



Happy it's protected: John McSweeney, 65, is a fan of the Harold Holt Swim Centre. Picture: PETER GLENANE

Brute force saves Harold Holt pool

VICTORIA'S most controversially named swimming pool, the Harold Holt Swim Centre, has been given heritage status.

Then-prime minister Harold Holt is believed to have drowned off a Portsea beach in 1967. His body was never found.

To ensure Melburnians remembered Australia's 17th PM, a pool was named after him.

The Harold Holt Swim Centre was yesterday announced as the latest addition to the Victorian Heritage Register.

Planning Minister Rob Hulls said only Melbourne would name a pool after a man who drowned.

Built in 1966, the building is one of the most notable examples of bare concrete embracing Brutalist architecture.

Designed by architects Kevin Borland and Daryl Jackson, the building replaced the old Malvern Swim Centre, built in 1927.

The City of Stonnington has announced a \$7 million upgrade of the pool.

The listing would protect the facade and building style, but did not mean the upgrade was threatened, Mr Hulls said.

He did not rule out the Government giving more money if the development cost more because of the heritage listing.

Jacqueline Freegard

"This is an iconic swim centre, no doubt about that. It has a particular style of architecture. Some like it, some don't, but it's certainly Brutal and on that basis it has been listed," Mr Hulls said.

Ron Hobba, who was braving the elements at the Harold Holt Swim Centre yesterday morning, said he was pleased it had been listed.

"I've been swimming here for more than 20 years," the Camberwell dad said. "My kids swim here and my wife pops in occasionally, too."

The 55-year-old said he swam between three and five days a week and he enjoyed nothing better than a warming swim on a cold winter's day.

"It's fantastic," he said.

"It can be five degrees outside but the pool is heated consistently so it's very warm."

And Melburnians across the city will also get the chance to hit the water, with Sunshine pool to remain open.

Brimbank Council yesterday reversed a decision to close the pool. Mr Hulls said the Government was continuing to invest in swimming across the state.

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