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# Commonwealth Oil Refinery Complex (Former)



Commonwealth Oil Refinery  
Complex (Former), Hobsons  
Bay Heritage Study 2006

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## Location

32-54 Toll Drive ALTONA NORTH, Hobsons Bay City

## Municipality

HOBSONS BAY CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO303

## Heritage Listing

Hobsons Bay City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is Significant?

The Commonwealth Oil Refinery complex (former), comprising the former administrative offices constructed c.1921 now situated at 32-54 Toll Drive, Altona North and the timber tramway bridge over Kororoit Creek, Altona North.

How is it Significant?

The Commonwealth Oil Refinery complex (former) is of local historic, technical and aesthetic significance to the City of Hobsons Bay.

Why is it Significant?

Historically, it is significant for its strong associations with the beginnings of the oil industry in Australia as the remnants of the first oil refinery to be developed in this country. Commonwealth Oil Refineries pioneered the development of the refining of crude oil products and led to the development of a significant oil and petrochemical industrial area in the western region of Melbourne. At its peak, the complex occupied a large area of land on both sides of Kororoit Creek and was one of the largest of its type in Australia. While most of the buildings and plant have been removed, the surviving buildings are important for their ability to illustrate aspects of the history of the plant. The administrative office is a well designed brick building that illustrates the importance of the plant, while the former trestle bridge, which carried a tramway connecting the parts of the complex on either side of the creek gives an indication of the once vast scale of the complex. The complex also forms part of a significant group of historic sites associated with the oil industry and is directly related to the former COR tank farm at Newport, which contains two early tanks and other facilities. (AHC criteria A4, D2 and H1)

Technically, the bridge over Kororoit Creek is significant as a now rare example in the metropolitan context of an early timber trestle bridge. (AHC criterion F1)

Aesthetically, the administrative offices are significant as an intact representative example of Interwar office architecture. (AHC criteria E1)

Heritage Study/Consultant Hobsons Bay - Hobsons Bay Heritage Study, Hobsons Bay City Council, 2006;

Construction dates 1920,

Hermes Number 22285

Property Number

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## Physical Description 1

The former Commonwealth Oil Refinery (COR) complex once occupied a site of 400 acres on both sides of Kororoit Creek to the north of Kororoit Creek Road and the Melbourne-Geelong Railway (See History). There was also a 'COR' railway station, and workers houses were situated nearby on Kororoit Creek Road.

Since the Refinery was closed in 1955, the site has been progressively redeveloped and by the 1980s, when assessed as part of the *Western Region Industrial Heritage Study*, most of the early buildings and plant had been removed, although the c.1920 offices, a small filling plant, stores and the railway sidings remained. When originally assessed for this Study in 1999-2000 most of these structures were still extant, however, since then the site has been redeveloped for an industrial park and now the only surviving buildings are:

- The c.1920 red brick hipped and gable roof former COR office building with a gambrel roof, small gable pediments and cemented cornices over windows and doors (Refer to image on cover). This style is characteristic of Commonwealth buildings of the interwar period and compares with similar buildings on the Maribyrnong Explosives Factory site and Point Cook Air Base. The site of this building was once near the entrance to the complex at the end of a road (now removed) that led from Kororoit Creek Road - It now faces a new access road known as Toll Drive.

- The timber trestle bridge over Kororoit Creek, which is situated approximately 400 m east of the c.1920 office. The construction is standard mid-twentieth century railways pattern employing round timber piers with square section cross rails and braces, round timber stringers and corbels and timber running deck with ballast boards.

Opposite the former office building in Toll Drive is the BP Altona Terminal, which is situated on part of the former Refinery site. However, this complex was constructed later and is not directly associated with the early development of the COR refinery between 1922-50.

## **Integrity**

External Condition

Offices and Bridge - Good

External Integrity

Integrity of the Bridge is High, Offices are moderate. Integrity of the complex as a whole is low.

## **Physical Description 2**

Context

Set in an open landscape which is being redeveloped for large warehouse and industrial buildings.

## **Historical Australian Themes**

Utilising mineral resources, Extracting oil & gas

## **Physical Description 3**

*Associations*

Commonwealth Oil Refinery Co., Commonwealth Government, Anglo-Persian Oil Company, BP Australia.

*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/>*