SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

REGISTER ENTRY

Entry in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

NAME:	Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex	**PLACE NO.:** 26557
ADDRESS:	Kaurna Country	

356 Torrens Road, Kilkenny

CT 5491/302 F6312 A8; CT 5491/304 F6312 A7; CT 5491/305 F6312 A11; CT 5491/306 F6312 A10; and CT 5232/375 F6312 A6

Hundred of Yatala

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

In 1956, the Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex was designed by architect Keith Neighbour and built for Sisalkraft Distributors SA Pty Ltd, a company that manufactured sisal-based products including Sisalation. Located in Kilkenny, the complex is an outstanding representative of a mid-twentieth century factory. It exhibits many of the key attributes typical of factories erected during the industrialisation of South Australia, c.1935-1965, notably its Modernist design elements and hard landscaping. The Sisalkraft Factory Complex is also an outstanding example of Postwar International architecture, observed through elements like its rectilinear shape, structural frame and curtain walls. Similarly, the Sisalkraft Factory Complex demonstrates a high degree of creative achievement through the holistic application of Modernist design elements across the complex as well as its distinctive rhomboid skylights and concrete parabolic arch.

RELEVANT CRITERIA (under section 16 of the Heritage Places Act 1993)

(d) it is an outstanding representative of a particular class of place of cultural significance

The Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex is associated with the class of place known as mid-twentieth century factories. Mid-twentieth century factories are culturally significant to South Australia because they demonstrate the industrialisation of the state, which occurred between the mid-1930s and mid-1960s. In that time, manufacturing replaced primary production as the state's principal economic activity. Such activity occurred within factories, the number of which increased from around 1,710 in the mid-1930s to about 5,800 in 1963.

Principal characteristics of mid-twentieth century factories include:

- Modernist or International Style architectural elements,
- bespoke designed standalone administrative office/s,
- standout architectural element/s to attract business, such as landmark signage, artwork and/or landscaping,
- standalone or integrated showroom/s,
- standalone or integrated drafting, engineering or design office/s,
- manufacturing and/or assemblage facilities,
- corporate landscaping for staff and/or customer usage, including outdoor recreation and leisure areas,
- staff amenities,
- staff and/or customer carparking.

The Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex demonstrates most of these characteristics, including:

- International Style architectural elements, expressed throughout the entirety of the complex,
- A bespoke standalone administrative office building,
- standout architectural element/s to attract business, achieved through the parabolic arch and contrasting cubiform shape, as well as landscape elements;
- manufacturing facilities to the rear of the complex;
- corporate landscaping, in this case hard landscaping featuring a paved garden area with a water feature;
- staff amenities located in the annex that connects the office and the factory;
- staff and customer parking areas.

While most components of the Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex remain largely unaltered, the original showroom interior has been removed, an outdoor area originally designed for factory staff is being used for storage and the lower glass windowpanes of the office wing have been replaced with sheet metal. Regardless,

the Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex remains substantially intact, and these issues are not irreversible or irredeemable. Notably, the corporate landscaping, particularly its original hard landscape features, is exceptionally well preserved, which is an element that has typically been lost or compromised in other mid-twentieth century factories. The Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex demonstrates a high level of intactness and is considered to be an outstanding representative of the class of place, mid-twentieth century factory.

(e) it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics

The Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex is considered to be an outstanding representative of Postwar International architecture and demonstrates a high degree of creative accomplishment.

Designed by Keith Neighbour and constructed in 1956, the Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex is considered to be an outstanding example of Postwar International Style architecture, articulating many key attributes of the style, including:

- cubiform [rectilinear] overall shape, particularly evident in the office building, with its shoebox proportions and flat roof;
- structural frame expressed through the steel beams and alternating gable trusses on the factory roof that form rhomboid skylights (factory);
- curtain walls built of Besser blocks (factory) and glass window panels (office),
- large areas of glass expressed as glass window panels (office);
- overhang for shade in the form of an eave at the southern (front) elevation of the office;
- plain, smooth wall surfaces built from Besser block masonry and glass panels,
- external sun-control devices, especially evident in the eaves and metal fins along the office's southern elevation;
- contrasting non-rectangular shape expressed through the parabolic arch that supports the canopy at the front entrance.
- cantilever, expressed by the end of the canopy.

The Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex also demonstrates a high degree of creative accomplishment, exhibited through its application of Modernist design ideas and elements to a factory complex.

Neighbour designed the Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex holistically and carefully considered each of its individual components, drawing from the design language of the Postwar International style to do so. Other mid-twentieth century factories in South Australia typically centred their architectural emphasis on the administrative buildings and relied on established factory designs, most often featuring 'sawtooth' roofs, a mainstay in industrial architecture since the late nineteenth century. Conversely, each

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component of the Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex was given equal consideration, including the factory. Neighbour eschewed the standard sawtooth model and instead designed an innovative structure comprised of alternating gable trusses forming large rhomboid skylights, intended to maximise and regulate light flow.

The Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex has received contemporary and retrospective critical recognition for its creativity and progressiveness. Contemporaries lauded its modern design elements. In 1956, *Cross Section*, an influential newsletter published by the University of Melbourne's School of Architecture, declared that the complex was 'not only Adelaide's most advanced factory … but an excellent pointer for industry elsewhere'. In May 1957, *Architecture and Arts,* based in Melbourne, included the complex among its Buildings of Outstanding Merit, judged as part of its Building of the Year awards.

Subsequent observers have similarly praised the Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex. The (Royal) Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) included the complex on its list of South Australian Significant 20th Century Architecture, noting the place 'exemplified an objective approach to design'. The AIA later listed the complex in its of 20th century South Australian places.

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SITE PLAN

Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex   **PLACE NO.: 26557**

356 Torrens Road, Kilkenny

Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex, 356 Torrens Road, Kilkenny, CT 5491/302 F6312 A8; CT 5491/304 F6312 A7; CT 5491/305 F6312 A11; CT 5491/306 F6312 A10; and CT 5232/375 F6312 A6, Hundred of Yatala.

Elements of heritage significance include (but are not necessarily limited to):
- Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex,
- Office wing,
- Factory,
- Parabolic arch supporting concrete canopy,
- Landscaping, including slate pathways and courtyard, lawned areas, tiled water feature, tiled podium, flagpole and Besser and breeze block fences.

Elements not considered to contribute to significance of place include (but are not necessarily limited to):
- Non-original sheds/warehouses,
- Wire fencing,
- Air-conditioning and ventilation systems,
- Internal partitioning in office and factory,
- Cantilevered car shelter,
- Shipping containers,
- Poles for shade awnings in garden,
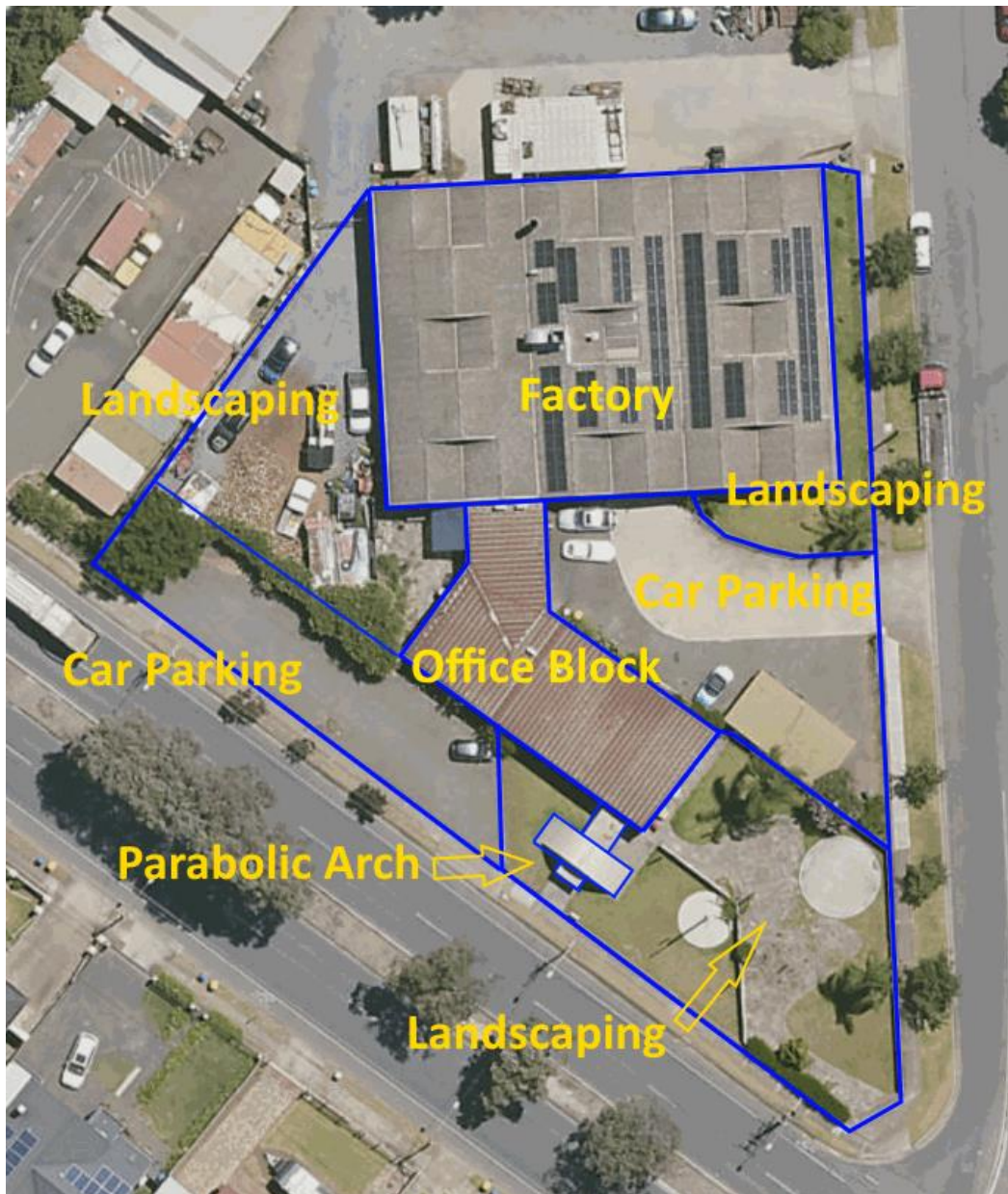- Any non-original fixtures and fittings.

N ↑

LEGEND

▭ Parcel boundaries (Indicates extent of Listing)

▭ Outline of Elements of Significance for State Heritage Place

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COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING

Description and notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

Physical Description

The Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex comprises multiple structures and elements, including an office wing, factory, parabolic arch and landscaping.

Site plan of the Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex

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Office wing

The office wing is situated to the south of the site and fronts Torrens Road. It is a steel-framed rectangular building with a flat roof clad in deck-profile steel. There is an annex at the rear connecting the office to the factory.

Features include:

- Besser block curtain walls on the north-western and south-eastern elevations,
- timber-framed glazed double door at entrance with fan light and flanking windows,
- glazed panel windows along the northern and southern elevations (bottom halves infilled with sheet steel),
- eaves,
- metal fins positioned perpendicular to southern elevation, supported on steel posts,
- timber facias.

Factory

The factory is situated to the north of the site. It is a steel-framed rectangular structure with a patterned gable truss roof clad in corrugated asbestos-cement sheeting.

Features include:

- gable truss roof pattern comprising six smaller truss sections repeated at the front, middle and rear bays and three larger truss sections repeated in two interleaving bays, forming rhomboid skylights,
- Besser block curtain walls (some sections painted),
- steel-framed glazed clerestory windows,
- interior insulation (Sisalation),
- industrial roller doors,
- timber facias.

Parabolic Arch

The front entrance features a distinctive reinforced concrete parabolic arch that supports a steel-framed canopy with timber soffits, the latter overhanging a stone pathway. The arch supports the canopy with a hanging concrete blade and steel brackets on either side. The arch is skim-coat rendered.

Landscaping

Extant landscaping features are situated primarily to the south-east of the site. These are largely hard landscape features, meaning they are constructed and inorganic. They include:

- slate pathways,

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- courtyard paved with slate,
- low fences constructed of Besser blocks and breeze blocks, the bottom two courses solid, the above four hollow,
- circular, water feature forming a shallow, tiled pool,
- steel and timber flagpole on circular, tiled plinth,
- Soft landscape features including lawned areas, palm trees and shrubs.

Elements of Significance:

Elements of heritage significance include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- Sisalkraft Factory Complex,
- Office wing,
- Factory,
- Parabolic arch supporting concrete canopy,
- Landscaping, including slate pathways and courtyard, lawned areas, tiled water feature, tiled podium, flagpole and Besser and breeze block fences.

Elements not considered to contribute to significance of place include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- Non-original sheds/warehouses,
- Wire fencing,
- Air-conditioning and ventilation systems,
- Internal partitioning in office and factory,
- Cantilevered car shelter,
- Shipping containers,
- Poles for shade awnings in garden,
- Any non-original fixtures and fittings.

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History of the Place

Mid-Twentieth Century International Style Architecture

During the early 1930s, Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Phillip Johnson coined the term 'International Style' to describe the modernist architecture designed by architects like Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.[1] The style generally prioritised simple forms responding directly to the intended function of a building, and stressed the honest expression of materials and structure, in turn rejecting ornamentation and the pretensions of historicism.[2] It also embraced industrialisation and mechanisation, seeking to harness the benefits of mass production.[3]

The Headquarters of the United Nations (centre) in New York is a quintessential example of International Style architecture.

Aesthetically, the style was characterised by:

> space enclosed by thin planes or surfaces as opposed to the suggestion of mass and solidity; regularity as opposed to symmetry or other kinds of obvious balance; and, lastly, dependence on the intrinsic elegance of materials, technical perfection, and fine proportions, as opposed to applied ornament.[4]

It was 'international' in that practitioners believed that these principles were universal and applicable anywhere in the world regardless of tradition and context, at least initially.[5] The style became a global one when it spread beyond Europe, particularly to the United States, owing to the migration of Modernist architects before and after the Second World War and modernism's embrace by homegrown architects like Frank Lloyd Wright.[6] By the middle of the century, especially following the war, multinational corporations advanced the International Style due to its perceived progressiveness.[7]

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Although South Australia tended to be stylistically conservative during the interwar period, younger Adelaide-based architects began to turn to the developing International Style, which at this stage referred broadly to modernist designs, particularly functionalist and streamlined styles.[8] Jack Cheesman, Colin Hassel and Jack McConnell were notable early advocates.[9] Cheesman, who had both travelled throughout Europe and studied contemporary American architecture, commented in 1932 that 'the "modern" or "international style" is practical, straightforward, and really in elevational treatment a truthful expression of the plan'.[10] In 1938, McConnell, originally from Melbourne, established the Young Architects Association, alternatively known as the Adelaide Architects Club, which aimed to advocate modernist architecture to the broader public.[11]

Buildings designed in modernist styles were erected in South Australia during the 1930s, but the International Style proliferated following the Second World War. The postwar economic boom and massive population growth combined to necessitate and facilitate a vast construction programme to accommodate businesses and residents, as well as provide essential amenities, like healthcare and educational facilities.[12]

This scenario was well suited to modernist design principles and practices, which were applied broadly to a vast array of buildings throughout South Australia. Historian Susan Marsden observes that by 'adopting industrial mass-production techniques[,] modernist architecture could provide bigger housing estates, factories and power stations, schools, hospitals and whole towns'.[13] Referring to modernist design in Adelaide, author Stuart Symons states that it was at the 'heart' of the city's 'physical, cultural and social transformation'.[14] In short, the International Style was interwoven with the postwar economic and population booms.

Mid-Twentieth Century Factories

Throughout the Western world, factories erected during the first half of the twentieth century were primarily designed to maximise functionality. Factories were built to serve a particular purpose and thus varied considerably by industry, ranging from large manufacturing plants to smaller scale facilities. They could encompass single structures subdivided into departments or complexes comprised of multiple, freestanding buildings. Both types could include manufacturing facilities, administrative offices and drafting departments. Most were constructed using materials such as structural steel and reinforced concrete, and accommodated new production and management processes, such as assembly lines and 'scientific management'.[15]

Importantly, designers began to draw from urban beautification and urban design principles, particularly the City Beautiful movement in the US, also known as 'beautility', and the Garden City movement in the UK. These ideas were premised on

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creating urban environments that were both aesthetically pleasing and provided various amenities for the communities associated with them.[16]

While many factories were designed by structural engineers and were purely utilitarian, others were designed by architects in whole or in part. In the 1910s, European architects like Walter Gropius began to design factories in the nascent Modernist style, itself predicated on functionality. The style continued to be applied to factories built throughout the West over the following decades.[17]

By the middle of the twentieth century, factories built in Modernist styles were typically streamlined in appearance and built using materials such as structural steel, reinforced concrete and plate glass. The greater use of glass increased natural light within factories and symbolised transparency, 'both in terms of modernity and accessibility'.[18] In addition to functionality, some factories were also designed to be tangible 'advertisements' of their businesses, intended to demonstrate their progressiveness.[19]

Moreover, by this time, the earlier City Beautiful and Garden City ideas were transformed into 'corporate landscaping', which in part sought to factor in employee interests.[20] It was common for businesses to invest in 'landscaped parks, pleasure gardens or at least an outdoor seating area with trees, shrubs, flowers, or a roof garden or atrium garden'.[21] These spaces were intended to be used by staff and/or clients and sometimes included amenities like sporting facilities.[22] Their inclusion was undoubtedly also used for promotional ends.

