
Former B.P. Administration Building, Western Port Refinery

Location

The Esplanade,, CRIB POINT VIC 3919 - Property No B6524

Municipality

MORNINGTON PENINSULA SHIRE

Level of significance

State

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1016

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - October 27, 2005

Designed by Melbourne architect Don Hendry Fulton and completed in 1965, the former BP Administration Building is of architectural significance at a State Level as being a period exemplar of Mid-1960s small-scale office building design acclaimed by the architectural profession at the time of its design; as indicative of a multi-national corporation in the 1960s seeking a high quality public image for its second major Australian industrial plant; and stylistically as representing the shift in the mid-1960s away from the strict tenets of the International Style towards overt symbolic reference and which was reflected internationally by the work of American architects such as Edward Durrell Stone, John Carl Warnecke and Minoru Yamasaki. Blending disciplined structure and detail redolent of ordered classical composition with a distinctive roof form evocative of temple buildings of the Far East, the BP Administration Building is also the architects most distinguished work and was to become for him, a benchmark building in his long and notable career of designing large scale specialised buildings such as laboratories, repetitive housing for mining companies, and prefabricated buildings for the Antarctic.

Prominently sited amongst lemon-scented gums on the Esplanade at Crib Point and facing the deep waters of Western Port Bay, the former BP Administration Building was the dramatic and jewel-like landmark in front of the prosaic and vast expanse of the refinery behind. Crude oil came directly from ocean-going tankers in a straight line along the jetty past the Administration Building and the adjacent gatekeeper's office. The simple concept of an all-encompassing roof supported on slim precast columns which taper out at the base was made complex by the intricately detailed column-roof connections, the curved concrete soffit to the first floor, the innovative

alternative ventilation system for the first floor windows, and internally by the illuminated ceiling to the first floor offices which evokes memories of Eastern courtyards or classical atria. Externally and internally, the building is remarkably intact. The black bean panelling, joinery units and concealed cupboards, vinyl tiles, terrazzo bathroom screens, and light fittings are all extant. The major internal feature which has been removed is well-known sculptor Norma Redpath's bronze sculpture which was originally mounted above the landing of the main stair. In the context of the mid-1960s, the BP Administration Building epitomised the Victorian architectural profession's commitment to the continuation of innovative and highly functional modern design but also its changing position with respect to the acceptance of abstract classicism and previously unacceptable references to history and decoration in the face of the exclusive purity of the International Style. The measure of that shift in taste is evidenced by the award bestowed upon the building in 1966: the prestigious RVIA Victorian Architecture Medal. Classified: 11/04/1994

File Note: "Stair Relief" by Norma Redpath (B7184) has been relocated to BP House, 1 Albert Street, South Melbourne.

Relocated again in 1997 to the McClelland Gallery, McClelland Drive, Langwarrin.

Hermes Number 66376

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.

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