

Standard Vacuum Refining Co. Complex (Former)



Standard Vacuum Refining Co. Complex (former), Hobsons Bay Heritage Study 2006



Standard Vacuum Refining Co. Complex (former), Hobsons Bay Heritage Study 2006 - c.1955 view showing Thermoform Catalytic Cracker in centre.



Standard Vacuum Refining Co. Complex (former), Hobsons Bay Heritage Study 2006 - Administrative building (Pegasus Centre) designed by Stephenson & Turner and constructed c.1955



Standard Vacuum Refining Co. Complex (former), Hobsons Bay Heritage Study 2006 - Cafeteria

Location

351-381 Millers Road ALTONA NORTH, Hobsons Bay City

Municipality

HOBSONS BAY CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO202

Heritage Listing

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is Significant?

The Standard Vacuum Refining Co complex (former), now Mobil Oil Refinery, comprising the buildings and plant generally constructed between 1949-60, at 351-381 Millers Road, Altona North.

How is it Significant?

The Standard Vacuum Refining Co complex is of local historic, social, technical and aesthetic significance to the City of Hobsons Bay.

Why is it Significant?

Historically, it is significant for its strong associations with the development of the oil industry in Australia as one of the oldest continuously operating oil refineries in the country. It is also significant as a major refinery and office complex that illustrates the immense industrial expansion of the City and Victoria in the post World War 2 period. The size of the complex had a significant impact on the economy of the State of Victoria and led to the establishment of a petro-chemical complex within this area with a number of associated firms such as Australian Carbon Black by the 1960s. The complex has associations with Standard-Vacuum Oil and later Mobil Oil who have played important roles in the development of the petrochemical industry in Victoria. Parts of the complex have associations with the important architectural firm of Stephenson & Turner. (AHC criteria A4 and H1)

Socially, it is significant for its strong associations with the local community as one of the first major industries in the Altona area and one of the largest employers over a long period. It is also significant for its associations with the development of the labour movement in Australia through the introduction of the concept of collective bargaining techniques, which were first used at this site. (AHC criteria D2 and G1)

Technically, it is significant for early plant and equipment such as the Thermoform Catalytic Cracking Plant, which is unique in the State. (AHC criterion F1)

Aesthetically, although altered, the c.1955 office block is significant as a good example of modernist design that illustrates the progressive nature of the Standard-Vacuum company and investment made in the establishment of the complex at the time. (AHC criterion E1)

Heritage Study/Consultant	Hobsons Bay - Hobsons Bay Heritage Study, Hobsons Bay City Council, 2006;
Construction dates	1949,
Architect/Designer	Stephenson & Turner,
Hermes Number	15139
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

The complex includes the following buildings:

- The refinery itself comprising various equipment, pipes, tanks and stacks, all set out on a rectilinear grid between the railway, Millers Road and Kororoit Creek Road. It includes the 248 feet high Thermoform Catalytic Cracking Plant (now decommissioned), which is thought to be the last vertical catalytic cracker in Australia.
- The auditorium, canteen and locker building, located at the north-east corner of Kororoit Creek Road and Millers Road, which has a flat roof, is clad with cream bricks and has aluminium framed windows with green glass panels. This is one of the buildings designed by Stephenson & Turner
- The former office/laboratory building (now the medical centre), which is a concrete block with a hip roof building facing Millers Road.
- The former Administration buildings, designed by Stephenson & Turner, on the south west corner of the Millers-Kororoit Creek Roads intersection. This building was pictured in the guide to architecture in Victoria, which was produced by the RVIA for the 1956 Olympics. This building has since been changed by a general renovation in recent times.
- A tank farm on the south side of Kororoit Creek Road. The number of tanks has been greatly expanded since the 1940s.

The plant has also been expanded, with some additional land occupied to the east, but the original plant has not been radically changed. An aerial view of the site titled "January 1955 The new refinery already looks complete" shows little change from recent aerial views. (Priestley 1988:206)

Integrity

External Condition

Good

External Integrity

substantially intact/some intrusions, with the exception of the administration and cafeteria.

Physical Description 2

Context

Set in an open industrial landscape which is complemented by the Kemcor Australia (now Qenos) plant further to the west, separated by Cherry Lake.

Historical Australian Themes

Utilising mineral resources, Extracting oil & gas

Physical Description 3

Associations

Standard-Vacuum Refining Company (Australia) Ltd., Mobil Refining Australia Pty Ltd, Stephenson & Turner

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.

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