

Heritage Citation



Key details

Addresses	At 241 Wynnum Road, Norman Park, Queensland 4170
Type of place	Telephone exchange
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Free Classical
Lot plan	L1_RP43206; L2_RP43206; L4_RP12509; L3_RP12509
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — August 2015
Construction	Roof: Tile; Walls: Face brick
People/associations	HW Barker (Architect)

The Telephone Exchange on Wynnum Road, known as the Bulimba Exchange, was one of the first six fully automatic telephone systems in Brisbane. Although it was proposed in 1913 as a vital piece of infrastructure in the growing but underserved South Brisbane region, plans for the exchange were not drawn up until 1926. Built in 1927-28, the brick Telephone Exchange was constructed to meet the growing needs of the community as the locality underwent substantial commercial and residential growth during the interwar period.

History

Five telephone exchanges existed in Brisbane in 1912, but this was considered too large an area to cover. In 1913 Bulimba was proposed as a satellite exchange for South Brisbane. A 1913 circular memorandum (written by acting Electrical Engineer JM Crawford) mentioned extensions to the tramway as a potential reason for 'closer settlement and consequently more rapid telephonic development of the area'. Bulimba had forty-four subscribers, not a large number but the area was 'untapped', according to the memo. The acting assistant engineer W Corbett prioritised Bulimba second in order of urgency, after South Brisbane.

'Bulimba' was proposed and kept as the name, despite the exchange's location in Norman Park.

(Population of Balmoral in 1913 was 3,900; estimated for 1928 was 5,500)

Corbett's 1913 report presumed the installation of an automatic exchange as '[t]he boundaries proposed are too limited for economical working of Manual Exchange.' The Bulimba area, Corbett predicted, would grow either along the railway line or the proposed aerial cable on Hawthorne Road. A theoretical centre for the exchange was selected, but Corbett preferred a site at 'the intersection of Hawthorne Road and New Cleveland Road [now Wynnum Road] where five roads meet... it is a convenient meeting point for the two main avenues of construction which serve the Bulimba area, and it is recommended.'

The onset of World War I halted any progress on the exchanges, and no further steps were taken until the 1920s, when Brisbane's rapidly growing population made the upgrades essential.

Plans were drawn up in 1926. Tenders were called in 1927 and J and M Maskrey's quote of £4,469 was accepted. The exchange was opened on 26 May 1928 at 2pm, at the same time as the Yeronga and Nundah exchanges. Bulimba exchange numbers used the prefix 'JY'.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

as the first automatic telephone exchange in Norman Park, established to serve the Bulimba area, it demonstrates the need for more efficient telecommunication services for the increasing population of the area in the 1920s.

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

as an existing example of a building required to house public telephonic communication technology during the interwar period.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as an ornate brick utility building on an elevated site on a prominent corner in Norman Park, the symmetrical design incorporates decorative features that contribute to the setting.

References

1. National Archives of Australia, Circular memorandum 490 – Telephone Development Survey – Brisbane (1913) (series number J3088, barcode 6674177)

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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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