

Heritage Citation



Hornibrook Highway Bus Service Office and Depot (former)

Key details

Addresses At 105 Rainbow Street, Sandgate, Queensland 4017

Period Interwar 1919-1939

Lot plan L1_RP43362; L21_RP4642; L19_RP4642

Key dates Local Heritage Place Since — 29 November 2022
Date of Citation — November 2022

Criterion for listing (A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (E) Aesthetic

Built by 1936, the former Hornibrook Highway Bus Service Ltd. depot and office is a rare example of an interwar former transport building with Art Deco features built to support Brisbane's developing transport network between the First and Second World Wars. Designed by C.E. Plant, the former Depot and Office, retains intact Art Deco features such as the stepped silhouette of the parapet façade, distinguished entrance and stylized low-relief ornamentation. The aesthetic qualities of the building, including its Art Deco features coupled with its prominent

corner position on Rainbow Street close to Sandgate railway station, also illustrates the relationship between the Art Deco movement and travel and transport in the interwar years.

History

A history of Sandgate

Sandgate, including the suburb of Shorncliffe, is located 17 kilometres from central Brisbane. The first land sales in the Sandgate area occurred during the 1850s and much of the early development centred on the area now known as Shorncliffe. On 29 April 1880, Sandgate was declared a constituted municipality. During the 1880s, the area around Pier Avenue and Yundah Street became the town's communal and civic centre. The first Town Hall, constructed in 1882, the Court House, and the first two police stations were located in this area.

From the 1880s onwards, Sandgate became increasingly popular as a residential and seaside resort town. The opening of the train line to Brisbane in 1882 (extended to Shorncliffe in 1897) and the construction of the Sandgate Pier boosted the development of Sandgate. The train line to Sandgate was the first suburban line built solely for passengers in the Brisbane area. The train line provided a quick and efficient service for the growing number of residents commuting to Brisbane, and holidaymakers and day-trippers. Numerous attractions catering for visitors were also developed around this time. For example, separate bathing areas, dressing sheds, a caretaker's cottage, office and licensed area were built close to the already established Sandgate Pier. In the 1930s, an enclosed area protected by railway lines, a shark net and stone wall was constructed as a shark-proof swimming enclosure lit at night. Additionally, Flinders Parade (then known as Brighton Esplanade), between First Avenue and Gladstone Street (now Twelfth Avenue), was dotted with cafes, refreshment rooms, flats and boarding houses. Attractions on the foreshores included sand-garden competitions, donkey, goat and gig rides, canoe hire and a miniature railway.

In 1910, a fire destroyed the original Sandgate Town Hall. Subsequently, a new Town Hall opened on Deagon Street (now Brighton Road) in 1912. This opening of the new Town Hall, alongside the relocation of Sandgate Rail Station to its current site in 1911, marked a shift in the location of Sandgate's town centre away from the Shorncliffe area to the vicinity of the present-day Rainbow Street, Brighton Road and Bowser Parade. This area proved to be more accessible for neighbouring Deagon and Brighton residents.

The 1920s saw another period of prosperity for Sandgate. In 1925, Sandgate became a founding ward of the newly created Greater Brisbane City Council. While Shorncliffe continued to be a popular destination, the Sandgate and Brighton foreshores also drew crowds of holidaymakers. However, the building of the Hornibrook Highway Bridge in 1935 brought mixed blessings for Sandgate. This was because while the highway brought more passing trade to the area, it also enabled visitors to travel further north, typically by public transport, to the Redcliffe Peninsula for holidays rather than vacationing in Sandgate as had traditionally been the case. After the Second World War, increased car ownership also led to a further decline in the area's popularity as people were able to travel further beyond Brisbane's city limits for a holiday. Car ownership also brought the expansion of Brighton, Deagon and Nashville as outer suburbs became more attractive.

