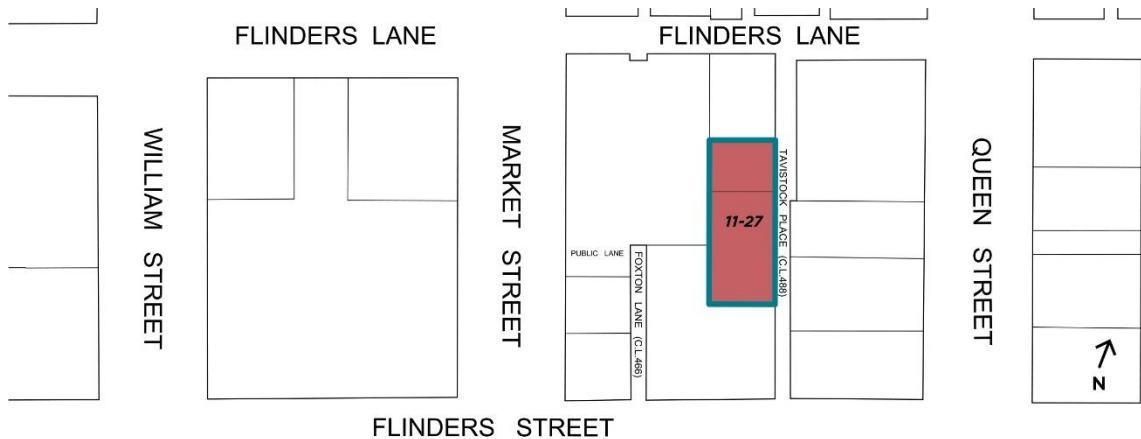


SITE NAME	CitiPower (former Melbourne City Council substation)
STREET ADDRESS	11-27 Tavistock Place Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	109438



SURVEY DATE: October 2017

SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE INVENTORY	H7822-1874	HERITAGE OVERLAY	No
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	PROPOSED CATEGORY	Significant
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	Not confirmed, but likely to be the architects' office at Melbourne City Council	FORMER GRADE	C
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Interwar Period (c1919-c1940)	BUILDER:	Not known
		DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:	1926

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
HISTORIC THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
6 Creating a functioning city	6.3 Providing essential services

LAND USE**HISTORIC LAND USE****Archaeological block no: 59****Inventory no: 874****Character of Occupation:** Commercial, Residential, Services/Infrastructure

Second land sale 1837, Block 3 Allotment 7, R. S. Webb.

1839 Williamson	Building possibly on site.
1837 & 1840 Hoddle	
1855 Kearney	
1866 Cox	
1877 Dove	Two-storey store and timber building in former yard areas.
1880 Panorama	
1888 Mahlstedt	Two-storey store and timber building in former yard areas.
1905/6 Mahlstedt	Two-buildings, Peterson & Co. Store, Valentine Fruit Store.

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE

1890s	Warehouses and Yards
1920s	Power
1960s	Power

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

11-27 Tavistock Place is a large electrical substation built by the Melbourne City Council Electricity Supply Department in 1927 as part of an upgrade of electrical supply and distribution. It is one of several built at the edges of the Hoddle Grid which facilitated the residential, commercial and industrial expansion of the city.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Creating a functioning city

Providing essential services

Melbourne was one of the first major cities in the world, along with London and New York, to have a public electricity supply where electricity was distributed from a central generating station for use by paying private customers and for public street lighting. The nascent electricity supply enterprises adapted quickly to a new public utility technology that had its origins in the UK, USA and Europe but 'which enabled local ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit to flourish'. In addition, Melbourne's early public electricity supply development encompassed most of the evolutionary technical and structural facets of the industry (Pierce 2009:8). The Melbourne City council was the first metropolitan council to establish its own electricity supply and distribution network in 1894.

Ray Proudley in the *Encyclopædia of Melbourne* writes that:

Locally, the first example of the general supply of electricity from a central point was the establishment by the Melbourne City Council of the Spencer Street Power Station from which the streets of the central business district were first illuminated on 7 March 1894...

[The first production and supply of electricity in Melbourne was commenced by private companies in the 1880s and 1890s.] In 1896 the Victorian Parliament enacted the Electric Light and Power Act to bring some sense of order and regulation to what until then had been a new and totally unregulated industry dealing in a potentially hazardous field (Proudley 2008).

