

# Brunswick Electricity Supply Substations Serial Listing



119 Brunswick Road, Brunswick



2A Walker Street, Brunswick - hipped type



10 Dawson Street, Brunswick



425B Victoria Street, Brunswick



7 Methven Street, Brunswick East



339 Albion Street, Brunswick East



318-324 Lygon Street, Brunswick East



188 Brunswick Road, Brunswick



Colebrook Street, Brunswick



24 Gray Street, Brunswick



14 Frith Street, Brunswick



2 Russell Street, Brunswick



25A Stewart Street,  
Brunswick



59 Ryan Street, Brunswick  
East

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## Location

10 Dawson Street and 425B Victoria Street and 7 Methven Street and 339 Albion Street and 119 Brunswick Road and 188 Brunswick Road and Colebrook Street and 24 Gray Street and 14 Frith Street and 2 Russel Street and 25A Stewart Street and 2A Walker Street

## Municipality

MERRI-BEK CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO600

## Heritage Listing

Merri-bek City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 17, 2023

### What is significant?

The electricity distribution substations, erected by the Brunswick Electricity Supply (BES) from 1912 to c.1940, are significant. All are constructed of brick and there are three basic types, as well as one-off or special designs. The basic types include:

- **Gabled type:** six substations at 425B Victoria Street, 7 Methven Street (Methven Park), 339 Albion Street, Colebrook Street, 25A Stewart Street, and 59 Ryan Street. These substations have a steeply pitched gabled roof with projecting eaves with louvred vents in the gable end and (originally) timber doors in the end or side walls. At Methven Park the gable end vents are augmented by metal chimneys with rotating cowls directed by arrow design weather vanes, whilst Victoria Park, Stewart Street and Ryan Street have box ventilators with louvred vents and gabled roofs that sit astride the roof gable;
- **Hipped type:** two substations at 188 Brunswick Road and 2A Walker Street. These appear to date from the 1920s and have hipped roofs with deep eaves that are surmounted by a ventilation box. At Brunswick Road this has a distinctive bellcast roof with a finial, while at Walker Street the box has a flat circular roof;

and

- **Parapet type:** two substations at 14 Frith Street (faces Howarth Street) and 2 Russell Street. Constructed during the 1930s these have brick parapeted walls that conceal a hipped roof. Frith Street retains the distinctive ventilation box/tower with hipped roof positioned at angle to the front, whilst there is none at Russell Street. Frith Street is also distinguished by the decorative brick corbelling to the parapet and diaper patterns to the walls. At Russell Street there are also decorative crosses and a label mould above the door, but the effect is diminished by the overpainting of the walls.

The one-off or special designs include:

- Main Substation at 119 Brunswick Road. This substation is a rectangular building, two storeys in height, constructed of red brick with a band of manganese bricks in a stepped line below the rendered gable end, which contains the words 'CITY OF BRUNSWICK ELECTRIC SUPPLY' in faded painted lettering. Manganese bricks also form two pilasters, which flank the central oversized timber door;
- Main substation '1' or 'A' at 10-14 Dawson Street. This is a rendered building with parapeted walls and triangular pediment with projecting brick courses. The timber entry doors are placed off-centre in the front wall;
- Temple Park substation at 24 Gray Street. L-shaped in plan, this forms part of a building that also contains public conveniences. The substation section has a gabled roof with a large louvred box ventilator, also with a gabled roof, astride the ridge. The double timber entry doors are flanked by high set windows; and
- Baby Health Centre substation at 318-324 Lygon Street. Situated at the rear of the Streamlined Moderne baby health centre, this is a gabled building with cream brick parapeted walls with rendered capping and triangular pediments at either end. The walls have high set slot openings containing glass bricks.

### How is it significant?

The BES electricity distribution substations are of local historic, representative and associative significance to the City of Merri-bek.

### Why is it significant?

The substations are historically significant for their association with the establishment and development of the Brunswick's electricity supply network from its inception in 1914 until the interwar period. The former City of Brunswick was one of the first metropolitan councils to establish their own electricity supply and distribution networks, which played a critical role the residential, commercial and industrial expansion of the municipality during the interwar period. This is demonstrated by the number and geographic distribution of the substations throughout the city. Of particular historic significance are the substations in Dawson Street and Methven Park, which form part of the original network of four substations constructed in 1913-14, and the Frith Street substation, which is an example of the substations specifically constructed to provide additional supply to industrial areas. (Criterion A & H)

The substations are significant as representative examples of early electricity substations and demonstrate the evolution in design. The Methven Park example is also notable as the only double-gable type, whilst the Stewart Street and Ryan Street substations are the only examples to retain a terracotta tile roof, which includes horn finials to the ventilation box. Also of note is the Frith Street substation as an example of the larger, double height substation required to meet increasing electricity demand, which were designed with sheer, parapeted walls that enabled them to be built on small sites hard against surrounding buildings. (Criterion D)