The development of the Hornibrook Highway Bridge

Opened on 4 October 1935 by the Governor of Queensland, Sir Leslie Orme Wilson, construction of the Hornibrook Highway Bridge was conceived as a response to the high unemployment of the early 1930s. Construction began in 1932 by the firm of M.R. Hornibrook and when the Hornibrook Highway Bridge opened, it was the longest road viaduct built over the water in the southern hemisphere. The Hornibrook Highway Bridge

was also a significant catalyst in the urban development of the previously isolated Redcliffe Peninsula. Before construction of the Bridge, access to the Redcliffe Peninsula was either by road or a ferry from Sandgate.

Before Hornibrook became involved in providing a bridge over the Hayes Inlet, several schemes had been investigated to improve access to the Redcliffe Peninsula from Brisbane. These schemes preferred constructing a road link across Hayes Inlet and the mouth of the South Pine River. In 1926, Redcliffe Council had proposed that the Queensland Government's Main Roads Commission consider such a project that would involve crossing 2.7 kilometres of water by viaduct at the cost of £120,000. This road would then connect with the main Sandgate to Brisbane road.

M.R. Hornibrook, who had holidayed in the Sandgate area, saw potential in developing a transport link between the Redcliffe area and Brisbane's northern suburbs. The onset of the Depression in 1929 provided Hornibrook with the impetus to plan and construct a bridge between Sandgate and Redcliffe. In 1931, Hornibrook approached the Queensland Government with a proposal to build a toll bridge between the Redcliffe Peninsula and the Sandgate area. While the project was initially rejected, an act of Parliament was passed that allowed for the involvement of private enterprise in the construction of toll facilities. The terms of the franchise set the toll and stipulated the length of the lease. Hornibrook successfully negotiated a 40-year franchise for operating the bridge.

Work on the Hornibrook Highway Bridge began on 8 June 1932. Progress was initially slow and continuing financial difficulties forced Hornibrook to re-finance the company to finish the work as planned by 1935. This was helped by a £100,000 loan from the AMP Society, guaranteed by the Queensland Government.

After 40 years of running the franchise, in 1975, the operation of the Hornibrook Highway was transferred to the Queensland Government's Department of Main Roads. Increasing road traffic led to the replacement of the Hornibrook Highway Bridge with the new Houghton Highway, which opened in 1979.

The construction of the Hornibrook Highway Bus Service Depot and Office (former), 105 Rainbow Street

In 1935, the Queensland Government's Railway Department put out a tender to run a coordinated road/rail bus service to transport passengers between Sandgate and Redcliffe. Three companies applied to run this service. These companies were the Redcliffe-Petrie Motor Service, the IBIS Bus Company, and Hornibrook Highway Ltd. Hornibrook Highway Ltd planned to run the service with cheap fares, frequent services, and modern buses. On 1 August 1935, it was announced that the Hornibrook Highway Ltd had won the tender to run the service. The new company was incorporated on 27 August 1935 as the Hornibrook Highway Bus Service Ltd.

On 5 October 1935, the day after the Hornibrook Highway Bridge opened, the first bus service ran between Sandgate rail station and Redcliffe. Initially, passengers caught buses from stands located outside of the bus depot on Rainbow Street. However, in the late 1940s, provision was made for a bus station on land formerly occupied by the stationmaster of Sandgate railway station.

To support the new bus service's operations, in September 1935 the Hornibrook Highway Bus Service Ltd applied to Brisbane City Council for permission to erect a bus depot on the corner of Rainbow Street and John Street. Council specifically noted that the building was to be of a 'good appearance.' Subsequently in November 1935, a title for subdivision 19 and 21 and resubdivision one of subdivisions 20 and 22 of suburban allotment six of section 17 in the parish of Nundah was produced in the name of the Hornibrook Highway Bus Service Ltd. This site was located at the corner of Rainbow Street and Knox Street. At the same time, a mortgage for an unspecified amount was taken out from the Queensland National Bank.

