

New Farm Powerhouse

33 Lamington Street, New Farm

Described at its opening in 1928 as a grand institution, the New Farm Powerhouse heralded a new and important epoch in Brisbane's industrial development. Despite critics objecting to the powerhouse as a wasteful, extravagant dream, it supplied people with light and power at the lowest possible price – the importance of which we can still relate to today.

Navigational hint: after leaving the Hawthorne ferry terminal, look across the river for the imposing brick New Farm Powerhouse, just as the CityCat rounds the bend.

The New Farm Powerhouse is an imposing and elegant Interwar Stripped Classical industrial brick structure. It was designed by the Council architect for the Tramways Department, Roy Rusden Ogg and built by G.H Turner, who won the construction job from a pool of 12 tenders. Beginning in January 1927, construction was completed in record time with pile driving for 800 ironbark piles. The first of 2 million bricks were laid in April 1927 and the first electrical current was sent in April 1928.

By its completion, the New Farm Powerhouse comprised 7,000 cubic yards of concrete (5,352 m³) and 500 tons (508 tonnes) of fabricated steel, as well as old tramway rails to reinforce walls and machinery pads.

Throughout the post-war years, the New Farm Powerhouse provided electricity for Brisbane's tram network and the suburbs of Toowong, Ithaca and Yeerongpilly. After 1989, it was superseded by the Swanbank Power Station and became largely redundant until Brisbane City Council commenced construction in 1999 to convert the building into a cultural and performing arts venue under the direction of its Urban Renewal Task Force. This conversion proved to be a successful example of adaptive reuse of a heritage building.