Under the 1896 Act, a number of local councils operated Municipal Electricity Undertakings (MEUs), enabling them to manage electricity distribution and retailing to their ratepayers. The City of Melbourne took up the first MEU in 1897.

By 1903 the Melbourne City Council Electricity Supply Department (MCCESD) was one of four electricity supply companies in Victoria and supplied 53.6 per cent of total generating capacity. Electric trams relied on this power supply when they commenced operation in Melbourne in 1906. The Melbourne Electricity Supply Co (MES Co.) formed in 1907, when the Electric Light & Traction Company changed its name (Pierce 2009:5-6).

Demand for electricity grew rapidly in the early decades of the twentieth century. The bulk of the Melbourne metropolitan area was supplied by just two companies, the aforementioned MCCESD and MES Co. They obtained their supply from the Spencer Street Power Station until the Newport A Power station was built at the mouth of the Yarra River between 1913 and 1918. It was constructed by the Victorian Railways to supply energy for the electrification of the suburban rail system, but also supplied bulk electricity to the MCCESD and MES Co (Edwards 1969:27-29).

The State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SECV) was established in 1921 under the chairmanship of Sir John Monash. The first SECV projects were the construction of the first brown coal power plant at Newport B (adjacent to the Victorian Railways Newport A traction power station), which came on line in 1923, and Yallourn A (the first Latrobe Valley power station), which opened in stages from 1924. Meanwhile, the SECV began to establish and develop its supply and distribution network. The first stage involved the construction of substations at key locations, which enabled the SECV to progressively assume control for the supply and distribution of power in the metropolitan area. From

1922 to 1924 four metropolitan substations were constructed and operating in the following areas: Melbourne City Council area (1923); Ascot Vale (1924); Brunswick (1924); and Collingwood (1924). In 1930, the MES Co. was formally acquired by the SECV (Pierce 2009:8).

As Proudley writes,

However, as a consequence of the earlier private ownership, electricity distribution remained at least partly in the domain of local government with eleven Municipal Electrical Undertakings distributing and selling electricity purchased from the SECV [State Electricity Commission of Victoria], [which] [f]rom the 1950s to the early 1980s...expanded dramatically... (Proudley 2008).

The Spencer Street Power Station supplied the inner city of Melbourne with electricity until the 1960s.

In 1994, the Kennett government launched an extensive reform of the Victorian electricity industry, resulting in the creation of five electricity distribution companies based on geographic regions that took over the responsibilities of the SECV and the 11 MEUs in inner Melbourne.

SITE HISTORY

The site at 11-27 Tavistock Place was originally part of Crown Allotment 7, Section 3, purchased by R S Webb during the second Crown Land Sale in 1837 (Fels, Lavelle & Mider 1993, Inventory no 874). By 1839 the allotment had been subdivided and a right-of-way established, connecting Flinders and Little Flinders streets between Market and Queen streets (*Port Phillip Gazette* 16 March 1839:4). Tavistock Place was named as a lane by 1865, possibly after London's Tavistock Street (RHSV 2018).

Previous buildings on the subject site included a two-storey store and timber house occupied by Burns & Co in 1877, with a third building built in 1888. In 1910 Peterson & Co operated a store on the southern portion of the lot, while Valentine's Fruit Store occupied the northern end (Fels, Lavelle & Mider 1993, Inventory no 874; Mahlstedt Map, no 18, 1910). In 1922 the Bank of Victoria occupied 11-27 Tavistock Place (CT:V4196 F101).

Electrical substation

Between 1898 and 1900 the Melbourne City Council acquired the assets of three private electricity companies operating within its municipal boundaries, creating a new company known as the Melbourne City Council Electricity Supply Department (MCCESD). In 1907, the City of Melbourne called for tenders for the erection of electric substations to plans and specifications available from the City Architect's Office (*Age* 3 July 1907:4).

A number of electric substations were subsequently constructed, including one in Park Street that was in existence by 1914 (*Brunswick and Coburg Leader* 6 February 1914:5). Many of the substations were erected as part of the electrification of Melbourne's suburban railway system.

