

## Identification and location

**Name of Place:** Yarraville SEC Terminal Station

**Other Name**

**Address** 1 Globe St. (Vockler St.)

Yarraville

**Place Identifier** 8829

**Heritage Significance** state

**Creation date(s):** 1920 c.

**Map (Melway)** 42 B10

**Boundary description** the extent of the current allotment

**Local Government Area:** City of Maribyrnong

**Ownership Type** Privatised electricity company

## Description

**Site Type:** Public Utility

### Physical Description

Complex of cement rendered brick buildings and timber and iron sheds. The main building is a large two-storey structure with hipped roof and wide overhanging eaves. Steel framed windows include crossed diagonal glazing bars and casements. Prominent mouldings surround openings. Constructed in steel reinforced concrete, the building displays the Monash and Monier influence in plan walls with projecting pilasters and horizontal string mouldings expressing the internal structure.

The electrical function of the complex is clear from the prominent insulated openings through which high tension wires run. Internally the original crane gantry survives, along with some original fittings and electrical installations, although these may have become redundant. Associated low rise stores and workshops reflect some of the contemporary style but in steel or timber framing clad in corrugated iron.

### Condition

In good condition

### Integrity

Generally Intact

### Context

Located near Stony creek adjacent to residential and industrial areas. The high tension cable provides an associated context.

### Threats

None apparent

## History

In 1921 the newly established State Electricity Commission (SEC) began exploiting the vast brown coal deposits of Yallourn and Morwell to provide a cheap reliable electric power system for Victorians. Prior to this Victoria had been dependent on coal from New South Wales, and small local generating plants. With the capacity of the existing plants at their limits, power shortages were becoming a frequent problem. Therefore the provision of a reliable electricity supply was a priority for the SEC (SEC 1948).

Construction of the Yallourn Power Station commenced in 1921. The Yarraville Terminal Station, the main receiving station for the electricity transmitted from Yallourn to Melbourne, was commenced in 1922. In the following year work on the 110 miles of transmission line in between Yallourn and Yarraville was started.

Meanwhile, Melbourne's power supply was to be supplemented with excess power generated by the Newport power station, which supplied the Victorian Railways electric train system. In June 1923 a 12,500 kws frequency changer installed in the Yarraville Terminal was brought into operation, converting 25 cycle energy from Newport to 50 cycle energy for the City of Melbourne. Thus the first part of the Yallourn scheme was put into service. In June 1924, with the transmission line completed, the first electricity generated from brown coal reached Melbourne and Yarraville Terminal Station came into full operation (SEC Annual Report 1921:24).

The Yarraville Terminal Station was probably designed by the Commission's Architect, A.R. La Gerche, who also designed Yallourn Township and the SEC Head Office in Williams Street (SEC 1949:46). Both the Head Office, built in 1921, and the Terminal Station were of reinforced concrete construction, reflecting the engineering preference and background of the Chairman of the SEC, Sir John Monash. Yarraville was the first terminal station to be built by the SEC. Both buildings were constructed by the firm founded by Monash - the Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Co. Monash and his firm had been leaders in the development of reinforced concrete in Victoria in the first decade of the twentieth century, however it was not until after the war that reinforced concrete gained general acceptance for multi storeyed and industrial buildings. Monash, who still had an interest in the Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Co, brushed aside accusations of conflict of interest when the firm was given the contracts. He was insistent that his old firm had the expertise to provide the most economical structure for the Terminal Station and sought their engineering advice regarding the design for the reinforcing (Searle 1982; Lewis 1988, *The Age* Sept. 1921; MU archives.).

Yarraville was the first terminal station to be built by the SEC. Others followed, including those built at Thomastown and Brunswick in the 1930s (SEC 1938). The site at Yarraville also included workshops specialising in switch and line gear and switchboards before World War 2, a spare parts store and laboratories for electrical research. The main 2 storey building was erected behind existing houses in Hyde Street with access via Vockler Street. Easements for high tension power lines followed Stony Creek to the east to link up with the main power lines from the Latrobe Valley which circumnavigates Melbourne (SEC 1949:150, 184).

## Thematic context

<b>Australian Principal Theme</b>	Providing services		
<b>PAHT Subtheme:</b>	Providing electricity	<b>Local Theme</b>	Industry Consolidation and

## Cultural Significance

The Yarraville Terminal Station is of State historical and architectural significance as one of the earliest surviving buildings relating to the establishment of the SEC in Victoria and the provision of electrical power from the Latrobe Valley brown coal deposits. The creation of the Latrobe Valley brown coal electricity generation scheme and the SEC was a major step in the development of Victoria, having ramifications for industry, employment and quality of life throughout Melbourne. (Criterion A4)

The buildings represent the form of monumental classically inspired architecture of the government works department of the time, and reflect the significance with which the scheme was imbued. (Criterion D2)

Internally, the main building is relatively intact with original crane gantry and some electrical installations contributing to the significance. The creation of the Latrobe Valley scheme and the transmission of power to Melbourne homes and businesses was one of the greatest achievements in engineering and planning in Victoria. The use of reinforced concrete construction, was an early application of a still new building technique. (Criterion F1)

The Terminal Station was probably designed by the Commission's Architect, A.R. La Gerche, who designed Yallourn Township and the SEC Head Office in Williams Street. Both the Head Office, and the Terminal Station reflect the engineering preference and background of the Chairman of the SEC, Sir John Monash. (Criterion H1)

## Comparative Examples

In style the building recalls to original Newport Power Station (demolished) and some of the slightly earlier Victorian Railways substations. It also has parallels with the Morwell power station and briquette factory.

## Recommendations

Heritage Victoria Register	Recommended
Register of the National Estate	Recommended
National Trust Register	Recommended
Other Heritage Listings	WRIHS
Planning Scheme Protection	Recommended
External Paint Controls Apply?	Yes
Internal Alteration Controls Apply?	Yes - some original switch gear and equipment
Tree Controls Apply?	No
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act	No
Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?	No
Prohibited Uses may be Permitted?	No

## 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

*A4 Importance for their association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, state, region or community.*

The creation of the Latrobe Valley brown coal electricity generation scheme and the SEC was a major step in the development of Victoria, having ramifications for industry, employment and quality of life throughout Melbourne.

*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 surviving early structures from the formation of the SEC the place demonstrates an important process in the transmission of electricity, and a distinctive design in its structure.

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

The creation of the Latrobe Valley scheme and the transmission of power to Melbourne homes and businesses was one of the greatest achievements in engineering and planning in Victoria. The use of reinforced concrete construction, was an early application of a still new building technique

*H1 Importance for their close associations with individuals whose activities have been significant within the history of the nation, state or region.*

The Terminal Station was probably designed by the Commission's Architect, A.R. La Gerche, who designed Yallourn Township and the SEC Head Office in Williams Street. Both the Head Office, and the Terminal Station reflect the engineering preference and background of the Chairman of the SEC, Sir John Monash.

## Documentation

### References

State Electricity Commission (SEC), *Three Decades: The Story of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria from its Inception to December 1948*, Melbourne, 1949, (no author given) ch 2.

State Electricity Commission, *Annual Report*, 1921-1949

Monash's engineering work in reinforced concrete is outlined in Serle, G., *John Monash: A Biography*, Melbourne University Press, 1982, ch.6, see p.485 regarding conflict of interest;

Lewis, M, *200 Years of Concrete in Australia*, Concrete Institute, North Sydney, 1988, p.100;

*Age*, September 1921

letters from Monash to the Company 22 & 23 November 1921. File 2034. Box 122.

## Data recording

Assessed By

Assessed Date: