

Airservices Australia Heritage Register Place Record

Airservices Australia Place ID# : 418-01 EN-APT-CTC Control Tower
Airservices Australia Place Name: Essendon Airport Air Traffic Control Tower
<p>Location of Place (inc. link to plan/map image if appropriate): The Essendon Air Traffic Control Tower is located to the north and west of the Essendon Airport two runways (1,921m and 1,585m), at the southern end of Wirraway Road, a surviving component of Bulla Road, the original thoroughfare through the airport. The ATC tower is approximately 300m south of a section of the airport known as the Wirraway Park ‘Heritage Zone’, where a number of early airport buildings have been retained. Lat: 37 43’ 31.4”S Long: 144 53’ 56.2”E.</p>
<p>CHL/RNE ID# (inc. link to CHL/RNE): Listed “Registered” on the RNE as part of the <u>Essendon Airport Group</u>. Not a listed place on the CHL. The DEWHA Australian Heritage Database provides the following: CHL - “Indicative Place”, <u>Place ID:105161</u>, Place File No: 2/13/005/0010; RNE – “Registered”, <u>Place ID: 102718</u>, Place File No: 2/13/005/0010.</p>
<p>Other known Heritage Listings Associated with Place: National Trust – File only B7158; Conservation study – Gary Vines, Western Region Industrial Heritage Study, 1989 (conservation level C).</p>
<p>Potential (non-listed) Heritage Values Associated with Place (note if investigation conducted): A Heritage Assessment commissioned in 2009 by Airservices Australia concludes the Essendon Airport Control Tower meets the CHL criterion (a), (b) & (d) at a level indicative of Commonwealth Heritage values. Refer to Statement of Significance.</p>
<p>Details if Place Located within or adjacent to known Heritage Place: Tower is identified within the RNE listed Essendon Airport Group: <u>Place ID: 102718</u>.</p>
<p>Statement of Significance for the Place (listed and/or potential): <u>Potential CHL:</u> The Essendon ATC tower is of historical significance in a national context as an early and relatively rare example of a post-World War II era control tower equipped to an international standard following guidelines devised by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). It was one of eight Australian ATC towers built to the same operational specifications between 1952 and 1959 in the first major phase of control towers development in the post-WWII period. Essendon ATC tower is now one of three surviving operational and two decommissioned ATC towers of this period and is now thought to be the earliest surviving example of this group. When commissioned, it formed part of an experimental system for the control of civil aircraft at Melbourne Airport (now known as Essendon Airport), which was at the time one of the busiest airports in the British Empire. This system comprised the air traffic control tower, remote VHF repeater and flight progress board. At the time of its design and installation, the Melbourne Airport system was envisaged as a prototype to be replicated throughout the air routes of eastern Australia. The building itself was designed by the Commonwealth of Australia Department of Works (Victoria & Tasmania Branch) for the Department of Civil Aviation. It comprises a square three-storey base building, clad in asbestos cement sheeting, and surmounted by an elongated octagonal cabin. The cabin is raised on an elongated octagonal duct and service drum. The roof of the base building forms a walkway around the drum. The building’s form and fabric are remarkably intact for a building that has operated continuously for over 50 years. External and internal modifications to Essendon ATC tower have primarily been associated with systems upgrades, notably in the late-1960s. External changes include modifications to original openings and the construction of a large ground</p>

floor extension to the east. Internally, there have been a number of alterations, principally to the first and second floors though evidence remains of the original planning and some finishes. The original console (now at the nearby Airways Museum at Essendon Airport) and all original equipment have been removed.

Essendon Airport RNE: Refer to: Place ID: 102718.

Known History and Current Use of Place: The tower was commissioned on 4 October 1956, and remains Essendon Airport's current operational Control Tower.

Summary Description of Significant Physical Characteristics/Elements of Place:

Potential CHL: Melbourne-Essendon ATC tower comprises a square, three-storey, steel-framed base clad in square sheets of asbestos cement joined under battens. The base building is surmounted by a cabin in the form of an elongated octagon – it is wider at the north and south – with outward-canted windows. The perimeter of the base structure's roof forms a 360-degree external walkway. A single-storey addition with a skillion roof of sheet metal was added to the east in the late-1960s, to house electronic and radar equipment linked to the new Melbourne Airport at Tullamarine. The cabin is raised on an octagonal base, enclosing crawl space and ducting. The walls of the base are clad in vertical box profile sheet metal. The floor of the perimeter walkway is bituminous felt. The cabin's outward canted windows are single-glazed, but may originally have been double glazed, as at the Hobart Tower (built 1956-58). The control cabin has a shallow flat roof supported on the principal glazing bars. The framing to the tower block includes steel I-beams forming intermediate columns, steel angles at the corners, and a mixture of 3"x2" and 4"x1.5" timber fillers, and 6" x 2" floor joists. The vertical I-beams were set into reinforced concrete footings sewn together with a 5" concrete slab.

Tenure Arrangements: The Essendon Airport Control Tower is owned by Airservices Australia. The tower is located on land leased from the Essendon Airport Pty Ltd. Essendon Airport is on Commonwealth land.

Summary of Works, etc relevant to Heritage Values of Place: Airservices' Environment and Climate Change Branch must be consulted prior to giving approval to any proposed modification to the Essendon ATC tower, where that modification may affect the tower's original external form and fabric (the square three-storey asbestos-clad base building and elongated octagonal cabin and service drum). There is scope for adaptation of the interior, but such works must be sympathetic with the identified values of the place. While new development could occur in the general vicinity if required, the building should be retained as an essentially free-standing structure.

Property or Information Restrictions/ Requirements Associated with Place:

Public access restricted – access only permitted by approval of Airservices Australia.

Stakeholder Consultation Requirements related to Place: Heritage related statutory obligations exist.

Location/Details of 'off-site' Objects, Records etc of Significant Association with Heritage Values of Place: The original air traffic control console is housed at the Airways Museum & Civil Aviation Historical Society, Essendon Airport, Victoria.

Relevant Conservation Documents or References:

Essendon Air Traffic Control Tower. Detailed Heritage Assessment, June 2009. Report by Lovell Chen Architects and Heritage Consultants, commissioned by Airservices Australia.

Last Record Update Date: 23 July 2009