Heritage Study/Consultant Moreland Heritage Nominations Study, Extent Heritage, 2022;

Construction dates 1912,

Hermes Number 206422

Property Number

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## Physical Description 1

The electricity distribution substations, erected by the Brunswick Electricity Supply (BES) from 1912 to c.1940 and dispersed through Brunswick, Brunswick East and Brunswick West, are all constructed of brick. There are three basic types, as well as one-off or special designs. The basic types include:

**Gabled type:** six substations in Victoria Street (S2), Methven Street (Methven Park, S3), Albion Street (S4), Colebrook Street (S8), Stewart Street (S12), and Ryan Street (S14). These substations have a steeply pitched gabled roof with projecting eaves with louvred vents in the gable end and (originally) timber doors in the end or side walls. At Methven Park the gable end vents are augmented by metal chimneys with rotating cowls directed by arrow design weather vanes, whilst Victoria Park, Stewart Street and Ryan Street have box ventilators with louvred vents and gabled roofs (also known as monitors) that sit astride the roof gable. The walls are a combination of unpainted face brick.

The Victoria, Methven and Albion Street substations (S2-4) share a close typology with subtle variations in form or subsequent surface treatment. Victoria Street S2 is a brick structure in stretcher bond, now painted but with evidence of stone quoining and horizontal bands, suggesting a combination of unpainted brick and painted quoining and horizontal bands. The roof is a simple gable in corrugated iron with overhanging eaves, topped with a small gabled monitor with fixed timber louvres, with another small vent with louvres underneath the eaves of each gable end. A single door off centre facing Victoria Street is its only other aperture. The northern facade notably contains a row of insulated ceramic conduits which are now covered, as possible evidence of a previous cable ingress/egress point.

Methven Street (S3) continues the same basic typology but replicates the form to introduce a double-gable roof, with a large timber double-door with fixed timber louvres on the lower panels, and in place of the small gabled roof ventilation are large metal ventilation pipes with weather vanes. Present are the same stretcher bond bricks, gable end vents, and evidence of quoining and bands. The southern-most gable end facing Methven Street also features remnant ceramic conduits, now filled.

Albion Street (S4) continues this typology and is the only example of the five to retain its unpainted brick set off against quoining and banding painted dark brown. It is also the only example of this type to feature a door (large timber double door with vents on lower panels) on the side wall. Unpainted quoining and bands on the northern side reveal cement render underneath. Colebrook Street (S5) appears an austere version perhaps in light of its industrial setting between grain stores and railway lines, while Stewart Street (S12) and Ryan Street (S14) introduce terracotta roof tiles and finials.

**Hipped type:** two substations at 188 Brunswick Road (S7) and 2A Walker Street (S13). These appear to date from the 1920s and have hipped roofs with deep eaves that are surmounted by a ventilation box. At Brunswick Road this has a distinctive bellcast roof with a finial, while at Walker Street the box has a flat circular roof.

**Parapet type:** two substations at Frith Street (S10) and Russell Street (S11). Constructed during the 1930s, these have brick parapeted walls that conceal a hipped roof. Frith Street retains the distinctive ventilation box/tower (positioned at angle to the front) with hipped roof, whilst there is none at Russell Street. These examples are also distinguished by the decorative brick corbelling to the parapet and diaper patterns to the walls. At Russell Street there are also decorative crosses and a label mould above the door, but the effect is diminished by the overpainting of the walls.

The one off or special designs include:

-Main substation '1' or 'A' at 10-14 Dawson Street (S1). This is a rendered building with parapeted walls and triangular pediment with projecting brick courses. The parapet appears to conceal roof plant. The timber entry doors with fixed louvres on the lower panels are placed off-centre in the front wall.

-Baby Health Centre substation at 318-324 Lygon Street (S5). Situated at the rear of the Streamlined Moderne baby health centre, this is a gabled building with cream brick parapeted walls with rendered capping and triangular pediments at either end. The walls have high set slot openings containing glass bricks.

-Main Substation at 119 Brunswick Road (S6). Brunswick Road is a rectangular building, two storey in height, constructed of red brick with a band of manganese bricks in a stepped line below the rendered gable end, which

contains the words 'CITY OF BRUNSWICK ELECTRIC SUPPLY' in faded painted lettering. Manganese bricks also form two pilasters, which flank the central oversized timber door.

-Temple Park substation at 24 Gray Street (S9). L-shaped in plan, this forms part of a building that also contains public conveniences. The substation section has a gabled roof with a large louvred box ventilator, also with a gabled roof, astride the ridge. The double timber entry doors are flanked by high set windows.

## Physical Conditions

The sites are in varying condition as detailed below.

-**10 Dawson Street (S1)** is in **good condition** although with minor cracking evident on the western face.

-**425B Victoria Street (S2)** is in **fair condition**, with sound brickwork but heavily weathered timber elements, including eaves boards and louvres, and roofing iron showing striped rusting typical of sheets being laid alternately with zinc coating facing upwards and downwards, which was a common method to use as little sheeting as possible. Where evident, the roof plumbing is in poor condition and appears disconnected.

-**7 Methven Street (S3)** is in **fair condition**, also showing weathering of timber elements and features metal bracing indicating some foundation movement.

-**339 Albion Street (S4)** is in **good condition**, with minimal structural cracking although some evidence of slight bulging and weathering of the eaves boards.

-**318-324 Lygon Street (S5)** is in **fair condition** with large cracks associated with bulging, currently braced with steel reinforcement to the exterior of the facade on at least two sides.

-**119 Brunswick Road (S6)** is in **good condition** with only the slightest evidence of cracking revealed in recent mortar repair.

-**188 Brunswick Road (S7)** is in **good condition**, with rust evident on roof, some structural movement evident from a small metal bracing plate on the lower part of the south facade, and a small amount of bowing of the timber under the eaves. The rendered masonry is currently covered with graffiti.

-**Colebrook Street (S8)** is in **fair condition**, with several brick courses shearing away on the lower part of the west facade, a missing eave board on the southern side and damage to other eaves boards from falling damp and weathering (including live moss/lichen growth on timber) and cracking on southern facade where a former opening has been filled in. Urgent roof plumbing required to repair guttering and flashing.

-**24 Gray Street (S9)** is in **good condition** with no particular issues evident.

-**Frith Street (S10)** is in **fair condition**, with a large crack on the north facade currently braced, and discolouration beneath the roof spouting that does not allow water to clear the brick facade, with some evidence of falling damp on the north-east corner of the facade. The adjoining building to the south has failed guttering that is releasing water onto the substation roof, likely adding to water problems. There is weathering evident on the timber of the ventilation box.

- **2 Russell Street (S11)** is in **good condition** with no particular issues evident.

-**25A Stewart Street (S12)** is in **good condition** overall, despite evidence of the north wall bowing away to cause cracking, weathering to eaves boards on the roof and (especially) ventilation box. The door is missing louvres.

- **2A Walker Street (S13)** is in **good condition**, with some weathering of the timber on the underside of the eaves, evidence of a small area affected by rising damp on the eastern facade. Picturesque deciduous creepers are marking the paint but no evidence of damage to render.

- **59 Ryan Street (S14)** is in **good condition** overall, with some movement evident from a gap to the right side of the door lintel, bracing plates on east and north facades. There is evidence of falling damp on south and

(especially) north facades, with failed guttering at one point causing severe damage to the eaves at one place. Urgent roof plumbing is required to repair guttering. Overall, the substations are in good condition but some, Colebrook Street, Frith Street and Ryan Street substations, require urgent roofplumbing repairs to alleviate the risk of further damage.

## Integrity

Overall, the sites demonstrate high integrity.

**10 Dawson Street (S1)** appears to have had the most alterations and additions over time, with no clear evidence of the original 1912 fabric. Its integrity is low.

**425B Victoria Street (S2)** has its original exposed face brick painted, yet overall retains high integrity.

**7 Methven Street (S3)** also has its original exposed face brick painted and has had metal bracing affixed, yet overall retains high integrity.

**339 Albion Street (S4)** appears to have had few alterations and retains high integrity.

**318-324 Lygon Street (S5)** has metal bracing, plastic electrical conduits\* affixed to the southern facade and graffiti, yet overall retains high integrity.

**119 Brunswick Road (S6)** has had security lights affixed to the facade, and recently installed cabinets housed on one side of the forecourt along with a timber backyard-style fence\*. It retains high integrity overall.

**188 Brunswick Road (S7)** has a recently installed downpipe on the east facade and some old (non-significant) plumbing fixtures remain on the west facade. A metal fence\* is affixed at one corner, and the door has been replaced with an unsympathetic metal door\*. It retains high integrity overall.

**Colebrook Street (S8)** has evidence of infill of a former opening on the south facade\*, in which the original rounded brick edges now abut conventional rectangular brick, leaving a gap at their joining. It retains high integrity overall.

**24 Gray Street (S9)** has been part-converted into a toilet block\*, and features an unsympathetic Colourbond roof\*. It has only moderate integrity overall.

**Frith Street (S10)** has an unsympathetic replacement door\* and steel bracing affixed. It retains high integrity overall.

**2 Russell Street (S11)** has been subject to overpainting\*, obscuring brick details including decorative crosses and a label mould above the door. It retains high integrity overall.

**25A Stewart Street (S12)** has no alterations or additions evident. It retains high integrity.

**2A Walker Street (S13)** has had recent roof plumbing installed. It retains high integrity overall.

**59 Ryan Street (S14)** has metal bracing plates affixed. It retains high integrity overall.

*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/>*