To design the bus depot, Hornibrook Highway Bus Service Ltd employed Brisbane based architect Clifford Ernest Plant who was known for his residential and commercial designs. Born in Great Britain in 1885, Plant emigrated to Australia in the early 20th Century. By 1911, Plant was working as a draughtsman for the Queensland

Government. Between 1914 and 1915, he worked as an instructor at the Brisbane Central Technical College. Plant joined the Australian Imperial Force as an engineer in 1915 and served on the Western Front, where, in 1917, he was awarded the Military Medal. On returning from the First World War, Plant returned to working for Queensland Government. In 1929, Plant became a registered architect, and in 1930 he was made an Associate of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. In 1938, Plant established a short-lived practice with R.W. Voller that ended in 1941.

Given the relationship between the Hornibrook Highway Bridge and the bus service, the design of the Art Deco entry portals at each end of the Bridge provided some form of inspiration in designing the Hornibrook Highway Bus Service depot and office. These entry portals were designed by architect John Beebe and used concrete supplied from the QCL works at Darra. However, as the Hornibrook Highway Bus Service promised to deliver a modern, comfortable service between Sandgate and Redcliffe, the styling used by Plant in designing the bus depot and office was also representative of the relationship between the Art Deco movement and travel and transportation in the years between the First and Second World War. This relationship was based on shared ideas related to speed, luxury, comfort, and opulence.

The origins of the Art Deco movement can be found in the work of the French Society of Decorative Artists before the First World War. However, after 1918, the Art Deco movement became more prominent and influenced various design fields ranging from architecture to transportation. Importantly, Art Deco designs represented a break with the past and the coming of the modern age. With regards to architecture, the incorporation of Art Deco designs marked the first step towards the emergence of Modernism. Many Art Deco designs were also a response to the new technologies and the social change of the interwar years. For example, the emergence of the Streamline Moderne style of Art Deco design was influenced by the aerodynamic principles associated with the design of various modes of transport, such as motor cars, aircraft, and ships.

The relationship between the Art Deco movement and travel and transportation was also seen in those buildings and structures built to support transport provision. For example, given the 'association of Art Deco with speed and progress' as seen in modes of transport, it was entirely appropriate that the Hornibrook Highway Bridge was designed in the Art Deco style. Therefore, it was also appropriate that the building designed to house and service the buses that operated over the Hornibrook Highway Bridge, and also owned by M.R. Hornibrook, would, for the same reasons, be designed with Art Deco features. While rare in Brisbane, another example of a building associated with transport provision that incorporated Art Deco elements into its design is the administration building at Archerfield Airfield.

The Hornibrook Highway Bus Service operated the service across the Hornibrook Highway Bridge for 40 years until the franchise associated with the Bridge came to an end in the 1970s. The service initially consisted of four new buses. The number of buses expanded as more passengers used the service. For example, *The Courier Mail*, recorded in January 1937 that the number of passengers who used the bus service during the Christmas and New Year holiday period totalled 42,000 customers. This was an increase of 12,000 passengers when compared to the same period in 1936.

An early description of the success of the bus service to Redcliffe appeared in *The Queenslander* in 1938 and read:

With the opening of Australia's longest bridge, the Hornibrook Highway, connecting Redcliffe to Sandgate, visitors to Sandgate are enabled to continue their journey a few miles to the popular beaches of the Redcliffe Peninsula by means of the Hornibrook Highway Bus Service, operating a combined rail and road service.

This new method of reaching Redcliffe has already proved very popular, and since its commencement has expanded rapidly. Express trains and modern motor buses provide passengers with a fast and comfortable service at very low fares. The new streamlined motor buses used on this service are the most up-to-date in Australia, being beautifully finished both inside and out. They are now a familiar sight in Sandgate, as they ply regularly between the railway station and Redcliffe, along the foreshores, and across the Bay.

Twelve miles of road, beautiful scenery, and the cool sea breezes provide passengers with one of the most delightful drives in Brisbane, and in comfort leaves nothing to be desired.

