Location:
124-188 BALLARAT ROAD FOOTSCRAY, Maribyrnong City

Heritage Status / Level of Significance:
Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number: H2067
Listing Authority: VHR

Heritage Overlay Number: HO90

Statement of Significance:
What is significant?
Kinnears Ropeworks, Footscray, is a large industrial complex of buildings built between 1909-1969. The buildings reflect the industrial processes of the site and include a number of manufacturing and storage buildings built in a rudimentary industrial manner of brick walls and saw tooth roofs. The earliest and most intact buildings are the service buildings that include the Engineers stores and workshops, Boiler house and chimney and the Spooling room which still displays its original brick paved floor. The internal workings and communications between the various facets of industry on the site are represented by the internal laneway system. The site also includes a particularly rare and fine example of a Rope Walk.

Kinnears Ropeworks was established by George Kinnear in Moonee Ponds in 1874. After he died two of his sons, Edward (Ted) Hore Kinnear and Henry (Harry) Humphrey Kinnear moved the works in 1903 to its present location on Ballarat Road in Footscray. The introduction of Federal tariff protection to the industry in 1902 is likely to have influenced this move. The new factory was badly damaged by fire in 1908 and was rebuilt in 1909. Ted Kinnear was the first footballer to play 100 games for Essendon and played in both the 1897 and the 1901 premierships.

For around one hundred years, Kinnears Ropeworks produced a large range of rope and twine products for a variety of domestic, commercial, agricultural, fishing, shipping, transport, textile, and other industrial purposes. They also manufactured carpet yarns and were leaders in the innovation of the production of synthetic yarns. Under manpower legislation during World War II, the factory produced a range of materials for military use, but also diversified into new products, such as camouflage netting and parachute cords. The factory struggled during the war due to the loss of essential personnel, and, as a result, employed a large number of women during this period.

Manufacturing in Victoria was reinvigorated with postwar immigration, but it was not until the 1970s that Kinnears was employing a significant number of non-British migrants, mainly from Italy, Greece, Macedonia and Turkey. In the post war period, the demarcation of space within the complex was emphasised by the assignment of different migrant groups to different tasks; this segregation was designed to avoid racial conflicts and also to enhance relations amongst workers within each division.

Kinnears expanded further in the early 1970s when it made significant inroads into the carpet industry.

The following buildings with associated equipment contribute to significance at the State level: B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, B6, B9, B10, B13 and B14, and the portions of B7, B8, B11 and B12 which abut the lanes. (see attached map) Multi-lingual signs throughout the site contribute to significance at the State level.

The following buildings with associated equipment contribute to significance at the local level: All items which contribute at State level, buildings B7, B8 and B11 along Ballarat Road for one structural bay in depth, and the sky sign at the south east corner.

How is it significant?
Kinnears Ropeworks, Footscray, is of, historical, social, scientific (technological) and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.
Why is it significant?

Kinnears Ropeworks is of historical significance as an important example of a rope-making factory in Victoria and was the largest and longest continually operating ropeworks in Victoria.

Kinnears Ropeworks is of historical significance for its contribution to the industrial landscape of Melbourne, in particular the western suburb of Footscray as a major industrial centre.

Kinnears Ropeworks is of historical and social significance because of its long and significant contribution to the development of a strong working-class culture in Melbourne, particularly the western suburbs and for its role in the history of post war migration to Victoria. The multi-lingual signs scattered throughout the site illustrate this role.

Kinnears Ropeworks is of scientific (technical) significance for its important and successful role in rope and textile manufacturing in Victoria during the early twentieth century. The large-scale production of ropes and cords in turn reflected the importance of shipping and haulage in Melbourne’s industrial development. The development of Kinnears Ropeworks through the twentieth century reflects the continued importance of rope-making and related production processes. This was evident during World War II with the manufacture of camouflage netting, and during the post war period with the development of new rope-making technology, especially in the use of synthetics and carpet manufacture. Equipment illustrating some processes survives on both levels at the western end of B9. The substantially intact rope-walk is a rare example of early twentieth century rope-making techniques and is indicative of the changing technologies of the site. At B3, the rails and early equipment associated with the manufacture of rope survive. B3 relies in part on the structure of adjoining and/or later buildings.

Kinnears Ropeworks, Footscray, is of architectural significance as an important example of a large industrial complex and is highly representative of early twentieth century industrial construction. The form of the roof structures assists in demonstrating the light requirements for the industrial activity below, and the spatial relationship of one building to another contributes to an understanding of the industrial site. The lanes between buildings also contribute to understanding of the site in use.

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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