
Underground Public Conveniences - Parliament Place Reserve



B6791 Underground Public Conveniences

Location

Cnr Macarthur Street and Parliament Place,, EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002 - Property No B6791

Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

Level of significance

Demolished/Removed

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - October 6, 2005

Designed and constructed by the City of Melbourne Architects Office, under the direction of Eric W Bilby, and completed in early 1939, the underground toilet in the Parliament Place reserve is of State architectural, aesthetic and historic significance. Architecturally, the above-ground structure of the toilet and its landscaping is of interest for the use of circular geometry, rock faced sandstone, and modern influenced metal work in the gates, and in the grills of the ventilation tower. These elements combine to give an appearance reminiscent of the works of Walter Burley and Marion Mahoney Griffin, whose interest in geometry, rough natural materials, and sympathy with the landscape appear to have influenced the design far more than the streamlined modern or modernist styles popular in Melbourne in the late 1930s. The exterior is intact, except that no decorative lamp standards shown on the original plans appear to have been replaced. Internally, the toilet is generously scaled, and unlike all the earlier underground toilets in the City of Melbourne is remarkably intact, including all the floor and wall tiling, the

doors, and the individual ceramic urinals in the mens section. Aesthetically, the above ground structures of the toilet are of interest for the successful intergration of structure and landscaping, incorporating a circular raised flower bed, which contrasts interestingly with the rock-faced retaining wall and central ventilation tower, and the whole is enhanced by a circular lawn and paths around the structure. Historically, the toilet is notable as amongst a series of underground toilets constructed by the City of Melbourne between 1903 and 1939. The large number, and early date of many of these underground facilities, is considered to be a feature unique in Australia, and rare in international context. Commencing with the first public toilets for women built in Russell Street in 1903, six sets of underground conveniences were provided by 1918 (all classified). This toilet is one of at least four further underground conveniences provided by the Melbourne City Council in the 1930s. Interestingly, these were all outside the CBD; the other three extant toilets being at Faraday & Lygon Streets corner, Carlton, Carpentaria Place, East Melbourne, King Street & Erroll Street corner, North Melbourne. After WW11, facilities across Melbourne were invariably provided above ground. The underground toilet at Parliament Place is unique amongst these facilities for the inclusion of extensive landscaping.

Classified: 'State' 02/06/1997

See also B6720. Russell Street Underground Convenience, and B6802 Group Classification, Public Conveniences.

Hermes Number 65388

Property Number

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/>