



Preserving History with Precast Sleepers

Covering 15 hectares of a former gold mining site, Sovereign Hill's Outdoor Museum is a renowned living museum located in Ballarat, Victoria. It brings the gold rushes to life through a living township with diggings, underground mines, costumed characters, coach rides, and 1850s shops, trades, schools, and dwellings.

Historically, the Museum used timber for its retaining walls, to align with the 1850s gold rush era aesthetics. Being readily available and easily workable, timber helped recreate the authentic look of the period. However, it required frequent maintenance and replacement.

Adding to this, the Museum's existing infrastructure did not enable mobility impaired visitors to experience gold panning.

Tasked with the responsibility of operating the Museum, the Sovereign Hill Museum Association embarked on a project to improve the Museum's infrastructure. Its priority was to find a solution that would enhance durability while preserving the site's historical appearance, and to make the gold panning experience accessible to all.

Quest for a durable solution

The Association decided on a scope of works that included a concealed, sustainable and robust precast concrete retaining wall system to enhance its infrastructure, and the construction of a platform - which required additional retaining walls - to provide wheelchair access to a new all-ability gold panning area.

Precaster
Sunset Sleepers

Project
Sovereign Hill Museum Association

Location
Ballarat, VIC

www.nationalprecast.com.au





National Precast member Sunset Sleepers was selected to manufacture and supply 800 purpose-built concrete sleepers for the project.

Known for its reliability and professional approach, Sunset Sleepers delivered custom-made sleepers that were reinforced according to specific engineering requirements, to meet the project's durability requirements.

The use of R6 ties in the sleepers, as specified in the project drawings, played a crucial role in preventing shear failure, holding longitudinal reinforcement in place pre-pour, and controlling shrinkage.

Preserving historical aesthetics

With its tailored and client-focused approach, the company devised a solution to meet the unique aesthetic challenges of the Sovereign Hill project.

To preserve the museum's authentic gold rush era appearance, we concealed the new concrete sleepers behind timber panels, replacing the old timber retaining walls with modern materials while maintaining historical aesthetics.

Minimal interruptions to business as usual

Being a busy tourist attraction, ensuring seamless integration of new infrastructure without impacting the visitor experience, was essential. That was no problem for the precaster, as it worked to schedule deliveries and installation to minimise disruption.

Sunset Sleepers successfully coordinated the manufacturing process to align with the Museum's requirements, ensuring all products were delivered and installed as needed.

Commitment to Historical Preservation

According to National Precast CEO Sarah Bachmann, Sunset Sleepers' involvement in the Sovereign Hill project showcases their dedication to client service, innovation, quality and historical preservation.

"Through careful planning and execution, they have successfully contributed to the enhancement of this iconic museum, ensuring its infrastructure meets modern standards and accessibility to all, while retaining its historical charm," Bachmann comments.

The Sovereign Hill Museum Association project stands as a testament the seamless integration of modern materials within a historical setting has not only improved the site's infrastructure but also enhanced the overall visitor experience, making history accessible and engaging for all.



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