In 1921, the MCCESD supply capacity was augmented by provision for importing up to 5000kW at 6.6kV from the newly constructed Victorian Railways power station at Newport. In addition, in 1925 the first stage of conversion to three-phase importation from the State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SECV) for the Melbourne Electric Supply Company (MES Co.) supply areas was introduced (Pierce 2009: 7-8). A number of substations throughout the city were upgraded or newly built in order

to convert the 22,000v alternating current generated at the Newport power station to a 1,500 direct current before it was transmitted to overhead wires for use by electric trains.

The subject site was nominated for the construction of an electrical substation at a Melbourne City Council meeting held at the Melbourne Town Hall on 24 April 1926. The electric supply committee recommended that authority be given for the purchase of land in Tavistock Place from owners, customs and shipping agents Mullaly and Byrne Pty Ltd, for £15,000 (*Age* 12 March 1915:14; 24 April 1926:16). The subject site, having a frontage of 103 feet 5 inches to the west of Tavistock Lane with buildings erected thereon, was required for the erection of a rotary substation. The cost of the purchase was charged to loan, as part of a broader undertaking of the council's electrical supply (*Age* 24 April 1926:16). In January 1927 the City of Melbourne advertised tenders for the erection of an electric substation in Tavistock Place, and it is assumed that construction would have taken place later that year (*Argus* 12 January 1927:3). No information about the building's designer could be found, although it is likely to have been designed by the then city architect. A 1925 map shows the substation in situ (Figure 1).

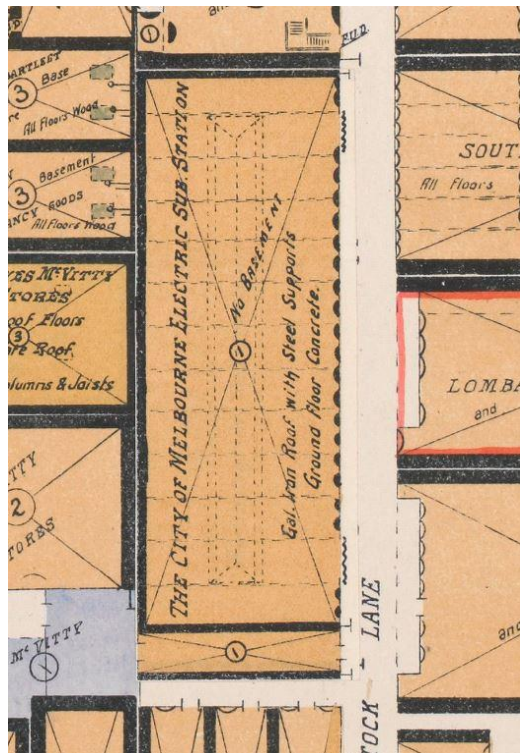


Figure 1. Detail from a 1925 Mahlstedt plan shows a substation occupying the subject site; presumably this map was updated after its construction in 1927. (Source: Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 18, 1925)

The electric substation was operated by Melbourne City Council until the privatisation of the electricity industry saw it transferred to CitiPower Ltd in 1995 (CT:V4196 F101).

In recent years, 11-27 Tavistock Place has been used for storage and a band rehearsal space, until it was recently converted into corporate office space for Beon Energy Solutions, a subsidiary of CitiPower (DRIVENxDESIGN 2018).

SITE DESCRIPTION

11-27 Tavistock Place is situated in a small laneway between Flinders Street and Flinders Lane. Like other substations in Spencer Street, George Parade and Park Street, these buildings are situated on the edges of the Hoddle Grid. 11-27 Tavistock Place is a large sub-station with a long rectangular footprint and two-storey height. The substation is built to the property boundary, forming an edge to the laneway. It is designed in an interwar industrial aesthetic with plain face brickwork and concrete lintels. The lower floor has recessed panels in an otherwise plain brick wall. These are now bricked in but probably formerly with ventilation louvres. The upper floor is lit from a regular pattern of windows set in pairs between pilasters. The window frames have been replaced. Above these is a continuous concrete lintel and a string course that forms a semi-circular arch over the doorway entrances. A similar detail of angled corbels leading from the concealed gutter to the pilasters, also found at 10-14 Park Street, is likely to indicate the same designer.