Although factories had existed in South Australia for many decades, during the late 1930s their number increased in response to efforts to industrialise South Australia and enlarge its manufacturing sector.[23] This process intensified during the postwar economic boom and continued into the 1960s.[24] In that time, industrial zones were established, in places such as Elizabeth and Edwardstown, and many factories were erected throughout the State, in both utilitarian and modernist styles, often with a mix of both, especially at factory complexes. Administrative and public-facing buildings tended to be more stylised than production facilities.[25] The latter were often clad with corrugated metal and featured 'sawtooth' roofs, a mainstay of factory design since the nineteenth century.[26]

The application of the Garden City ideal to industrial areas had been at least partially implemented in places like Dry Creek before the war,[27] but it was combined with the 'New Towns' model and implemented on a massive scale during the postwar period, as seen by the development of Elizabeth.[28] Likewise, corporate landscaping and outdoor employee facilities were heavily integrated into the design of some factories, such as the Chrysler Plant in Clovelly Park (now in Tonsley) and ETA Foods in Renown Park (since demolished).

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Industrialisation and the Postwar Boom

Before the 1930s, the South Australian economy was based on primary production, predominantly agriculture and pastoralism and, briefly, mining.[29] Manufacturing was largely geared towards supplying these industries with equipment and processing the produce created, as well as providing basic consumer goods for the domestic market.[30]

The state's heavy reliance on primary production exposed the economy to several risks, including seasonal variations and fluctuating prices. It also left South Australia less competitive than other states, particularly Victoria and New South Wales, which were further along their industrialisation pathways. Recognising these vulnerabilities, in the 1920s the state government launched a Royal Commission into the manufacturing sector. Promisingly, the motor body industry developed during the decade. Beyond this, however, leaders did not devise a serious industrialisation strategy until primary production was greatly impacted by the Great Depression and the nascent motor body industry threated to move interstate.[31]

Spearheaded by Premiers Richard Butler and Thomas Playford, public servants like J. W. Wainwright and organisations like the South Australian Chamber of Manufacturers, major efforts to encourage manufacturing and transform the economy commenced in the mid-1930s.[32] Certain taxes were greatly reduced to encourage growth, infrastructure was constructed to support industrial development and the South Australian Housing Trust (SAHT) was established to provide low-cost housing for workers.[33] Various firms responded positively to these developments and increased or commenced operations in the late 1930s, notably BHP in Whyalla.[34] Industrialisation was further stimulated by war production during the Second World War, reflected by the munitions factories in and around Salisbury, Woodville North and Hendon.[35]

Factory workers visited by Premier Thomas Playford (left) during the Second World War, c.1944.
Source: SLSA B64210

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Despite initial difficulties, the national economy boomed following the war, much as it did in other parts of the world, especially throughout the Anglosphere.[36] A ravenous demand for consumer goods was unleashed after wartime restraints were lifted and economic activity 'increased more than threefold'.[37] As a result of the postwar 'Baby Boom' and mass immigration, the number of young families also grew. The Australian population consequently almost doubled between the mid-1940s and mid-1960s, in turn further stimulating growth and development.[38]

In South Australia, the government introduced a raft of measures to accelerate the industrialisation process. It began mining coal at Leigh Creek, nationalised the state's electricity industry and built a power station in Port Augusta to ensure a cheap and reliable source of energy; retained price controls for several years following the war to reduce living costs and in turn minimise agitation for higher wages; secured from the Commonwealth a disproportionately larger share of Assisted Passage migrants; bolstered or established industrial cities, suburbs and corridors, including Whyalla and Elizabeth; and, through the SAHT, constructed thousands of houses for workers throughout the state.[39]
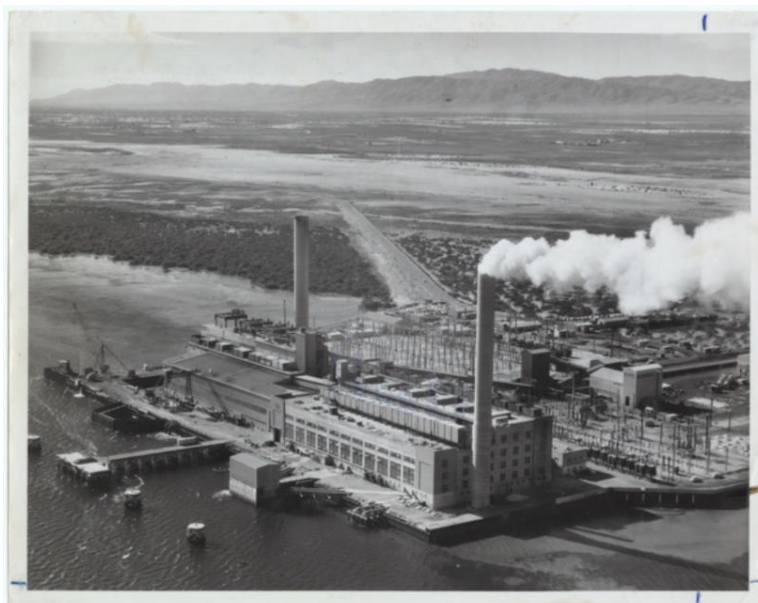
Playford A Power Station in Port Augusta (since demolished), c.1962.
Source: Darian Smith, SLSA B 48544

The attempt to encourage and entice industrial manufacturing in South Australia worked. Authors Mark Dean and Lance Worrall observe that '23 significant manufacturing firms' were established in South Australia during the 1940s, followed by another 26 during the 1950s, in turn 'doubling the number of firms established during the 1930s'.[40] Most firms were related to 'motor-vehicles, electrical goods and household appliances'.[41] The number of factories and workers employed in these industries similarly grew: by the mid-1960s, there were about 5,800 factories of various kinds and sizes throughout South Australia,[42] and around 118,000 people employed in manufacturing.[43]

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A large share of this growth stemmed from foreign capital investment, including from the US. Throughout Australia, postwar industrial development had been 'financed in no small measure by overseas capital, with a significant contribution from the United States'.[44] Scholar Donald Brash notes that the 'value of American direct investment in Australia [...] expanded by 446 per cent' between 1950 and 1962.[45] In South Australia, American capital investment was most evident in the establishment of the General Motors Holden factory in Elizabeth South and the Chrysler factory in Clovelly Park.[46]

The combined result of government policy, capital investment, global economic conditions and a soaring population, South Australian's economy was completely transformed in the space of a few decades. The manufacturing sector outweighed primary production for the first time in the 1950s and by the mid-1960s South Australia had essentially been industrialised.

Sisalkraft

In 1925, the US-based American Reenforced [sic] Paper Company filed its patent for Sisalkraft, the brand name for its waterproof, reinforced building paper.[47] The product was initially designed as protective sheeting for 'building, agricultural and industrial uses',[48] though early advertisements stressed its broader applicability.[49] A copper coated version was later developed for use as flashing and was followed by the creation of Sisalation, an aluminium variant used for insulation and sarking.[50]

The American Reenforced Paper Company first manufactured the product at its plant in Attleboro, Massachusetts. Distribution branches operating as the Sisalkraft Company were subsequently established in other American cities, namely Chicago, New York City and San Francisco. By the early 1930s, Sisalkraft products were being manufactured and distributed internationally.[51] Australia's first Sisalkraft factory opened in Sydney in 1932.[52]
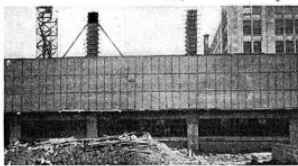
The company's expansion continued after the Second World War. In the US, additional factories were opened during the 1950s in Cary, Illinois, and Tracy, California.[53] Sometime thereafter, the Reenforced Paper Company likely changed its name to American Sisalkraft Corp.[54] By the 1960s, Sisalkraft was operating in most Australian capital cities,[55] variously as Australian Sisalkraft, Sisalkraft Distributors, Australian Reenforced Paper Company and Bates (Australasia).[56]

These subsidiaries resembled multinational franchises, in that they were co-owned by a parent company and local investors, in this instance split evenly between the two.[57] Moreover, they appear to have operated under a licensing agreement, allowing them to use the Sisalkraft name and manufacture the product locally.[58] While they were both American and Australian owned, Donald Brash noted Sisalkraft in his study of American capital investment in Australia.[59]

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Advertisement for Sisalkraft building paper, the American Reenforced Paper Company's new product, 1926.