From 1942 onwards, as the bus service grew in success, Hornibrook Highway Bus Service Ltd purchased land adjacent to the depot and office. By 1953, the relevant Detail Plan for this portion of Sandgate illustrated that the whole of the land occupied by the Hornibrook Highway Bus Service Ltd consisted of the depot and office, a service station and a 'bus stable.' When the franchise associated with the Hornibrook Highway Bridge ended, the related bus service ended. In the 1970s, the former bus depot and office were sold off and the site has since been used for industrial uses.

Description

The former Hornibrook Highway Bus Service Ltd Depot and Office building is prominently located at the corner of Rainbow and Knox streets in Sandgate, within immediate proximity of Sandgate railway station. The single-storey painted rendered masonry and fibre-cement sheet building includes Art Deco inspired features, such as the distinguished entrance with its splayed façade to the street corner, incorporating fluted pilasters, Spanish render surfaces and a stepped parapet.

General description

The former bus depot is a single-storey painted rendered masonry and fibre-cement sheet building, with a corrugated sheet metal roof comprising multiple gables behind a stepped parapet façade.

The building is constructed primarily from painted fibre-cement sheet, with corrugated sheet metal roofing visible on the north and west elevations. Original window and door openings, with minor alterations, remain evident on the northwest façade facing the street corner. Original vehicle entrances remain on the Knox Street elevation.

The façade of the building at the street corner is constructed from rendered masonry. The building features Art Deco details typical of the period, including Spanish render, fluted pilasters, vertical fins, and moulded panels. At the parapet level, an original light fitting remains that originally illuminated painted signage on the façade.

On the side elevations facing Rainbow and Knox streets, additional original details include moulded parapet capping and horizontal tracks and flashings. Other elements include the sliding doors used as bus entrances to the building. Metal framed windows in the former locations of these sliding doors are non-original features, being associated with later renovations to the building.

The interior of the building was not inspected.

The former Hornibrook Highway Bus Service Ltd building is one of the more architecturally stylised buildings within the proximity of Sandgate railway station. The legibility of the former transport building, designed to feature Art Deco elements, is significant to the place.

There are significant views to the place from Rainbow and Knox streets.

Significant features

Features of cultural heritage significance include:

- Original built form and composition, including:
 - Single-storey building with multiple gabled roof form, partially concealed behind parapets
 - Corrugated sheet metal clad gable roofing
 - Distinguished corner entrance with stylized low-relief ornamentation
 - Rendered masonry and fibre-cement sheet and expressed timber batten parapet facade
 - Expressed timber battening and fibre-cement sheet external linings
 - Original window fenestration
 - Existing vehicle entries to Knox Street and evidence of original vehicle entrances to Rainbow and Knox Streets (including associated overhead sliding tracks and flashings).
- Views to and from the place.

Non-significant features

Non-significant features include:

- Non-original, metal-framed windows and doors to the masonry section of the building
- Non-original metal framed windows and associated infill to former vehicle entrances off Rainbow and Knox Streets
- Non-original sheet metal parapet flashings
- Non-original wall-mounted signage
- Non-original lighting fixtures along the building facade.

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

Built by 1936, the former Hornibrook Highway Bus Service Ltd depot and office provides evidence of the growth and development of Brisbane's transport infrastructure in the period between the First and Second World Wars. As expressed in the citation's history, the building, designed to include Art Deco inspired features, also illustrates the relationship between the Art Deco movement and travel and transport in the interwar years.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage

As expressed in the citation's history, the former Hornibrook Highway Bus Service Ltd depot and office is a rare example of a former interwar transport building that includes Art Deco inspired features, built to support the operation of Brisbane's developing transport network between the First and Second World Wars.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

Since the construction of the former Hornibrook Highway Bus Service Ltd depot and office, it has remained a prominent part of the streetscape proximate to the Sandgate railway station. The former transport building is constructed of timber, sheet cladding, and render finish, and retains intact Art Deco inspired features such as the stepped silhouette of the parapet façade, distinguished entrance and stylized low-relief ornamentation.

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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.

Citation prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised November 2023)



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