

Walking tour: Civic places of importance – East Melbourne

Approximate walking time 30 minutes

Access on Google Maps [here](#)

These sites have been selected for their relevance to Parliament of Victoria and/or their connection to civics and citizenship. There are many more monuments and places of significance in the area as well as throughout Melbourne. The walk starts at Parliament House, makes a loop around the back of parliament to the Treasury Gardens, before finishing back at Parliament House.

Traditional Landowners and Parliament House

Address: Parliament House – Spring St, East Melbourne

Long before workers broke ground on Eastern Hill in 1855, the site of Parliament House had been a traditional meeting place for people of the Kulin Nations – a gum and wattle forest where visitors were welcomed, and special events were celebrated.

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and recognise all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past, present and emerging.

Parliament of Victoria: How a law is made

Address: Parliament House – Spring St, East Melbourne

Parliament of Victoria is a bicameral (two chamber) system made up of the Legislative Assembly (the lower house or the green room) and the Legislative Council (the upper house or the red room). The process of passing a law through parliament often, but not always, starts in the lower house. If the bill passes it then moves to the upper house, or vice versa.

Briefly, the bill (proposed law) must go through 3 readings. The first reading is the introduction of the bill, the second reading is where the bill is debated and can be referred to committee, and the third reading is where Members of Parliament vote as to whether the bill should pass. If the bill passes both houses, it goes to the Governor for Royal Assent. Once Royal Assent is given the bill becomes an Act and becomes law.

As mentioned, in some cases, a bill might be referred to a committee. The committee will seek public submissions, conduct research and public hearings. The committee report, usually including both findings and recommendations, is presented to parliament at the conclusion of the inquiry. The government then has 6 months to respond to the report.

Parliament House – The building

Address: Parliament House – Spring St, East Melbourne

Construction on Parliament House started in 1856, but is still incomplete. This is why there is a fireplace on one of the outside walls. The original plans had giant lion statues at the front (a plaster replica a quarter of the size, known affectionally as Clarence, is kept in the Parliament Library) and there were also plans for another wing and giant dome.

The current building works are to maintain and restore the stonework, as well as increase accessibility. From 1901 to 1927 Parliament House was used by Commonwealth parliament. During this time the Victorian parliament met in the Exhibition Building. When the Commonwealth parliament left, they gave Parliament of Victoria a thank you gift of 50,000 pounds sterling that was used to develop the refreshments room known as Strangers Corridor.

Pastor Sir Douglas and Lady Gladys Nicholls

Address: Parliament Gardens, Spring Street, East Melbourne

Pastor Sir Doug Nicholls, a Yorta Yorta man, was part of the historic Cummeragunja Walk-Off and was a professional footballer, one of the founders of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League and Governor of South Australia. He was Victoria's second Aboriginal Justice of the Peace and was knighted in 1972.

Lady Nicolls was born at Cummeragunja, and spent much of her life committed to helping the underprivileged and fighting for the rights of women.

The Great Petition

Address: Burston Reserve, Macarthur Street, East Melbourne

The Great Petition, otherwise known as the Monster Petition, was presented to parliament on 29 September 1891. It contained 30,000 signatures from Victorians all supporting the vote for women. The petition was 20 centimetres wide and 260 metres in length, and is made of paper pasted onto fabric. The petition is now in the State Archives and played an important role in Federation, because in 1901 Australia became the first nation in the world to give women both the right to vote and the right to stand for parliament.

Department of Premier and Cabinet

Address: 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne

The Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) leads whole-of-government policy and performance. It supports the Premier, Deputy Premier, the Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs, Equality, Multicultural Affairs, Industrial Relations, Veterans, Youth and Women, as well as the Cabinet.

The Victorian Emergency Services memorial & John F Kennedy memorial

Address: Treasury Gardens, East Melbourne

The Victorian Emergency Services memorial, constructed in 2019, honours the Victorian emergency services personnel who have lost their lives while serving the community, including members of the Country Fire Authority, Victorian State Emergency Services, Melbourne Fire Brigade, Forest Fire Management Victoria, Ambulance Victoria, Marine Search and Rescue, Life Saving Victoria personal.

The JFK memorial was built after the assassination of JFK in 1963. It recognises the service of JFK as president of the United States of America. His administration was considered to be progressive and is credited with avoiding a nuclear war with the then Soviet Union over the 1962 Cuban missile crisis.

Old Treasury Building

Address: 20 Spring St, East Melbourne

The Old Treasury Building was built between 1858 and 1862 and hosts the original gold vaults where gold bullion was stored during the gold rush era. It also has rare and historic documents from the Public Record Office Victoria that highlight some of the key moments in Victoria's history. It now hosts a range of exhibitions, including the yearly travelling exhibition of political cartoons, Behind the Lines, from the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House in Canberra.

General Gordon Statue

Address: Spring St, Melbourne

General Charles Gordon was a very popular Englishman in his day, although he did become unpopular with the British Empire for campaigning for 'native rule' in countries such as Botswana, South Africa and Ireland. He was viceroy of India and was known for his victories in China, his charitable activities in Gravesend, and his governorship in Sudan. These events along with his death in Khartoum are depicted on the four bronze bas-reliefs (artworks) on the limestone base of his statue. Although he never actually stepped foot in Australia, General Gordon was so loved that the public funded a statue of him, a replica of the statue in London. The London statue, however, does not have the bas-reliefs. It's believed these were included because more money raised than was needed to create the statue. General Gordon's death was of historical importance to Australia because it prompted the dispatch of the first Australian troops overseas.

The Windsor Hotel

Address: 111 Spring St, Melbourne

The Windsor Hotel can be viewed from the steps of Parliament House, or the gardens opposite the building. The Windsor Hotel was built in 1883, and was originally known as the Grand Hotel. After a few years it was sold and closed for renovations, re-opening in 1888 as the Grand Coffee Palace for a brief time - under the influence of the Temperance Movement alcohol was banned from the premises. It was sold in 1893 and became known again as the Grand Hotel, and its liquor license reinstated. As it was directly opposite Parliament House and surrounded by government offices, it was the perfect location in 1898 for the Drafting Committee for the Federal Constitution to meet and work on the final details of the Constitution. It was renamed the Windsor in 1923 after the hotel hosted a luncheon attended by His Royal Highness, the then Prince of Wales.

Important links

- Civic places of importance
<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1BEDt0ixkLAKD7X9omSJArtXczLTB8oOX&usp=sharing>