Source: *American Builder*, February 1926 (via Hathi Trust).

The US-based St Regis Paper Company acquired American Sisalkraft Corp in 1960, including its Australian holdings.[60] In 1961, St Regis-ACI Pty. Ltd. was registered in Australia,[61] suggesting a merger or joint-venture with Australian Consolidated Industries (ACI), a glass manufacturing conglomerate that later introduced Pink Batts® to the Australian market, another widely used insulation product.[62]

St Regis-ACI initially operated under the Sisalkraft name, but eventually used its own name while continuing to sell Sisalkraft and Sisalation branded products.[63] St Regis was deregistered as an Australian company in 1999.[64] Fletcher Building acquired ACI in the early 2000s, bringing with it the Sisalation and Sisalkraft brands.[65]

The Sisalkraft Factory Complex

On 18 November 1955, Sydney-based Sisalkraft Distributors purchased a portion of Section 62, Hundred of Yatala, located on the south-eastern corner of Torrens Road and Goodall Avenue in what was then Challa Gardens.[66] Challa Gardens was created as a new suburb five years earlier on land that was previously a part of Kilkenny.[67]

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Kilkenny had been a mixed residential and industrial suburb since the nineteenth century. Almost all industrial activity occurred at its south-western corner around the railway line and Port Road.[68] The north-western end largely comprised undeveloped and agricultural land, with limited residential development.[69] Around the time Challa Gardens was established, commercial and industrial development proliferated in the area, as it had throughout the north-western suburbs generally, owing largely to the government's industrialisation efforts.[70]

In 1956, the company commissioned the architectural firm Lawson, Cheesman and Doley to design a factory complex for the site.[71] Employee Keith Neighbour was selected to lead the project. Neighbour, a veteran of the Second World War and former prisoner of Imperial Japan, was still early in his career as an architect when he led on this commission,[72] making the Sisalkraft factory complex one of his earliest projects.

Drawing on modernist architectural principles, Neighbour designed the Sisalkraft Factory Complex in a progressive and comprehensive manner. Comprising distinct but connected sections, Neighbour's design integrated steel frames, plate glass and Besser block curtain walls. A standout feature was the concrete parabolic arch at the entrance. The arch was built without a top form, suggesting it was poured in-situ rather than manufactured off-site.[73] Another notable feature was the factory's alternating gable trusses that formed rhomboid skylights, intended to regulate light flow. Sisalation, the company's aluminium insulation product, was used as sarking in the office and factory roofs.[74] Even the office furniture was included in the design.[75]
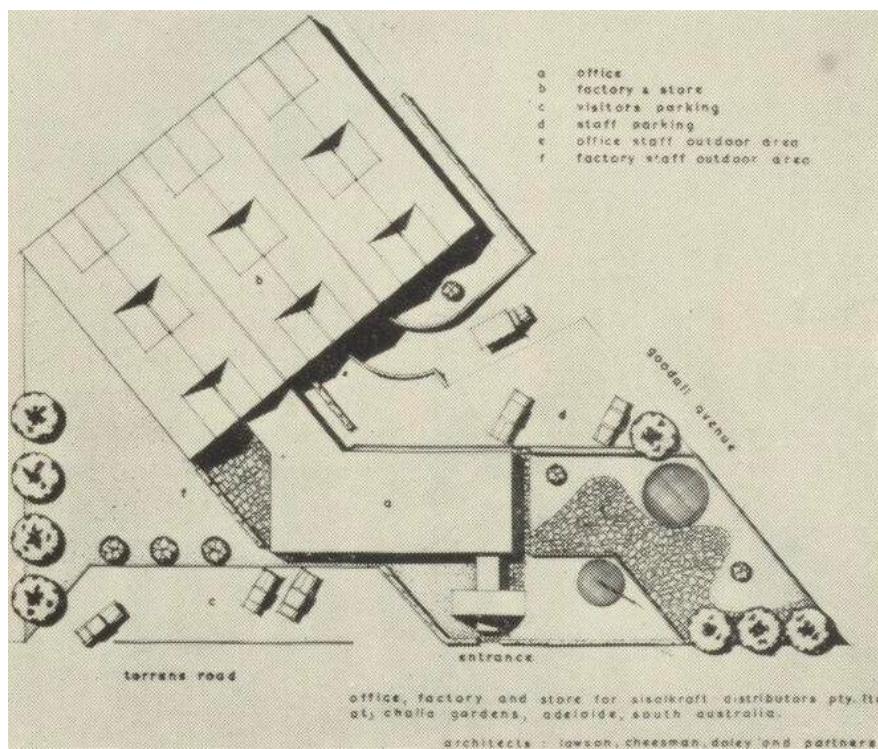
Site plan of the Sisalkraft Factory Complex, 1957.

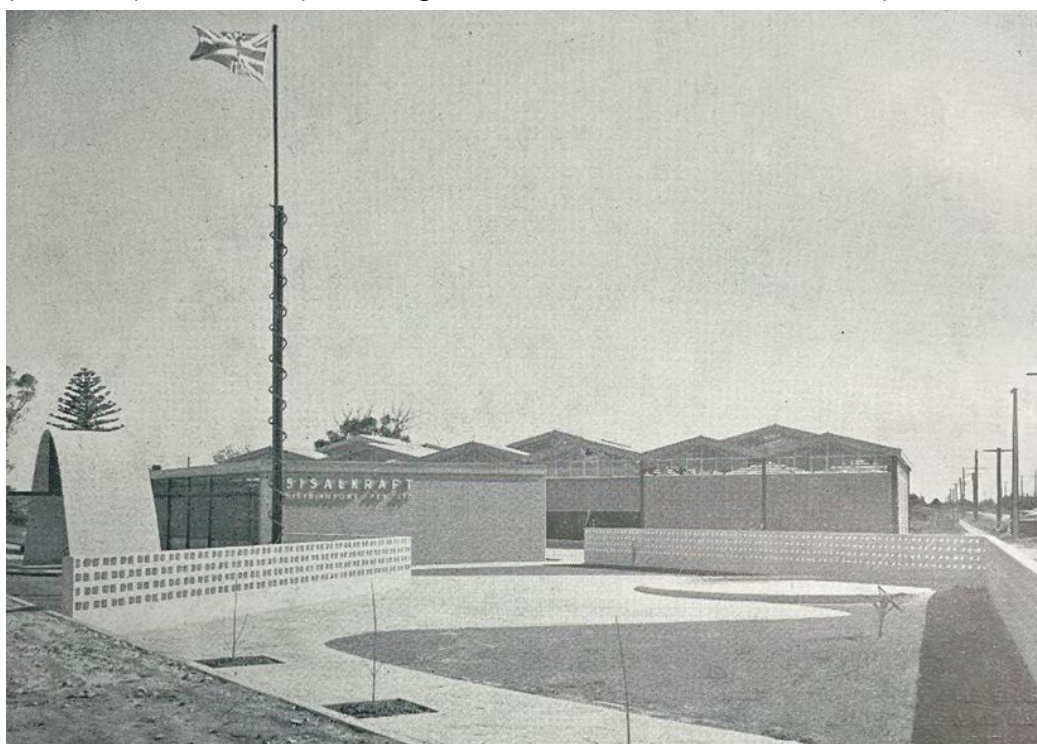Source: *Architecture and Arts* no.46 (June 1957), p.32; trove.nla.gov.au.

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Corporate landscaping was also integral to the design, which included outdoor areas for both office and factory staff, though the area for the former was more elaborate, likely due to its visibility to the public. A 1957 article in *Architecture and Arts*, a Melbourne-based magazine, noted the outdoor 'conference area', with its 'lawns, pool, stone paving, shrubs, seats and screens'. It observed that '[i]ntegrated landscaping was considered to be most important, both by clients and architects'.[76]

Builders Wilckens and Burnside Ltd. were contracted to construct the factory complex in 1956.[77] It was completed sometime later that year and was occupied no later than February 1957, by which time Sisalkraft Distributors was listing the place within its national advertisements.[78] The company's name was placed conspicuously and proudly on the showroom wall facing the south-eastern corner.[79]

The complex was immediately well received within Australian architectural circles. In 1956, *Cross Section*, an influential newsletter published by the University of Melbourne's School of Architecture, declared that the complex was 'not only Adelaide's most advanced factory [building] but an excellent pointer for industry elsewhere'.[80] In May 1957, *Architecture and Arts* included the complex among its Buildings of Outstanding Merit, part of its Building of the Year award.[81] The following month, the magazine published an article on the complex and a year later included the complex as an example of a 'post-war city building' that exhibited fine workmanship and creativity.[82]

Sisalkraft Factory Complex c.1956.

Source: South Australian Institute of Architects, *Architecture in South Australia*, p.54.

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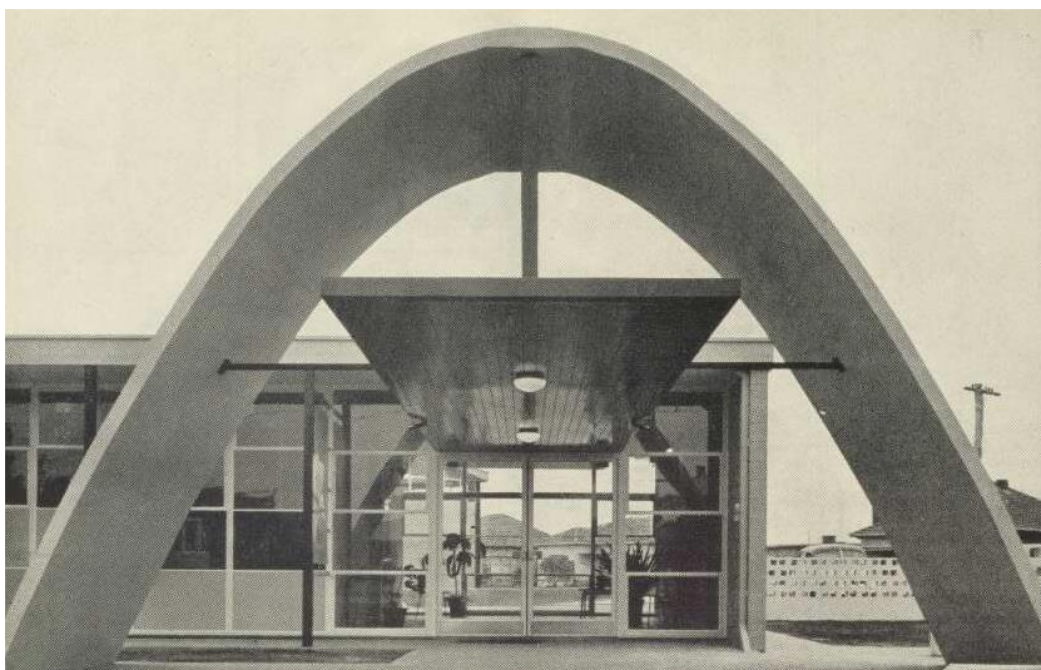
Feature Concrete Parabolic Arch, c.1957.

Source: *Architecture and Arts*, June 1957, p.32.

Subsequent History

Sisalkraft Distributors continued to own the factory complex until the early 1980s.[83] Advertisements from that time indicate that the business was by then operating as St Regis-ACI, which had been Sisalkraft's parent company in Australia since the early 1960s.[84] On 25 June 1982, the land title was transferred to St Regis-ACI.[85] It is likely the Sisalkraft signage was removed from the factory complex around this time. In August the following year, St Regis-ACI sold the factory complex, effectively ending its association with the Sisalkraft name.[86]

Classic Holdings Pty Ltd purchased the factory complex and subsequently leased it to Liebherr-Australia, a subsidiary of the Liebherr Group based in Europe,[87] a 'major manufacturer of mining, earthmoving and construction equipment'.[88] A year earlier, the Foreign Investment Board approved the Liebherr Group's proposal to construct a $10 million manufacturing plant in what is now Para Hills West.[89] Liebherr-Australia likely used the Former Sisalkraft factory complex as a showroom and warehouse until its own factory was built, which appears to have been completed in the early to mid-1990s.[90]

According to the owner of Marque Restorations, a business that restores classic cars, their tenancy in the factory section of the complex commenced in the 1990s, which correlates roughly with when the first portions of Liebherr-Australia's factory were built.[91] The building was later purchased in 1998 by its current owners.[92] The office has had multiple tenancies since; Marque Restorations continues to lease the factory section.[93]

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While there have been several alterations to the factory complex over the years, attributable to its varied uses and general wear, it has remained substantially intact since its construction in 1956. In c. 1986 the South Australian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects recognised it as an example of significant 20th century architecture in South Australia. Additionally, it is included in Stuart Symons' book, *Modernist Adelaide: 100 Buildings, 1940s to 1970s*, and was featured in a 2023 edition of *Spirit of Progress*, the journal of the Art Deco and Modernism Society of Australia Inc.[94]

Chronology

Year	Event
1846	29 October: Hundred of Yatala is established.
1892	Section 2069, Hundred of Yatala, is subdivided, which includes the creation of Section 62.
1919	13 June: Architect Keith Neighbour is born in Goolwa, South Australia.
c.1926	**The American Reenforced Paper Company establishes Sisalkraft, the brand name for its waterproof reinforced building paper.**
1932	Sisalkraft begins operating in Australia. The first Sisalkraft factory in Australia opens in Sydney.
1930s-1960s	South Australia undergoes intensive industrialisation, completely transforming its economy and society.
1940-1945	Keith Neighbour joins the RAAF and serves as a gunner in a bomber crew in the Pacific. He is captured by the Japanese in 1942 and spends the next several years as a prisoner of war.
1954	Keith Neighbour is hired by the architectural firm Lawson, Cheesman and Doley.
1955	**18 November: Sisalkraft Distributors Pty Ltd purchases a portion of Section 62, Hundred of Yatala.**
1956	**Sisalkraft Distributors commission architectural firm Lawson, Cheesman and Doley to design a factory complex for the site. Keith Neighbour is assigned the project.** **Builders Wilckens and Burnside Ltd. are contracted to construct the factory complex.** **Construction of the Sisalkraft Factory Complex is completed later in the year.**
1957	**Sisalkraft commence operations at the factory complex early in the year.** **May: *Architecture and Arts* includes the complex among its Buildings of Outstanding Merit, part of its Building of the Year award.**

1959	Lawson, Cheesman, Doley and Partners is renamed Cheesman, Doley, Brabham and Neighbour. Neighbour was made a partner sometime between his employment in 1954 and the firm's rebranding.
1960	American firm St Regis Paper Company acquires the American Reenforced Paper Company, which includes the Sisalkraft brand and all the business's Australian holdings.
1961	St Regis-ACI is registered as an Australian Company. It continues to operate its Sisalkraft holdings under their original name.
c.1980s	St Regis-ACI begin operating their Sisalkraft holdings under their own name. The Sisalkraft signage at the factory complex is likely removed around this time.
1982	**25 June: The land title is transferred from Sisalkraft Distributors to St Regis-ACI.**
1983	**August: St Regis-ACI sell the property to Classic Holdings Pty Ltd. The latter immediately leases the factory complex to Liebherr-Australia, a subsidiary of the Europe-based Liebherr Group.**
c.1992	Liebherr Australia relocate to their new factory complex in what is now Para Hills.
	Marque Restorations commences its tenancy of the factory section of the complex.
1998	**The property is purchased by its current owners. Various tenants have since leased the office section of the complex. Marque Restorations continue to lease the factory section.**
1999	St Regis is deregistered as an Australian company.
2000s	Fletcher Building acquires ACI, including the Sisalkraft and Sisalation brands.

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SITE DETAILS

Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex   **PLACE NO.: 26557**

356 Torrens Road, Kilkenny

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Factory complex comprising office wing and factory, with landscaping and feature reinforced concrete parabolic arch supporting a canopy over the entrance.
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:	1956
REGISTER STATUS:	Nominated: 5 December 2022
	Provisionally entered: 8 May 2025
CURRENT USE:	Commercial use, c.1980s –
PREVIOUS USE(S):	Manufacturing, 1957 – c.1980s
ARCHITECT:	Keith Neighbour of Lawson, Cheesman, Doley and Partners, 1956
BUILDER:	Wilckens and Burnside Ltd., 1956
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	City of Charles Sturt

LOCATION:	**Street No.:**	356
	Street Name:	Torrens Road
	Town/Suburb:	Kilkenny
	Post Code:	5009
LAND DESCRIPTION:	**Title Reference:**	CT 5491/302 F6312 A8; CT 5491/304 F6312 A7; CT 5491/305 F6312 A11; CT 5491/306 F6312 A10; and CT 5232/375 F6312 A6
	Hundred:	Yatala

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PHOTOS

Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex   **PLACE NO.: 26557**

356 Torrens Road, Kilkenny

Aerial view of the Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex, c.1969.

Source: ENV Maps

Aerial view of the Former Sisalkraft Factory Complex, c.1979.
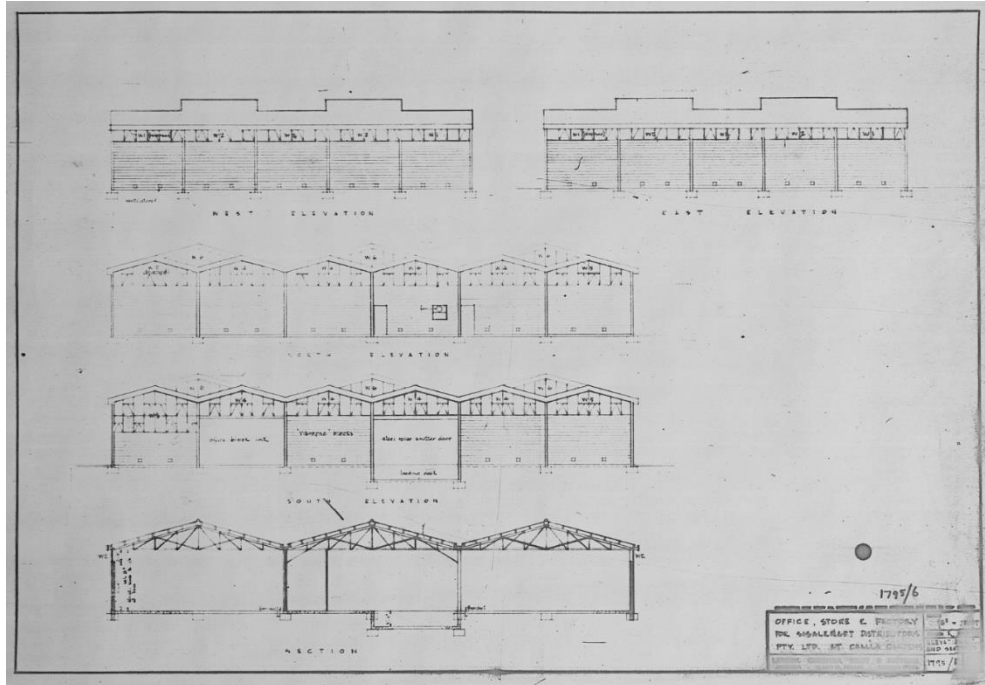
Source: ENV Maps

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Sections and elevations for factory section, c.1957.

Source: Rob Tinga; Art Deco and Modernist Society (SA Chapter)

Plan of office and showroom layout, c.1957.

Source: Rob Tinga; Art Deco and Modernist Society (SA Chapter)

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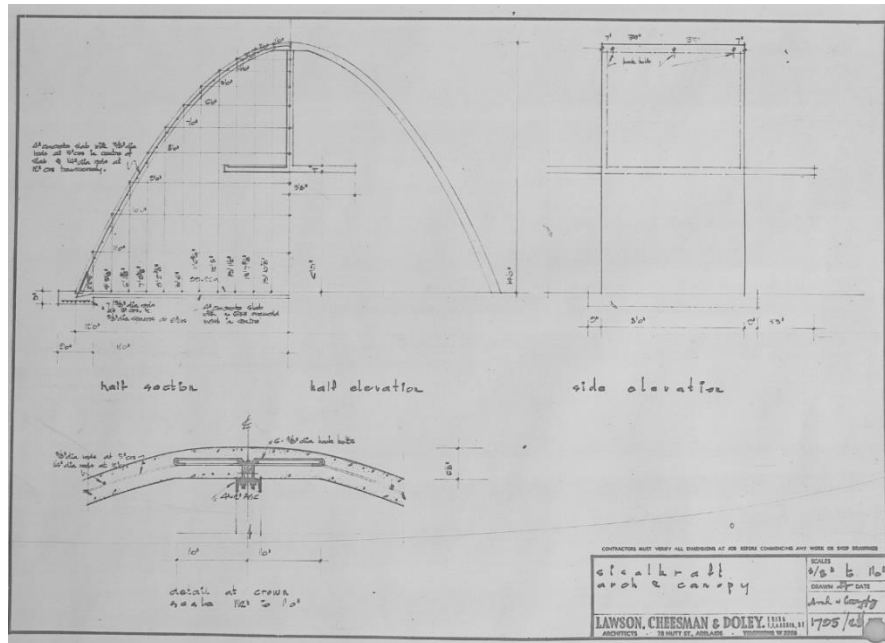
Elevations and sectional details for the parabolic arch, c.1957.

Source: Rob Tinga; Art Deco and Modernism Society of Australia (Adelaide Chapter)

*All subsequent photographs taken by DEW staff on 26 November 2024

Parabolic arch, canopy and slate path at front entrance.

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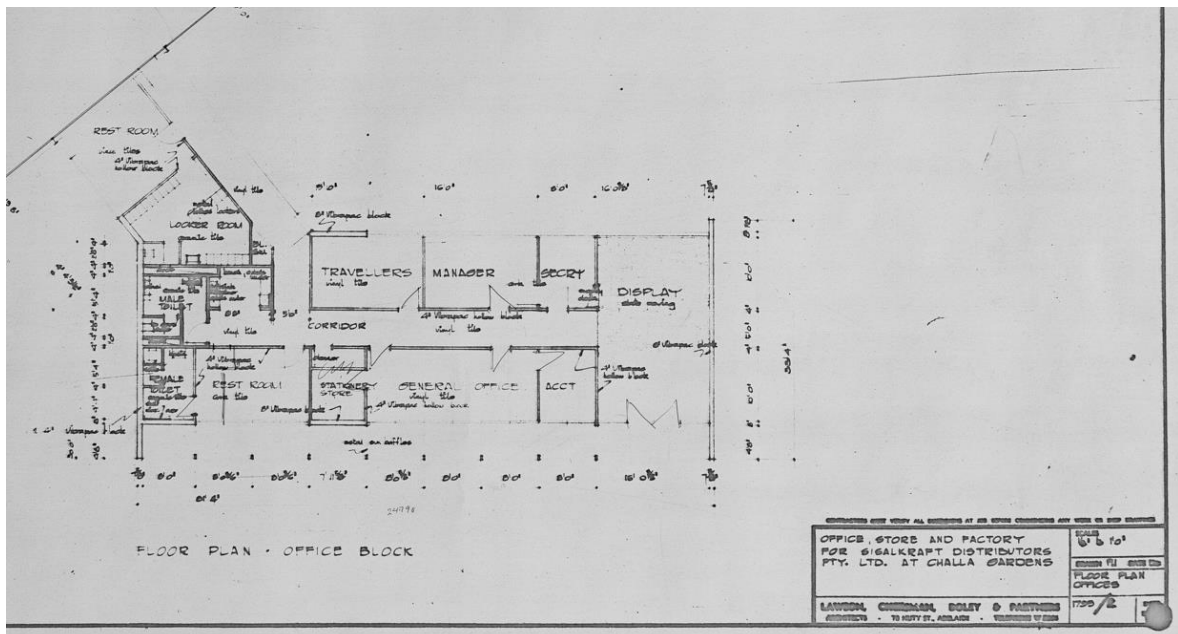Confirmed by the South Australian Heritage Council on (tbc)

Front canopy fronting Torrens Road.

Eave at southern elevation with steel posts and fins.

Portion of southern (front) elevation of office showing customer carpark to the left.

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Southern side showing parabolic arch, eastern elevation of office and landscaping elements.
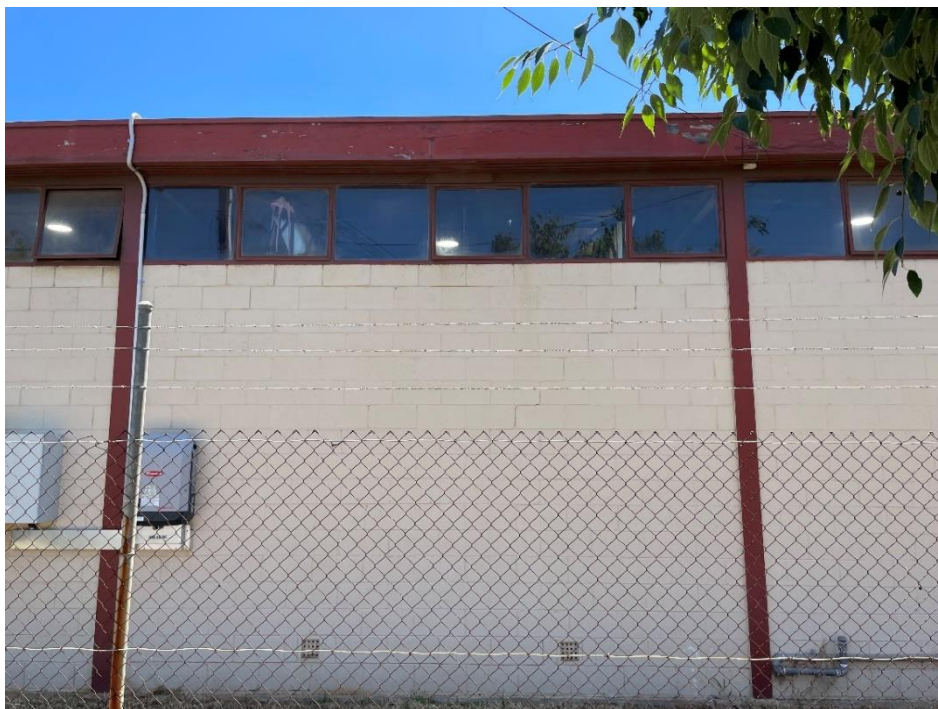

Centre of site showing rear of office and staff carpark (left), driveway and office annex (middle) and southern elevation of factory (right).

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Section of factory's southern elevation showing driveway to street.

Representative view of the factory's eastern elevation showing Besser block curtain wall and clerestory windows. Portions of the wall have been painted.

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Section of the factory's northern (rear) election showing gable truss roof pattern. Note that the Besser blocks have not been painted.

Roofline of the factory's northern (rear) elevation.

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North-west corner of factory.

Indicative damage to facias (rot) and glass.

Indicative damage to facias on northern elevation.

Roof trusses in factory forming rhomboid skylights.

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Interior view of factory showing steel trusses, rhomboid skylights, clerestory windows and insulation (Sisalation).

Landscaping to east of site showing water feature in foreground.

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Landscaping to east of site showing slate paving, water feature, flagpole (right) and Besser brick fences.

Landscaping to east of site showing slate paving and Besser block fence.

Flagpole on circular tiled plinth.

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[1] Hasan-Uddin Khan, *International Style: Modernist Architecture from 1925 to 1965* (Koln: Taschen, 2001), p.8.

[2] Alfred H. Barr Jr, 'Preface' in Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1995), p.29; Khan, *International Style*, esp. pp.7-9; Stuart Symons, *Modernist Adelaide: 100 Buildings, 1940s – 1970s* (Adelaide: House of Ralph, 2019), p.5; Paul Greenhalgh, 'Introduction' in *Modernism in Design*, Paul Greenhalgh (ed.) (London: Reaktion Books, 1990), pp.8-10; and Philip Goad, 'Modernism' in *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Philip Goad and Julie Willis (eds.) (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2012): pp.464-467

[3] Khan, *International Style*, p.7; Greenhalgh, 'Introduction', pp.8-10; and Goad, 'Modernism', p.464.

[4] Barr Jr, 'Preface', p.29.

[5] Khan, *International Style*, pp.8-9.

[6] Khan, *International Style*, p.7 and pp.91-113.

[7] Khan, *International Style*, pp.117-147; Richard Apperly, Robert Irving and Peter Reynolds, *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, reprint (North Ryde: Angus and Robertson, 2011), p.214.

[8] Michael Page, *Sculptors in Space: South Australian Architects 1836-1986* (Adelaide: Royal Institute of Architects, 1986), pp.177-194, esp.188; Chris Burns, *Liturgy, Community, Modernity: Postwar Places of Worship in South Australia 1945-1990* (Adelaide: Architecture Museum, University of South Australia, 2020), p.22; Apperly, Irving and Reynolds, *Identifying Australian Architecture*, pp.184-187; Carol Cosgrove, *Moving to the Modern: Art Deco in South Australian Architecture* (Adelaide: Architecture Museum, University of South Australia, 2009), p.12.

[9] Page, *Sculptors in Space,* p.188; Louise Bird, *Russell S. Ellis: Pioneer Modernist Architect* (Adelaide: Architecture Museum, University of South Australia, 2007), p.14.

[10] Jack Cheesman quoted in Symons, *Modernist Adelaide*, p.5. Also see Page, *Sculptors in Space*, pp.61-63.

[11] Bird, *Russell S. Ellis*, pp.16-17.

[12] Susan Marsden, Carol Cosgrove and Robyn Taylor, *Twentieth Century Heritage Survey Stage 1: Post Second World War, 1946-1959* (Adelaide: Department for Environment and Heritage, 2004): p.37. For Australia more broadly, see Hannah Lewi and Philip Goad, *Australia Modern: Architecture, Landscape and Design* (Port Melbourne: Thames and Hudson, 2019), pp.22-28.

[13] Marsden, Cosgrove and Taylor, *Twentieth Century Heritage Survey* ,p.37

[14] Symons, *Modernist Adelaide*, p.7.

[15] Gillian Darley, *Factory* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003), pp.74-103.

[16] Robert Freestone, *Urban Nation: Australia's Planning Heritage* (Collingwood: CSIRO Press, 2010): pp.60-64 and pp.178-184; Robert Freestone, 'From City Improvement to the City Beautiful' in *The Australian Metropolis: A Planning History*, Stephen Hamnett and Robert Freestone (eds.) (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2000), pp.31-32.

[17] Darley, *Factory,* pp.74-103; Darley, *Factory,* pp.74-79.

[18] Darley, *Factory,* p.121.

[19] Darley, *Factory,* p.8.

[20] Helena Chance, *The Factory in a Garden: A History of Corporate Landscapes from the Industrial to the Digital Age* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2017), p.2.

[21] Chance, *Factory in a Garden*, p.2.

[22] Chance, *Factory in a Garden*, p.2.

[23] See Susan Marsden, *Twentieth Century Heritage Survey, State 1: Post Second World War (1946-1959), Overview History* (Adelaide: Department for Environment and Heritage, 2004), pp.27-28 and D. L. J. Aitchison, *Statistical Register of South Australia, 1963-64: Part V(b), Secondary Production* (Adelaide: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistic, 1966), p.5.

[24] Paul Sendziuk and Robert Foster, *A History of South Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp.130-145.

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25 For more on interwar and postwar modernist factory design in South Australia, see Caroline Cosgrove, *The Architectural Practice as a Professional Service Firm: Hassell* (PhD Thesis, Division of Education, University of South Australia, 2014), pp.115-156, esp. 122-133 and pp.144-147.

26 Caroline Cosgrove, 'Industrial Modernist: Sisalkraft Factory, Adelaide', *Spirit of Progress,* vol. 24 no. 1 (2023): p.26; James Wormald, 'The Legacy of the Sawtooth Roof, an Icon of Industrial Architecture', ArchDaily, 17 January 2024. https://www.archdaily.com/1012186/the-legacy-of-the-sawtooth-roof-an-icon-of-industrial-architecture Accessed 8 January 2025.

27 Alan Hutchings, 'Comprehensive Town Planning Comes to South Australia' in *With Conscious Purpose: A History of Town Planning in South Australia*, Alan Hutchings (ed.), 2nd ed. (Adelaide: Planning Institute Australia, 2007): 73-78.

28 Mark Peel, 'Planning the Good City in Australia: Elizabeth as a New Town', Working Paper No. 30 (Urban Research Program, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1992), p.6.

29 Copper mining during the nineteenth century constituted the height of resource extraction in South Australia prior to the 1930s.

30 David C. Rich, 'Tom's Vision? Playford and Industrialisation' in *Playford's South Australia: Essays on the History of South Australia 1933-1968*, eds. O'Neil, Bernard, Raftery, Judith, and Round, Kerrie (Adelaide: Association of Professional Historians, 1996): pp. 93-94; Mark Dean and Lance Worrell, 'Embedding Industrialisation and Deindustrialisation in South Australia', *Journal of Australian Political Economy,* no.93 (2024): pp.69-70; and 'Industrialisation', SA History Hub, History Trust of South Australia. https://sahistoryhub.history.sa.gov.au/subjects/industrialisation/ Accessed 12 December 2024. Building railway locomotives and rollingstock for the state's rail system also developed as a notable industrial venture. See Donovan and Associates, *Railway Heritage South Australia* (Adelaide: National Trust of South Australia, 1992).

31 Rich, 'Tom's Vision?', pp.93-94 and p.105; 'Industrialisation', SA History Hub.

32 Rich, 'Tom's Vision?', p.97.

33 Peter Donovan, *An Industrial History of South Australia* (Adelaide: University of Adelaide, 1979), pp.80-81.

34 Rich, 'Tom's Vision?', pp.93-94 and p.105; 'Industrialisation', SA History Hub.

35 Rich, 'Tom's Vision?, p.102.

36 Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, 4th edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp.204-247

37 Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, p.204.

38 Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, p.204.

39 See Rich, 'Tom's Vision?', pp.91-116; Sendziuk and Foster, *History of South Australia*, pp.130-145; and 'Industrialisation', SA History Hub.

40 Dean and Worrall, 'Embedding Industrialisation', p.72.

41 Donovan, *Industrial History of South Australia,* p.81.

42 Tom McKnight, 'Industrial Location in South Australia', *Australian Geographical Studies,* vol. 5, no. 1 (1967): p.50; Aitchison, *Statistical Register of South Australia*, p.5 and p.22; and Dean and Worrall, 'Embedding Industrialisation', p.72; and Rich, 'Tom's Vision?', esp. p.91, pp.94-95.

43 Rich, 'Tom's Vision?', p.91.

44 Department of Trade, *United States Investment in Australian Manufacturing Industry* (Melbourne: Commonwealth of Australia, 1957), Introduction [page no. N.A.].

45 Donald Brash, *American Investment in Australian Industry* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1966), p.9.

46 The Holden plant began operating in 1960 and the Chrysler plant in 1964. Both companies had already been operating in South Australia for several decades.

47 The patent was filed by the American Reenforced Paper Company on 3 July 1925 and accepted on 3 November 1925. United States Patent Office, *Official Gazette of the United States Patent Office* (D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1925), p.25.

48 'Sisalkraft Celebrates 25th Anniversary', *California Lumber Merchant* (1952), p.32.

49 See 'Try One Roll of Sisalkraft: "More than a Building Paper" (advertisement)', *American Builder* (May 1929), p.178; 'Sisalkraft A Reinforced Waterproof Building Paper that is

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[50] 'Sisalkraft Celebrates', p.32.

[51] Sisalkraft Celebrates', p.32.

[52] 'Companies Registered', *Sun* (Sydney), 19 July 1932, p.6 and 'Sisalkraft Products: Influential Board of Directors Establish Factory in Sydney', *Farmer and Settler* (Sydney), 15 December 1932, p.2.

[53] 'Sisalkraft Celebrates', p.32.

[54] 'American Sisalkraft Corporation, Factory, Tracy, CA', Pacific Coast Architecture Database, University of Washington.
https://pcad.lib.washington.edu/building/25042/

[55] Cosgrove, 'Industrial Modernist', p.26.

[56] See Brash, *American Investment*, p.322 and 'How to Make Your House a Home (advertisement), *Australian Home Beautiful* (1957), p.2.

[57] Brash, *American Investment*, p.322.

[58] This was the case with the Sydney-based Sisalkraft established in 1932 and was presumably how the interstate subsidiaries also operated. 'Companies Registered', 19 July 1932, p.6.

[59] Brash, *American Investment*, p.322. Sisalkraft is also mentioned in the Department of Trade's 1957 study. Department of Trade, *United States Investment*, p.2.

[60] John R. Ross, interview with Andrew F. Storer, 22 September 1975, transcript in *Oral History Interview Collection*, Vol. III, ed. Barbara D. Holman (1976: Forest History Society, 1976): p.101.

[61] 'St. Regis Pacific Pty Ltd', Registration Date 9 June 1961.
ASIC Organisations and Business Names.

[62] 'Our History', Fletcher Insulation, 2024.
https://insulation.com.au/about-us/our-history/ Accessed 12 December 2024.

[63] 'Who Needs Wall Insultation (advertisement)', *Victor Harbour Times*, 9 June 1982, p.33.

[64] 'St. Regis Pacific Pty Ltd', Date Deregistered 25 June 1999.

[65] 'Our History', Fletcher Insulation, 2024.

[66] Certificate of Title Vol. 1816, Folio 27, transfer no. 1920256.

[67] Geoffrey H. Manning, *A Compendium of the Place Names of South Australia: From Aaron Creek to Zion Hill* (Adelaide: self-published, 2012), Cable Bay – Cygnet, p.16 of pdf.
Online: https://published.collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/placenamesofsouthaustralia/C.pdf Accessed 13 December 2024.

[68] For instance, John Shearers, ACI and Forwood Down all operated in this area. See Norm Darwin, Industry at Kilkenny: Research Using the S.A. Land Title Data Base as a Resource (Adelaide: self-published), date N.A.
Online:
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55891778e4b034e58f5e51e7/t/5f0cf493bf5bbd4148a e53af/1594684570036/Industry+at+kilkenny.pdf Accessed 13 December 2024.

[69] 'Adelaide Metro 9 Jan to 27 April 1949', aerial image, EnvMaps, Department for Environment and Water.

[70] 'Adelaide Metro 15 November 1968 – 9 January 1969', aerial image, EnvMaps, Department for Environment and Water. The *News* reported in 1954 that there were '88 factories officially termed major' and '84 smaller factories' in the Woodville area, a suburb adjacent to Kilkenny. '80 Major Factories: Mighty GMH Plant is World-Famed', *News*, 6 April 1954, p.18.

[71] Cosgrove, 'Industrial Modernist', p.26.

[72] Julie Collins, 'Neighbour, Keith'.

[73] 'Concrete in Modern Architecture (advertisement)', in South Australian Institute of Architects, *Architecture in South Australia* (Adelaide: self-published, 1960), p.54.

[74] Cosgrove, 'Industrial Modernist', p.26.

[75] Lawson, Cheesman, Doley and Partners, 'New Office Furniture', 1956, blueprints, BRG 279/3/7/1908/3A and BRG 279/3/7/1908/6, State Library of South Australia.

[76] 'Office, Factory and Store for Sisalkraft Distributors Pty. Ltd.'. *Architecture and Arts*, no.46 (June 1957) p.32.

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[77] Cosgrove, 'Industrial Modernist', p.26.

[78] See 'How to Make Your House a Home (advertisement), p.2.

[79] 'Office, Factory and Store for Sisalkraft.', (June 1957): p.32; 'Sisalkraft Distributors, Cheltenham', c.1960, photograph, BRG/28/CHEESMANANDCO/31/1. State Library of South Australia.

[80] 'This bold entrance…'. *Cross Section*, no.46 (August 1956): p.2.

[81] 'Building of the Year, 1956'. *Architecture and Arts*, no. 45 (1957): pp.33-35.

[82] 'Office, Factory and Store for Sisalkraft.', (June 1957): p.32; 'Work'. *Architecture and Arts*, no. 59 (1958): pp.69-72.

[83] Certificate of Title Vol. 4160, Folio 742.

[84] 'Who Needs Wall Insultation (advertisement)', 9 June 1982, p.33.

[85] Certificate of Title Vol. 4160, Folio 742, transfer no. 4906615A.

[86] Certificate of Title Vol. 4160, Folio 742, transfer no. 5083848.

[87] Certificate of Title Vol. 4160, Folio 742, transfer no. 5083848 and lease no. 5129973.

[88] '$10 million Plant Approved for South Australia', *Canberra Times* (Canberra), 16 July, p.3.

[89] '$10 million Plant Approved', 16 July, p.3.

[90] Aerial imagery available through EnvMaps shows that the first sections of the factory complex were erected sometime between 1989 and 1997. Imagery between those years is not available. Compare 'Adelaide Metro 28 December 1986 - 7 September 1986', aerial image, EnvMaps, Department for Environment and Water, and 'Adelaide Metro 20 November 1997 – 17 February 1998', aerial image, EnvMaps, Department for Environment and Water.

[91] Cosgrove, 'Industrial Modernist', p.27.

[92] Cosgrove, 'Industrial Modernist', p.27.

[93] Cosgrove, 'Industrial Modernist', p.27.

[94] 'CO.6.1: Factory', RAIA South Australia Significant 20th Century Architecture: Card Index, c.1986, RAIA Collection S301/2, Architecture Museum, University of South Australia; Symons, Modernist Adelaide, pp.82-82; Cosgrove, 'Industrial Modernist', pp.26-27.

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