

## Heritage Citation



### National Broadcasting Service Radio Transmission Centre

#### Key details

**Addresses** At 99 Kluver Street, Bald Hills, Queensland 4036

**Type of place** Transmission station

**Period** Postwar 1945-1960, Late 20th Century 1960-1999

**Style** Stripped Classical

**Lot plan** L2\_SP132099

**Key dates** Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000  
Date of Citation — March 2011

**Construction** Roof: Corrugated iron;  
Walls: Face brick

**Criterion for listing**

(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (H) Historical association

The Bald Hills wireless transmission station commenced broadcasting in 1942 after the threat of Japanese bombing prompted a relocation of the existing 4QG/4QR station located in Brisbane City. The Bald Hills station transmitted on both shortwave and medium wave bands. Situated beside the Bruce Highway, the station's aerials became a Brisbane landmark. With the dominance of radio as the major form of home entertainment during the 1940s-50s, the station performed a vital service for the people of Queensland. The station ceased manual operations and switched to remote control from the ABC Mt. Coot-tha studios in 1988.

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## History

In 1932, access to a national wireless broadcasting network for Brisbane listeners commenced with the establishment of the medium wave radio station 4QG. In 1935, a 53 acre farm beside Bald Hills Road (now Kluver Street) and bounded by Bracken Ridge Road was purchased by the Commonwealth as the site for a government-run transmitter station. Due to limited government finances as a result of the Great Depression (1929-39), no work was undertaken on this site for a number of years.

The advent of World War II in September 1939 prompted the government to proceed with the project, as wireless communication with the civilian population was an important aid to the war effort. Design of the transmission station fell to Alf Howard and Vernon Kenna. Kenna was the divisional engineer for the Commonwealth's Post Master General's (PMG) Department's broadcast construction section. Construction of a transmitter building and its adjoining wireless mast commenced in late 1941. The mast was 76 metres in height. Bald Hills was seen as a strategic location for a transmission station, because of its inland location plus the horizon, as seen from the ocean, would be considerably lower.

In February 1942, the Bald Hills wireless station became operational after a 10 kw water-cooled, short-wave transmitter was installed in the station building. To reduce the threat of a bombing raid, the smaller 4QR (also a medium wave station) transmitter (2 kw) in the Brisbane CBD was shut down and replaced by a homemade transmitter established behind Fischle's jam factory in Roghan Road. This was a temporary stopgap measure undertaken until the move to Bald Hills was completed. The 4QR main transmitter was then removed and re-erected to the Bald Hills wireless station, where it was connected to a new mast. The station's aerial array had been emplaced in the northwest corner of the former farm's grounds. But fear of the station being a potential Japanese air raid target prompted many Bald Hill residents to express their concerns about the station's location. In particular, the aerial mast was not camouflaged, standing in the middle of a cleared field and so it was easy to spot from the air. Experience learnt from the 1940 Battle of Britain had shown these transmitter aerials were prime enemy bombing targets.

In May 1943, broadcasting on the shortwave band began when VLQ moved to Bald Hills. This wireless station was important as it broadcast ABC programs to outback regions. A no-fly zone was declared around the station to prevent Allied aircraft colliding with the aerial masts.

After the war, the station returned to peacetime normality with its importance enhanced by radio being the premier form of home-entertainment in 1940s-50s Queensland as reflected in the peak number of domestic radio

licence applications. In 1948, a 200 metre dual-frequency aerial mast erected and the 1941 building extended to accommodate two 10 kw air-cooled STC transmitters. One transmitter broadcasted 4QR while the other broadcast 4QG. The latter transmitter enabled the closure of the 4QG station that had been operating from Brisbane City since 1938. A new aerial array was placed again in the site's northwest corner. The original 76 metre aerial mast was used as a standby mast. Another 10 kw transmitter was soon added to provide a second short-wave radio station VLM. In 1951, two 6-cylinder Ruston & Hornsby diesel engines were installed to provide emergency power in the case of the failure of the main power grid (due to a cyclone etc).

There was a major transmission failure involving 4QG in 1961. An old 2 kw transmitter was quickly installed and 4QR programming was re-routed through to a new 50 kw transmitter. This relegated the existing 10 kw transmitter to stand-by status. In 1964, a new brick control was built to replace the 1941 building. This was followed by the installation of another 10 kw short-wave transmitter that had the role as a stand-by unit for the short-wave services of VLQ and VLM.

In 1986, the original 1941 mast was dismantled due to concerns over metal corrosion. It was replaced with a lattice-design mast. During the dismantling process, the old mast hit the adjacent, small Coupling Building. In 1988, the Bald Hills transmission radio station ceased having around the clock staffing and it was placed under remote control under the direction of the ABC-TV transmission centre atop Mt. Coot-tha. VLQ transmitted its last broadcast on 16 December 1993.

The Bald Hills radio mast became a Brisbane landmark, seen daily as it could be seen from the Bruce Highway. It was the notable as the second tallest transmission mast in Queensland. In 1993, the Brisbane History Group recognized the radio station's facilities as having heritage significance when it was included as Stop No.5 in its publication *Bald Hills Heritage Tour*.

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## 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:

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#### Historical

##### CRITERION A

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

chosen for strategic reasons during World War Two as the site for the vital government-run wireless transmission station.

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## Rarity

### CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage as Brisbane's first purpose-built, Commonwealth radio transmission centre.

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## Representative

### CRITERION D

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

with its transmission control building and aerial masts array.

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## Historical association

### CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

linked to Queensland radio stations 4QR and 4QG from World War Two.

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## References

1. Brisbane History Group, *Bald Hills Heritage Tour*, (Brisbane: Brisbane History Group, 1993)
2. "Cobb's coaches gave Bald Hills its first lift", *The Telegraph*, 12 June 1965
3. John Oxley Library, *Picture Queensland website*, photograph collection

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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 June 2022)



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