INTEGRITY

11-27 Tavistock Place is a site that has high integrity. It retains its form and façade detail from the 1920s redevelopment of the site. The windows are replacements and the ventilation openings at ground level have been bricked up. The laneway character is enhanced by the side elevation of the similarly two-storey scale Tavistock House at 383 Flinders Lane (HO648). The interior has not been investigated and it is not known whether any of the machinery and equipment remains. The building does not retain its original use.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Electrical substations

The earliest substations were small-scaled buildings and their importance not necessarily reflected in their design. The expansion of electricity supply in the interwar period reflected the importance of this new type of industrial building and efforts were made to produce designs that reflected their location and the importance of their function. Substations benefited from the philosophy that saw industrial uses as worthy recipients of design inspiration and sometimes even flamboyance as a way of celebrating the new development of electricity. Electrical substations across Melbourne show a variety of architectural manners, generally reflecting the civic and urban design concerns of the municipal electricity supply departments, the earlier electric companies and the role of the SEC. Pavilion styles proliferate in parkland areas of the Domain and the Fitzroy Gardens. Other substations in urban streetscapes tend to more austere modernism or simply adhere to a functional industrial aesthetic or a simple gable roofed 'shed'. Even in the more austere examples there is generally brickwork detail and care taken in their massing and composition (Biosis, 2007:19-25).

A large portion of the first power station erected by Melbourne City Council is included on the Heritage Overlay (HO737). This complex comprises the surviving remnants of the power station erected in 1894 to power electric lighting in the streets (Figure 2). Several other buildings used as substations are within existing or proposed precinct HOs.

The following examples are comparable with the subject building, being of a similar style, scale and construction date, although their original uses vary. The images and descriptions are provided by CoM Maps unless stated otherwise, with images dated c2000 or later.

Substation, 651-669 Lonsdale Street, 1915 (HO737)

It is a three-storey brick substation with two basement levels, built in 1915.



Figure 2. Substation at 651-669 Lonsdale Street constructed 1915.

620-648 Little Bourke Street, c1910-1925 (HO737 – recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)

CitiPower substation at (part of) 620-648 Little Bourke Street Melbourne is a two-storey interwar brick warehouse building constructed between 1910 and 1925 by Melbourne City Council Electricity for use as a carpenter's workshop to service its electricity supply station situated on the same site. The building was converted for use as an electric substation, likely in the 1920s or 1930s, and remains in use for that purpose today.



Figure 3. Substation at 620-648 Little Bourke Street constructed 1910-1925.

1-3 Evans Lane, 1913 (Contributory in interim HO1297 Little Lonsdale Street Precinct)

Built in 1913 by builders Reynolds Bros to designs by architect W Rain, this warehouse was converted to an electrical substation in 1928, as part of a program by the City of Melbourne to supply new substations in the 1920s. It continues to operate as a substation today.



Figure 4. 1-3 Evans Lane, constructed in 1913.

28 Crossley Street, build date unknown (Contributory in HO500 Bourke Hill Precinct)

A single-storey substation in Crossley Street, off Bourke Street.



Figure 5. Substation at 28 Crossley Street, unknown build date.

12-14 Guildford Lane, 1920s (Contributory in HO1205 Guildford & Hardware Laneways Precinct)

It is a single-storey brick electricity substation built in the 1920s.



Figure 6. 12-14 Guildford Lane, substation constructed c1920.

21 Market Lane, build date unknown (Contributory in HO507 Little Bourke Street Precinct)

It is a single-storey brick substation in Market Lane, off Bourke Street.



Figure 7. 21 Market Lane, build date unknown.

10-14 Park Street, 1928 (Interim HO1257 – recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)

10-14 Park Street is one of several small-scale electrical substations built in the interwar period as part of the expansion of electricity supply and distribution. It operated for over 60 years as part of the Melbourne City Council's electricity supply department. It continues to operate as a substation.



Figure 8. Substation, 10-14 Park Street constructed 1928. (Source: Context 2017)

23-25 George Street, 1938 (Interim HO1248 – recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)

23-25 George Parade is one of several small-scale electrical substations built in the interwar period as part of the expansion of electricity supply and distribution.



Figure 9. 23-25 George Parade constructed 1938. (Source: Context 2017)

11-27 Tavistock Place is a particularly large substation occupying a large extent of Tavistock Place. In size it is comparable to the substations at 651-699 Lonsdale Street and 620-648 Little Bourke Street (HO737). It is very similar to 651-699 Lonsdale Street in scale, form and detail, although the location of this place allows it to be viewed as a three-dimensional building, an aspect that is not possible in the confined space of Tavistock Place. Compared with other substations including 23-25 George Parade and 10-14 Park Street, 11-27 Tavistock Place is a more sophisticated composition with brickwork articulated by pilasters, a curved parapet highlighting the entry and the rhythm of paired windows. The substations share a common history in the development of electricity supply in the City of Melbourne and share an Interwar industrial aesthetic that contributes to the richness of building form and scale within Hoddle Grid Study Area.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓

CRITERION A

Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

CRITERION B

Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

CRITERION C

Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).

