
Toorak Telephone Exchange



Toorak Telephone Exchange

Location

268 Williams Road, TOORAK VIC 3142 - Property No 49517

Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO474

Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

Relevant themes from the City of Stonnington Environmental History are indicated by TEH.

What is Significant?

The Toorak Telephone Exchange at 268 Williams Road, Toorak is a double-storey Georgian Revival style building with a dignified symmetrical facade, enhanced by fine quality brick detailing. It was designed in 1942 by the Commonwealth Department of the Interior (Works and Services Branch) and constructed in 1944. The exchange was built to ease congestion on existing telephone exchanges in a period when wartime

communications were placing extra strain on the system. The Toorak Exchange formed part of a broader plan to automate all of Melbourne's telephone exchanges to meet the demands of post-war population growth.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The original external form, materials and detailing as originally built.
- The generally high level of integrity to its original design (including the unpainted state of brick and terracotta elements).
- The legibility of the original freestanding double-storey envelope created by the undeveloped front and side setbacks.
- The limited presence of modern signage on and around the building.
- The limited visibility of the modern additions from the public realm.

Modern fabric, including the rear additions and the Telstra sign, do not contribute to the significance the place.

How is it significant?

The Toorak Telephone Exchange is of local historical and architectural significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

Historically, the Toorak Telephone Exchange is significant for its associations with an important phase in the expansion of Melbourne's automatic telephone network that began in the inter-war period and continued through the Second World War (TEH 4.6.2 Establishing telegraph and telephone networks, Criterion A).

The Toorak Telephone Exchange is architecturally significant as a good representative example of the Georgian revival mode (Criterion D). The style was popularly used for residential buildings in the 1930s but also found favour with State and Commonwealth agencies.

The Toorak Telephone Exchange gains additional architectural significance from its complimentary relationship to the precinct of interwar flats on the opposite side of Williams Road (Criterion E).

Heritage Study/Consultant	Stonnington - Heritage Places in the City of Stonnington - Heritage Citations Project, Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd, 2013;
Hermes Number	195815
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

The Toorak Telephone Exchange is located on the east side of Williams Road, directly opposite a precinct of interwar flats centred on Coolullah Avenue. The exchange is a double-storey building with a hipped terracotta tiled roof and red brick walls resting on a brown brick plinth. The symmetrical Williams Road facade is composed and detailed in the Georgian revival mode, aside from a rendered entry porch with fluted pilasters more typical of the stripped classical idiom. The entry porch is surmounted by an elegant, round-arched stair hall window with a multi-pane steel frame. The porch and stair window are flanked on either side by double-height square-headed window bays with brick spandrel panels. The facade is constructed from thin, pale-red Roman bricks and has brick quoins to the corners and around the arched stair hall window. The side elevations are built from standard red-bricks.

The facade remains highly intact apart from the addition of a modern Telstra sign and the replacement of a first floor window with a metal louvre vent. The building was extended at the rear in the late twentieth century with a large double-storey addition but this has had minimal impact on its streetscape presentation.

Local Historical Themes

The Toorak Telephone Exchange illustrates the following theme, as described in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, 2006):

4.6.2 Establishing telegraph and telephone networks

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/>