

## Heritage Citation



### Sanitarium Office Building

#### Key details

<b>Addresses</b>	At 951 Ipswich Road, Moorooka, Queensland 4105
<b>Type of place</b>	Office building, Factory
<b>Period</b>	Postwar 1945-1960
<b>Style</b>	Functionalist
<b>Lot plan</b>	L2_SP118578
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2005 Date of Citation — May 2004
<b>Construction</b>	Walls: Face brick
<b>People/associations</b>	Bligh, Jessup and Brentnall (Architect)

This brick office and factory building, designed by Bligh, Jessup and Brentnall, was constructed in 1958 for the Sanitarium Health Food Factory during a period of expanded postwar industrial activity in Brisbane. The primary purpose of the new building was to increase production of one of the company's chief products, Weet-Bix, in order to satisfy demand. Sanitarium first began in 1898 when Edward Halsey opened a bakery in Melbourne. From there, the company expanded to the production of cereals and health food products and eventually became a household name. The company has continued to own and operate the building into the twenty-first century.

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## History

The Sanitarium Health Food Company had its beginnings in a bakery founded by Edward Halsey in Melbourne in 1898. Relocating later that year to Cooranbong, south of Newcastle, Halsey's company produced peanut butter and the ready-to-eat breakfast cereals, Granose and Granola. These products, and Caramel Cereals (a coffee substitute), were first available in Queensland when circa 1896 Lucy Hughes sold them from the rear of a building in Queen Street. In the early 1900s Hughes moved to 186 Queen Street.

In 1900 the Sanitarium company transferred its operations to New Zealand. From that time Granola and other vegetarian products were marketed in both Australia and New Zealand. Considerable competition occurred during the 1920s when a similar cereal product, Weet-Bix, appeared on the market. In 1930 Sanitarium acquired the company which manufactured Weet-Bix.

A retail store where Sanitarium products could be purchased was opened in 1911 within the Brisbane (Vegetarian) Café established at the 186 Queen Street site. The early years of the café were difficult and losses were often recorded. Relocating in 1921 to 360 Queen Street, the Brisbane (Vegetarian) Café continued retail sales, supported after 1935 by a wholesale department which opened at 57 James Street, Fortitude Valley.

Following the Second World War, Queensland sought to expand its processing and manufacturing industries using as a basis those industrial sites established during the War. Promotions were a success as by 1956-57 the Queensland Year Book recorded an increase over ten years of 35% in the number of workers engaged in the processing industries. One key industrial site was the former Rocklea Munitions Works. In the late 1940s, this site was converted into the Salisbury Industrial Estate to form the hub of a southside industrial precinct.

As usable space at Rocklea was taken up by manufacturing industries, other nearby areas were developed, including, in the 1950s, a strip along the western side of Ipswich Road at Moorooka. It was here that the Sanitarium office and factory was established.

Postwar the Sanitarium company acknowledged that new and better facilities would be needed to satisfy the demand for Weet-Bix and other of its products. The additional advantages of relocating its operations from inner city Fortitude Valley included the availability of a more spacious allotment, more agreeable plant surroundings and better transportation and parking facilities. In 1948 four acres of land, Resubdivision 1 of Subdivision 2 of Portion 129 between Ipswich Road and Moolabin Creek, was transferred to the Australasian Conference Association.

Brisbane City Council approval for an office and food factory was issued on 15 May 1956. The architects were Bligh Jessup & Bretnall. Their simple design has been identified by architect Alice LT Hampson as of the large factory type of the period. This, she noted, consisted of an office building, 'usually single storey with large areas of glazing protected by sunshading hoods or roof projections'<sup>1</sup> linked with a factory building. Other features identified by Hampson were graphics incorporated into the overall design and a landscaped finish, both features of the Ipswich Road office and associated open space areas.

The firm of Bligh Jessup & Bretnall was formed by Arthur WF Bligh, Colin W Jessup and Athol W Bretnall. Bligh had worked as an architect in Toowoomba and Brisbane in the 1920s and 1930s; Jessup and Bretnall qualified as architects immediately prior to the Second World War.

The new Sanitarium factory complex was opened by the Premier of Queensland, Sir Frank Nicklin, on 12 October 1958. According to the company's history, it contained upgraded and more advanced machinery. The Ipswich Road factory's chief product was the flake biscuit Weet-Bix, however, at other times processing of honey, wheat germ and peanuts (into peanut butter) has also occurred at this complex.

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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

as the office building within an industrial complex constructed during a period of rapid expansion of industry in areas removed from the inner city.

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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

as a light industry office building constructed in the 1950s which features many attributes consistent with the period.

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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

as a building designed by architects Bligh Jessup Bretnall.

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## Supporting images



L. & D. Keen Pty. Ltd. (photographers) for the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Queensland Chapter), 'Office building and factory of Sanitarium Health Food Company in Moorooka, Queensland, 1958', John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.

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## References

1. Hampson, Alice LT. *The Fifties in Queensland. Why Not! Why?*, B Arch thesis, University of Queensland, 1987, p. 120
2. BCC Building Registers
3. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of title and other records.
4. Hampson, Alice L. T. *The fifties in Queensland. Why not! Why?* B Arch thesis, University of Queensland, 1987
5. Hunker, Henry. *Brisbane's manufacturing industry: An appraisal of location factors.* (no publication details)
6. Parr, Robert and Glyn Litster. *'What God hath wrought!': The Sanitarium Health Food Company story*, Berkeley Vale, NSW: The Company, 1995
7. Queensland Manufactures Year Book, 1948
8. Queensland Year Books, 1958-60
9. Watson, Donald and Judith McKay. *A Directory of Queensland Architects to 1940.* (St. Lucia: U of Q Press, 1984)

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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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