✓

CRITERION D

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

✓

CRITERION E

Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

CRITERION F

Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)

CRITERION G

Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

CRITERION H

Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

Age, as cited.

Argus, as cited.

Brunswick and Coburg Leader, as cited.

DRIVENxDESIGN 2018, *Powercor, Tavistock*, <https://drivenxdesign.com/>, accessed online 1 April 2018.

Fels, M, Lavelle S, and Mider D 1993, 'Archaeological Management Plan', prepared for the City of Melbourne.

Land Victoria, Certificates of Title (CT), as cited.

Mahlstedt, G 1910, *Index to the City of Melbourne detail fire survey*, Mahlstedt, Melbourne.

Port Phillip Gazette, as cited.

Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV) 2018, *Discovery Series Brochures: Melbourne's streets and lanes: what's in a name?*, <http://historyvictoria.org.au>, accessed online 14 March 2018.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** E

**Central City Heritage
Study 1993** C

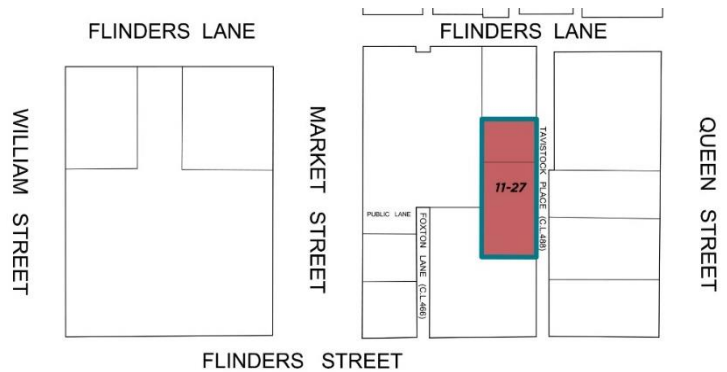
**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: CitiPower (former Melbourne City Council substation)

PS ref no: Interim HO1249



What is significant?

The electrical substation at 11-27 Tavistock Place Melbourne, built in 1927 for the Melbourne City Council Electricity Supply Department as part of the augmentation of supply from the Victorian Railways power station at Newport.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building’s original external form, materials and detailing;
- The building’s high level of integrity to its original design;
- Pattern and size of original fenestration, and rendered lintels;
- Continuous concrete lintel and a string course, forming a semi-circular arch over the doorway entrances; and
- Pilasters and angled corbel detailing.

Later alterations, including those undertaken at ground level and replacement window frames, are not significant.

How it is significant?

11-27 Tavistock Place, Melbourne, is of local historic, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

The electrical substation at 11-27 Tavistock Place is historically significant for its association with the development of Melbourne's electricity supply network established in 1894. In this year, the Melbourne City Council was the first metropolitan council to establish its own electricity supply and distribution network, which, in turn, facilitated the residential, commercial and industrial expansion of the city. The former substation is of historical significance as a substantial remnant of the interwar infrastructure built by the Melbourne City council as part of Melbourne’s expanding electricity network. (Criterion A)

11-27 Tavistock Place is a representative example of a Melbourne City Council substation designed by its own architects’ branch. As one of the larger substations it shares characteristics of form, scale and

materials with 651-699 Lonsdale Street and 620-648 Little Bourke Street. 11-27 Tavistock Place shares a common history in the development of electricity supply in the City of Melbourne and contributes to the architectural character of Tavistock Place. (Criterion D)

11-27 Tavistock Place is aesthetically significant for its sophisticated composition featuring red brickwork articulated by pilasters and stucco mouldings at eaves level and a horizontal string course. Other attributes include a curved parapet highlighting the entry and a rhythm of paired windows with continuous lintel to both ground and first floor levels. The angled corbels leading from the concealed gutter to the pilasters provide a pleasing rhythm to its façade that is accentuated by the window repetition. (Criterion E)

Primary source

Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)