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# BP Australia Complex and Canary Island Palm



BP Australia Complex and  
Canary Island Palm, Hobsons  
Bay Heritage Study 2006

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## Location

431 Douglas Parade SPOTSWOOD, Hobsons Bay City

## Municipality

HOBSONS BAY CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO89

## Heritage Listing

Hobsons Bay City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is Significant?

The BP Australia complex, comprising the blending tower, warehouse and office complex constructed in 1959 and the Canary Island Palm, at 431 Douglas Parade, Spotswood.

How is it Significant?

The BP Australia complex is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Hobsons Bay.

#### Why is it Significant?

Historically, the complex is significant for its associations with the development of BP Australia and demonstrates the importance of Newport and Spotswood during the early to mid twentieth century as one of the major centres of the oil industry in Australia. BP Australia replaced Commonwealth Oil Refineries Co as one of the major players in the Australian oil industry, as part of an international expansion of BP during the postwar period, which was a consequence of the Iranian oil crisis of the early 1950s. (AHC criteria A4 and D2)

Aesthetically, the architectural qualities of the blending tower, in combination with the offices, present an interesting industrial example of the then highly prized glass curtain wall, in this case with no spandrels. This innovative design reflects the modern and progressive aspirations of BP Australia, which was later reflected in their new head offices on St Kilda Road. The setting of the complex is enhanced by the mature Canary Island Palm. (AHC criteria E1 and F1)

*Note: Refer also to the citation in this Study for the former BP Australia Newport Terminal tank farm at 39-81 Burleigh Street, Newport*

Heritage Study/Consultant	Hobsons Bay - Hobsons Bay Heritage Study, Hobsons Bay City Council, 2006;
Architect/Designer	BP Australia Ltd,
Hermes Number	15019
Property Number	

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## Physical Description 1

This complex includes a multi-level blending tower with aluminium-framed curtain wall fenestration on the fully glazed east wall. At the rear is a projecting wing with horizontal glazing strips at each level. Next to the blending tower, on the north and south are the cream brick warehouses. Further to the north, on the road frontage, is a two storey cream brick office building with an aluminium-framed curtain wall facade at the upper level and part of the ground level, facing on to Douglas Parade. Square window openings punctuate the rest of the masonry wall. There is also a Canary Island palm in the grounds on the north edge of the site which presumably dates from the COR period.

The south-facing, saw-tooth roof, single-storey warehousing extends north and south of the central multi-storey complex, with a loading bays and canopies on the north and south sides. The low pitched sawtooth has the unusual feature of a splayed end on the east facade which precludes the need to extend the front wall up to the roof pitch, and so matches the rectangular lines of the blending tower.

Large cantilevered verandah canopies shelter loading bays at the frontage and there is a smaller cantilevered veranda over another loading bay on the south wall. An extension of four additional identical bays has been added to the north side, as indicated by the corrugated iron cladding, as opposed to fibre cement sheeting for the earlier section. The boiler house is located on the south side of the blending tower, between it and the storage tanks, with steam and hot water pipes crossing the roadway overhead. This is of brick with a low pitched fibre cement sheet roof, similar to the pump house.

The complex appears architect designed (the drawings were prepared by BP) and follows in the tradition of other glass-sided Modernist boiler or mixing towers such as APM in Chandler Highway Alphington and the General Motors boiler house at Port Melbourne. These towers were the envy of architects who desired the transparent facade but could not get around the provision of masonry spandrel walls to achieve the fire separation

requirement floor to floor in the Uniform Building Regulations.

West of the tower and warehouse building is a tank farm of one large and ten smaller oil tanks, with another group of 10 small tanks and a brick-veneer pump and valve house between. Earth bund walls surround the tanks to contain any spills. The tanks are linked to the blending tower by above ground steel pipelines, and the complex is also linked by pipeline to the nearby BP tank farm and oil wharves. A steel lattice overhead pipe bridge takes the oil pipe lines over Douglas Parade at the southern edge of the site.

In operation the plant took bulk stock by pipeline or tanker delivery, and elevated it into the top floor where additives were prepared and fed into the oil. They then ran by gravity to the clarifying floor, and then down to the main blending floor where additional additives are included. Below this is the testing floor, and on the ground level the packing floor where drums are filled, or the mixed oils are pumped into tankers for bulk transport. The southern part of the complex was used as a store for empty barrels while filled barrels and drums were stored in the northern part.

## **Integrity**

External Condition and integrity

*Condition* - Good. *Integrity* - Moderate

## **Physical Description 2**

Context

Contributory part of an industrial precinct, which includes a number of other oil-related installations and plant facing bay on a flat site abutting a busy road.

## **Historical Australian Themes**

Developing local, regional and national economies, Utilising mineral resources, Extracting oil & gas

## **Physical Description 3**

*Associations*

BP Australia Ltd

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*