and recommended a ten year maintenance works program, with an estimated cost of \$2 million.

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