

Building:	Former Richmond Power Station	Significance:	A
Address:	Oddy's Lane, Richmond	Melway Map Ref:	2L J2
Building Type:	Power Station	Construction Date:	1890
Architect:	Charles D'Ebro	Builder:	Unknown



Intactness:		Condition:	
G[]	F[x] P[]	G[x]	F[] P[]
Existing Heritage Listings:		Recommended Heritage Listings:	
Victorian Heritage Register	[x]	Victorian Heritage Register	[x]
Register of the National Estate	[]	Register of the National Estate	[x]
National Trust	[x]	Heritage Overlay Controls	[x]

History

In 1886, the development of alternating current made it possible to transmit electrical energy over considerable distances, and that it was no longer necessary to have the dynamo located within a few hundred metres of the consumer. Following these changes in technology, the Australian Electrical Co Ltd, which had operated for some years in Russell Place, decided to move to Oddy's Lane, Richmond.

Renamed the New Australian Electric Lighting Co., the company erected a new power station which began operating in 1890. It supplied the southern part of Richmond, Prahran and South Melbourne. Its competitor was A U Alcock's Electric Light and Motive Power Company, which had moved from Melbourne to Neptune Street, Richmond, in 1891.

In 1899 these two companies were taken over and were combined to form the Electric Light and Traction Co. of Australia in 1901. The new company increased the height of the engine house at Oddy's Lane and in 1908 it was renamed the Melbourne Electric Supply Co. In 1913 the engine room was extended to the east and a new chimney stack was built. A second chimney stack was erected in 1919, and a second floor was added to the office block in 1922.

The SEC took over the power station in 1930, and new oil-fired plant was installed in 1951. Power generation ceased in 1976 and the chimney stacks, once prominent local landmarks, were demolished, and virtually all of the generating machinery has been removed.

The noted Melbourne architect Charles D'Ebro had a long association with the complex extending over almost thirty years and is credited with the Romanesque design details seen in parts of the complex.¹

In 1996-97, the former Richmond Power Station was converted to the new headquarters of Country Road Australia.

John & Thurley O'Connor, Ros Coleman & Heather Wright. *Richmond Conservation Study*. 1985.

Description

The former Richmond Power Station is a complex of buildings including the former Engine House (1891), Boiler House (c. 1891-1913), and Offices and Workshops Building (1891-1922).

The Offices are located at the north-west corner of the site. It is a two-storey bichromatic brick building, with a hipped roof concealed behind a parapet. Walls are of red brick, with a series of cream brick string courses running across the north and west elevations. The two storeys are divided by a rendered string course. Windows are semi-circular arched double-hung sashes, with bluestone sills and alternating red and cream brick voussoirs. There is a simple moulded cornice at first floor level.

The adjacent former Engine House has a four-storey tower and a three-storey gabled section facing Oddy's Lane. The building is of red brick, with similar cream brick string courses. A moulded entablature divides the ground and first floors. Windows are semi-circular arched, and have rendered hood moulds at first floor level. The gable end has a heavy rendered moulding, and the tower is surmounted by a bracketed hipped corrugated iron roof.

The Boiler room is located at the south-west corner of the site, facing Oddy's Lane. The single-storey building is of red brick construction, with cream brick string courses and a moulded cornice. A broad gable surmounts the cornice, adjacent to which is a two-storey parapeted section without windows. Openings at ground floor level are blind semi-circular arches.

Significance

The former Richmond Power Station is historically, architecturally, technologically and socially significant.

The introduction of electricity profoundly changed the living conditions and social habits of urban residents and workers in late 19th and early 20th century Melbourne. The former Melbourne Electric Supply Company Limited's Oddy Lane Power Station is of social significance for its association with the early phases of power generation and distribution within the eastern Melbourne metropolis.

The Richmond Power Station is an important surviving remnant example of a 19th century coal-fired electricity generating station. It was sited close to both the railway for easy coal delivery and the Yarra River which provided a cheap source of water essential for the running of a large and efficient steam generating plant.

It is a representative example of a large late Victorian industrial complex incorporating Italianate and Romanesque features designed on a grand scale comparable with other surviving privately developed industrial complexes such as the Newport Railway Workshops.

The changes in technology, and increased output of the power station can be recognised in the various phases of the building, whether in the case of the raised engine house height for accommodating new vertical steam engines at the turn of the century, or the enlargement of the engine house and boiler house following World War 1 as part of a major phase of expansion. Unfortunately, virtually all of the internal generating equipment has been removed together with the large chimney stacks.

The former Richmond Power Station is a significant example of the work of the noted architect, Charles A D'Ebro. It is his most important industrial building and recalls his expertise and training as an engineer.²

Original Source

John & Thurley O'Connor, Ros Coleman & Heather Wright. *Richmond Conservation Study*. 1985.

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- 1 Extract from Allom Lovell & Associates. *Former Richmond Power Station Conservation Management Plan*. December 1995.
 - 2 Extract from Allom Lovell & Associates. *Former Richmond Power Station Conservation Management Plan*. December 1995.