
Former Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator



B2221 Incinerator



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Location

180 Holmes Road,, MOONEE PONDS VIC 3039 - Property No B2221

Municipality

MOONEE VALLEY CITY

Level of significance

State

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0434

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 8, 2008

The Essendon Incinerator complex at Holmes Road, Moonee Ponds was built in 1929-1930 and operated until 1942. The two surviving buildings comprise a large incinerator building with three incinerator units and distinctive 8m high chimney, built over two levels utilising the slope of the land, and a two-storey plant-store and workshop building at the front of the site. The incinerator building is constructed of reinforced concrete and brick, rendered externally, and is dominated by its asymmetrical, terracotta tiled roof. Three furnaces survive internally, largely intact.

In the 1920's incinerators were seen as a solution to shortages of suitable waste lands within municipalities for

the tipping of household refuse. The decision by Essendon Council to build one caused much controversy, mainly due to the perceived unsightliness. Once built, the incinerator was widely praised for its attractive appearance. The incinerator building was designed in the Melbourne office of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahoney Griffin, which was then operated by architect Eric Nicholls since the Griffins had relocated to Sydney. Only Nicholls' signature appears on the drawings, and it has similarities with other works known to be by him alone, so it seems likely that the design was Nicholls' alone.

It was built by the Melbourne based Reverberatory Incinerator and Engineering Company (RIECo) and was one of the first two of a series of celebrated incinerators designed by Griffin's office for them, mainly in Sydney. These later examples were designed by a partnership of Nicholls & Griffin, but show the creative influence of Griffin more than Nicholls. RIECo incinerators established a new standard in the effective disposal and management of municipal waste through incineration, as well as providing vastly improved working conditions for the related council staff.

The plant-store and workshop building was designed and constructed under the supervision of the city surveyor for the City of Essendon in a style to complement the main building.

The complex was designed to intergrate with the character of the surrounding domestic suburb and to provide minimal disruption to its immediate environment in terms of discharge. It survives substantially as designed, although there have been minor modifications to the interior and some original features have been removed. The iron gate to Holmes Road is believed to be original.

Between 1984 and 1989 the buildings were progressively restored and converted into an arts complex by the local Council. The furnaces are now a feature of the theatre foyer.

How is it Significant? The Essendon incinerator complex is of architectural, historical and technological (scientific) significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it Significant? The Essendon incinerator complex is architecturally and historically significant for its important associations with the internationally significant architects Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahoney Griffin, who strongly influenced the work of Eric Nicholls; he ran their Melbourne office, and was most likely the principal designer of the incinerator. The design of the main building is representative of the distinctive architectural approach of the Griffins, and has strong similarities with designs by Nicholls alone.

The main building is architecturally significant for the asymmetrical pitched tile roof form of the main building, which flows down over the lower level section to not only cleverly utilise the existing slope to allow easy access at both levels but create striking north and south elevations, enlivened by distinctive triangular and pointed arch openings, reveals, and a smaller projecting gable roof at the lower end. These angled forms and especially the large areas of roof on the lower side are dynamically counterpoised by the tall chimney with distinctive angled and triangular capping, providing another dramatic feature.

The building set a new standard in Australia for the design of industrial buildings, showing that they could be accommodated within developed suburban areas rather than being banished to the unpopulated fringe.

The Essendon incinerator complex is historically significant as one of the first to be built of the thirteen incinerators in Australia designed by Griffin and/or by Nicholls, and believed to be the most intact of the six surviving. It is also the only example remaining of their incinerator designs in Victoria.

Technologically, it is one of just three reverbatory incinerators, and the only one by RIECo, remaining in Victoria. The store and workshop building is of interest as a building designed in the Griffin style, and as an intergral element of the complex from its inception.

Classified: 'Local' 19/08/1970

Revised: 'Regional' 03/08/1972

Revised: 03/08/1998

Other Names The Incinerator Arts Complex, Essendon Incinerator,

Hermes Number 66138

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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