HERITAGE VICTORIA

Victorian Heritage Database Report

PRESTON TRAMWAY WORKSHOPS











Location:
16-18 MILLER STREET PRESTON, DAREBIN CITY

Heritage Status / Level of Significance:
Registered

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number: H7822-0960
Listing Authority: HI

Heritage Overlay Number: HO144

Statement of Significance:
What is significant?
The first section of the Preston tramway workshops, built for the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board in 1924-28, comprised a group of five large brick industrial buildings for the manufacture and maintenance of an increasing electric tram fleet. The principal buildings housed a foundry/ metalworking shop, mechanical/electrical shop, lifting/body shop, paint shop, and a central store. Two electric traversers enabled trams to be moved between the mechanical, body and paint shops, and auxiliary buildings comprised a two storey office,staff amenity hall and three timber stores. A substation to supply DC electricity for the East and West Preston tramways was constructed in the south east corner of the workshop compound in 1932.

During the 1930s and 1940s tramway buses were manufactured and maintained at the tramway workshops, and during the Second World War equipment was manufactured for the war effort. The office building was extended to house a laboratory in 1940, and in the mid 1940s the mechanical, body and paint shops, and their associated traversers were extended northwards. During the 1950s smaller light-weight buildings were erected further north to house an upholstery shop, tin smiths shop and cleaning and degreasing plant. A new steel store was also constructed south west of the blacksmiths shop and a tram body straightening bay was built north of the blacksmiths shop for the repair of serious accident damaged W Class trams.

During the late 1980s further northerly extensions were made to the mechanical and body shops for the specialised maintenance of new articulated light rail vehicles (LRVs) then being introduced. The two traverser tracks were also extended and new longer traversers introduced to deal with the larger vehicles. The existing tram test track along the Oakover Road frontage was extended south beside the adjoining railway reservation for some 0.8 km. for testing of the new generation LRVs. A state of the art below ground wheel lathe for the recontouring of tram wheels was installed in the former upholstery shop in the the late 1990s. The workshops are now occupied by Alstom Australia who have contracted to supply new generation low-floor trams and to maintain the existing fleet.

How is it significant?
The Preston Tramway Workshops are of historical, technological, architectural and social significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?
The Preston Tramway Workshops are of historical significance as the sole surviving tramway workshop designed for the manufacture and maintenance of a large tram fleet - the fourth largest tramway network in the world and the largest outside Europe.

The Preston Tramway Workshops are of historical significance as a large scale early twentieth century work place where a large workforce with many migrant workers were employed over a long period.

The Preston Tramway Workshops are historically significant as the birthplace of Melbourne's famous W Class trams.

The Preston Tramway Workshops are of historical significance for the role they played in the development of

tramway motor bus services during the 1930s and 1940s.

The Preston Tramway Workshops are of historical significance for the role they played during the Second World War, when construction of new trams was curtailed to allow for the construction of Bailey bridges and RAN Carley life rafts for the war effort. During the war, over one hundred "Munitions" and "Austerity" style buses were also built at the workshops to serve the munitions factories in Melbourne's industrial areas as well as supplementing services on existing busy routes.

The Preston Tramway Workshops are historically significant for their ability to demonstrate Melbourne's changing traffic patterns. For example, the construction of the tram straightening bay in the mid 1950s, for correcting tram bodies badly bent in collisions with other road vehicles, illustrates increases in Melbourne's motor traffic soon after the Second World War.

The Preston Tramway Workshops are of historical significance as the "studio" for three "Transporting Art" programs (1978-93), which produced numerous trams painted by prominent and emergent artists.

The Preston Tramway Workshops are of technological significance as the long standing centre of tramcar design and manufacturing in Australia.

The Preston Tramway Workshops are of technological significance for their ability to illustrate the changing work practices and facilities required for an evolving tram construction and maintenance facility. They also reflect the evolution of the trams that originated there - from the rigid timber bodied W Class trams of the 1920s to the all metal and fibreglass articulated light rail vehicles of the 1980s.

The equipment in the associated sub-station, which supplies power to the tramways outside the workshop compound, is technologically significant as it illustrates the evolution in equipment used for the conversion of electric current from AC to DC for electric traction purposes in the 1930s. The two different pieces of rectifier equipment were the first of their types to be used in Australia.

The Preston Tramway Workshops are architecturally significant as an intact 1920s specialised industrial complex, containing a mix of large-volume work areas and smaller auxiliary structures. The workshops are architecturally and technologically significant for their specialist industrial production layout, which incorporates the two traversers.

Heritage Study / Consultant	
Construction Date Range	1924 - 1932
Architect / Designer	
Municipality	DAREBIN CITY
Other names	
Hermes number	12621
Property number	

This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online