

## Identification and location

**Name of Place:** **Olex Cables**

**Other Name** Olympic Cables

**Address** 207 Sunshine Road

Tottenham

**Place Identifier** 8825

**Heritage Significance** city

**Creation date(s):** 1940 c.

**Map (Melway)** 41 C4

**Boundary description** The Quarry Rd frontage is the more architecturally significant, but the boundaries of the site should include the present allotment to ensure the appropriate context.

**Local Government Area:** City of Maribyrnong

**Ownership Type** Private

## Description

**Site Type:** factory

### Physical Description

Large red brick and concrete complex exhibiting limited International style architectural features to the main elevations, but otherwise a utilitarian industrial structure of the period. Steel framed, bolted and welded saw-tooth roof and clear-span production buildings are uniformly clad in corrugated galvanised iron, some re clad recently in steel decking.

Reflecting the architectural style of the original Beaurepaire's Tyre factory in Cross Street the Olex complex presents its main facade to a minor roadway on the west side of the works. As envisaged the plant featured a large range of sawtooth roof shedding with a central office on Quarry Road styled in a Moderne, Egyptian inspired manner featuring a low masonry building with tall narrow steel framed windows creating a colonnade effect and a taller central "pylon" entrance feature.

The formal classically derived landscape surrounding the factory was designed with suitable exotic species including Italian cypress and other conifers which are now mature. Planter boxes include some original shrubbery.

### Condition

good although parts are not in use

### Integrity

Intact to its Post WW2 state with some additions

### Context

A generally isolated site at the time of building at the western extreme of the developed industrial area of West Footscray/Tottenham, adjacent to other complexes including Wiltshire Files and near the Tottenham wool stores.

### Threats

Vandalism is apparent and redevelopment is possible as the site is currently underutilised

## History

The Olympic Tyre & Rubber Co Pty Ltd was founded in 1933 by Australian Olympic swimmer Frank Beaurepaire. Having begun in the tyre business as a retreader in 1922, he opened a factory in Cross Street West Footscray in 1934 and commenced making tyres with the claim that they involved 90% Australian workmanship. In 1940 wartime shortages of electric power cables prompted Beaurepaire to commence cable manufacture using technology he learned from Europe. It is probably (but not yet confirmed) that the plant was erected under the Commonwealth defence production Wartime Annex Scheme where private industry built and operated plants for essential military supplies with finance and overall control directed from the Commonwealth Government. Cables were made for the first time in Australia at their existing West Footscray tyre factory with the vulcanized rubber insulation cables being an Australian first in 1940. Many years later the Co-axial cable was another Australian development (Olympic Consolidated 1965; Lack 1991:313).

Olympic Cables Pty Ltd was originally established as the electric cables division of the Olympic Tyre and Rubber Company in 1946. As a specialist cable manufacturer it benefited for the post War expansion of communications, particularly the national telephone network, so that the new Tottenham factory was opened in 1947 as part of the company's expansion program to produce telecommunication cables. Olympic Cables produced a range of cables for telecommunications and power transmission, and insulating materials. Another factory was opened in Queensland in 1959 (Olympic Consolidated 1965; Lack 1991:313).

In 1973 Olympic Cables and Nylex Cables combined to form Olex Cables Ltd. The company expanded during the 1980s and '90s, building factories in Western Australia and Asia, and adding fibre optics technology to its production. Changes in corporate ownership have involved Pacific Dunlop and AMP. The Tottenham Road site is now the head office of Olex Cables (web site).

### Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme

PAHT Subtheme:

Local Theme

### Cultural Significance

Olex Cables is of historical and architectural significance to the City of Maribyrnong for its distinctive Moderne design which reflects both the prominence and success of the Olympic Tyre and Rubber Company, and the importance of the growth of the telecommunication industry in the immediate Post War period. (Criterion D2)

The factory is historically important as one of the largest cable makers and as a major local initiative begun by the firm founded by Sir Frank Beaurepaire. (Criterion H1)

The works is architecturally important for the extensive application of Moderne architectural and design elements (albeit in a relatively late context) to an otherwise utilitarian and functional factory. (Criterion F1)

The remnant landscaped gardens and mature trees contribute to the factories aesthetics.

## Comparative Examples

One of a number of late Moderne factories in the municipality, this example demonstrating one of the last of the type. Compares directly with Olympic Tyre and Rubber which was its parent in terms of the corporate family and stylistic origins.

## 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

*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).*

Olex cables represents both the individual achievement of Frank Beaurepaire and the abilities of Australian nurtured scientific, technical and commercial skill.

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

The buildings are a large and refined expression of the Moderne style which became the choice for industrial buildings of the period, and was particularly prevalent in the West Footscray/Tottenham area.

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

Like the Olympic Tyre Works, this factory is closely associated with Sir Frank Beaurepaire,

## Documentation

### References

Olympic Consolidated Industries Ltd brochure "Olympic Quality: Basis of Success", 1965.  
 Lack, J. *History of Footscray*, 1991, p.313.  
 Brief history given on Website of Olex Cables: [www.Olexcables.com](http://www.Olexcables.com); "Olympic Quality".  
 Graeme Butler, *Footscray Conservation Study* (4-39)

## Data recording

Assessed By

Assessed Date: