

## Identification and location

**Name of Place:** Southern Can Company

**Other Name**

**Address** 240 Geelong Road

Footscray

**Place Identifier** 44

**Heritage Significance**

regional

**Creation date(s):** 1937

**Map (Melway)** 41 K5

**Boundary description** The extent of the current allotment although the post 1970 additions to the site are not contributory.

**Local Government Area:** City of Maribyrnong

**Ownership Type**

Private

## Description

**Site Type:** factory

### Physical Description

The typical sawtooth roof, steel and timber framed, corrugated iron and brick clad factory complex sits behind a striking facade originally of clinker brick but now white painted. In a style reminiscent of the International or Dutch Modern, stacked geometric forms rise to a stylised clock tower over the arched entrance. Stylistic association can be seen with the work of architects Dudock and Billson. A later addition continues the flat concrete window hoods and fenestration patterns, but in a simpler composition. The brick and corrugated iron clad factory sections continue the forms to the complex's perimeter. Some original landscaping survives such as the palms. A siding from the West Footscray yards once served the works. Some unrelated additions from post 1970 have been erected to the north of the site. Some original landscaping elements survive such as the palms and planter boxes.

### Condition

In good condition externally.

### Integrity

Intact to its original state apart from the over painting of brickwork and some later additions to the rear which do not detract from the major elevations.

### Context

One of a number of Moderne and other styled mid 20th century industrial complexes along Geelong Road and in the West Footscray/Brooklyn vicinity.

### Threats

None current

## History

Designed by architects Oakley & Parkes, who successfully tendered to the Southern Can Company in 1937 and erected by the contractors Hansen and Yunken. The factory was completed and production commenced 1939. By 1947 it was transforming thousands of tons of tin plate into over one million cans a day for use as food and beverage containers. Southern Can had associations with Continental Can Company, Inc in America and the Metal Box Company in Britain, while their major competitor in the Australian stage was the home grown Gadsen's. A major market in the post WW II period was in the supply of beer cans to Carlton & United Breweries, for which it was one of only two suppliers, the other being Gadson's South Melbourne Plant. By the 1980s the firm had been taken over by Containers Limited as the packaging industry was restructured into larger units.

## Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme

PAHT Subtheme:

Local Theme

## Cultural Significance

Southern Can Co. is of regional historical and architectural significance as the most substantial and skilfully designed of the Geelong Road factories from the WW II period. In terms of its application of the International or Dutch Moderne style, it rivals Billson's Warburton Sanitarium work except for the unfortunate painting of the brickwork. (Criterion F1) Historically it corresponds with a period of industrial expansion in several areas of the western suburbs which had a close relationship with the established munitions industry and the development of self contained wartime production which was unparalleled anywhere else in Melbourne. (Criterion D2) As one of a number of Moderne style factory complexes in the immediate area it contributes to an important industrial heritage precinct. (Criterion B2) The surviving landscape elements such as the palms, are contributory.

## Comparative Examples

The building has design similarities to Edward Billson's Warburton Signs Publishing Co. and Dudock in the Netherlands.

## Recommendations

Heritage Victoria Register

Register of the National Estate

National Trust Register

Other Heritage Listings

Planning Scheme Protection

External Paint Controls Apply?

Internal Alteration Controls Apply?

Tree Controls Apply?

Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act

Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?

Prohibited Uses may be Permitted?

## Recommendations

The following objectives relate to the Statement of Significance and the cited fabric or contributory elements.  
To conserve and enhance the significant elements of the place.  
To conserve and enhance the public view of these elements.  
To conserve and enhance the visual relationships between the contributory elements.  
To ensure that new or altered elements within the place are visually recessive and related to the contributory elements.  
To prepare a conservation management plan which embodies the above objectives.  
To encourage continuation of the original use of the place.

## Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

*B2 Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practised, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest.*

A distinctive industrial use as part of one of the major packaging firms operating in Australia from the Second World War period representing a time when factory buildings were seen as a major public expression of the status of the company.

*D2 Importance in demonstrating the principle characteristics of the range of human activities in the Australian environment (including way of life, custom, process, land-use, function, design or technique).*

As one of the few distinctive and purpose built canning factories, Southern Can demonstrates a characteristic aspect of industrial development in Melbourne in the mid 20th century.

*F1 Importance for their technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement.*

A finely expressed and accomplished example of International Modern reflecting the Dutch origins and the particular approach of the architects Oakley & Parkes.

## Documentation

### References

Forging Ahead,  
Butler Footscray Conservation Study. 1989:4-64,  
V/Line Sidings Records  
Melbourne University Architects Index 1936-8.  
Lack, J. History of Footscray,

## Data recording

Assessed By

Assessed Date: