

# Historic Heritage Evaluation

## Tram Pole

### Corner Jervois Quay and Wakefield Street



January 2023

Historic Heritage Evaluation	
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## Executive Summary

The Tram Pole on the corner of Wakefield Street and Jervois Quay, Te Aro, was nominated for addition to the Wellington District Plan Schedule of Historic Heritage Objects. The evaluation of heritage values shows the Tram Pole to be a significant example of tramway infrastructure which possesses **historic**, **physical** and **social** significance, relating in particular to its rarity and integrity.

Trams first appeared on Wellington's streets in 1878 under the auspices of the Wellington City Tramway Company Ltd. In 1900 the Wellington City Council purchased the tram line to expand the service, and in 1904 the first electric trams were introduced. Over the next few years routes expanded into semi-rural areas that soon developed into suburbs as quick and easy transport to the city became available. In 1923 the Wellington City Council proposed a Wakefield Street extension as an express service to the city. Wakefield Street was widened to accommodate a double set of tram lines. Tram poles were erected on the sides of the street at half mile intervals. The steel poles were made in sections joined together, causing the diameter of the pole to slightly taper. The poles were topped with a traditional ball and spike finial, for ornamental purposes and to prevent water ingress into the hollow poles. Bracket arms carried a double insulation system to which the overhead wires were connected. Tram cars were connected by a trolley pole to the 500-550 volts supplied by the overhead wires. The Wakefield Street extension opened in October 1926 and was known as the Number 10 route or Midland Car. The Tram Pole remained in use from 1926 until around 1961, when the tram lines in Wakefield Street were removed. Wellington's tramway service was officially closed in 1964. While all of the city's tram poles were removed over the following years, the pole on the corner of Wakefield Street and Jervois Quay remained as a testament to a much-loved bygone age.

It is recommended that the Tram Pole on the corner of Wakefield Street and Jervois Quay, Te Aro, is added to the Schedule of Historic Heritage Objects. The extent should be based on the exterior form of the Tram Pole and a 1.5 metre diameter curtilage. The structure has historic values for its association with tramway infrastructure and every day social experiences; physical values for its impressive integrity; and social values for its representativeness and rarity.

## Summary Statement of Significance

The Tram Pole on the corner of Wakefield Street and Jervois Quay, Te Aro, is a significant example of a tram pole which was part of an extensive electric tramway system. The following summarises the fundamental values of the structure identified against the heritage significance criteria:



The Tram Pole at the corner of Wakefield Street and Jervois Quay has **historic values** and is associated with important **historical themes** including the expansion of outer suburbs and Wellington's developing economy, specifically in relation to tramway alignment and infrastructure. The tramways were an important part of the everyday **social** experience of Wellington's residents, in an age when motor car ownership was in its infancy. The Tram Pole has significant **physical values**, including **group** significance as an in situ example of tramway infrastructure, and for its high degree of **integrity**. The Tram Pole also contains **social** value for its **representativeness**. It is a testament to the trams that once rumbled along Wellington's streets and to the tram poles that once populated the streets of New Zealand's cities. The Tram Pole is now particularly significant for its **rarity** values: it appears to be one of only three original tram poles in situ in New Zealand and is the only one to retain its brackets arms.

## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to evaluate the Tram Pole located on the corner of Wakefield Street and Jervois Quay, Te Aro, against Wellington City Council's criteria for inclusion on the District Plan Schedule of Historic Heritage Objects.

The document has been prepared by New Zealand Heritage Properties for the Wellington City Council. It is intended solely for use by Wellington City Council in accordance with the agreed scope of work.

## Scope

This assessment is a desktop study and is based on documentary sources and images. No site visit was undertaken.

Values are considered against Wellington City Council and Greater Wellington Regional Council criteria for inclusion on the District Plan Heritage Schedule.

As with any heritage assessment, there were some constraints experienced in the preparation of this report, but sufficient information was available on which to assess the structure. The chronology of the site was pieced together from sources including Wellington City Council archives and *Papers Past*.

Newspaper sources were essential to understanding the history of the Tram Pole. It should be noted that the Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software, which converts these sources into digitised word searchable text, creates some errors in translation. This limits a researcher's ability to accurately identify all contemporary information.

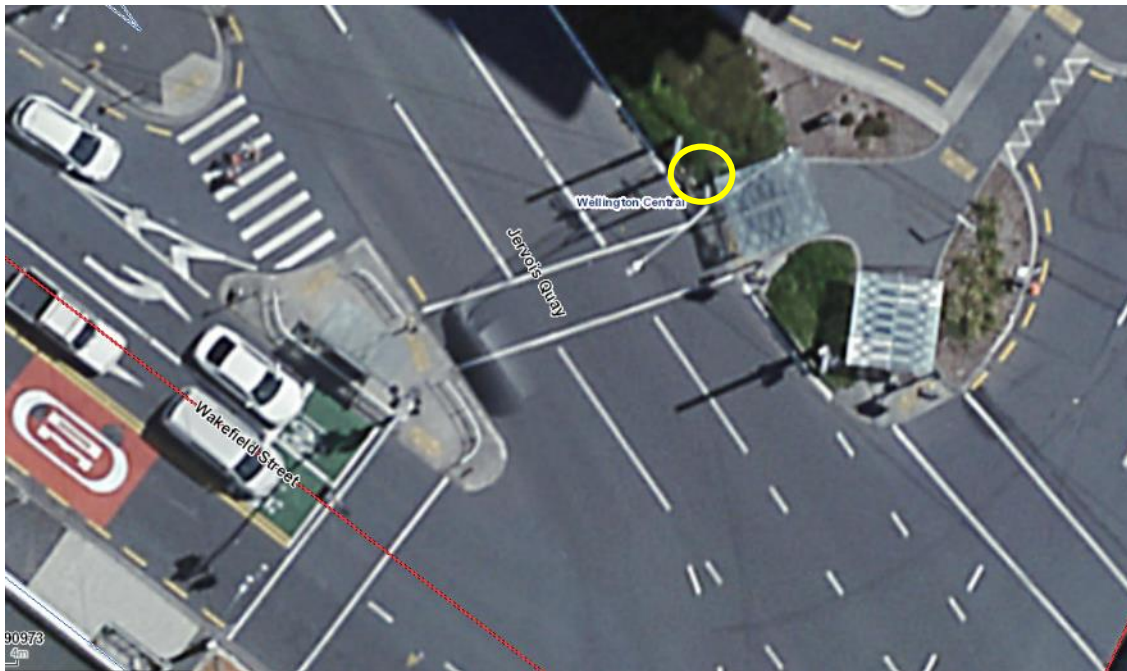


# Heritage Inventory Report

Site Detail	
Site address or address(es) and/or location	Corner of Wakefield Street and Jervois Quay, Te Aro, Wellington
Property Name	Tram Pole
Other names	N/A
Legal Description(s) and Record of Title identifier(s), Deeds register and/or Gate notice information	Road Reserve
NZTM grid reference	1748996, 5427420
District Plan Reference Number	
Sites of significance to Māori	None
WCC Heritage Area	none
HNZPT listed	Not listed
HNZPT category	None
Archaeological site (Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, Section 6)	Unknown
New Zealand Archaeological Association (NZAA) site record number(s)	
Constructed	1926
Significant alterations or additions	
Architect	N/A
Builder	Unknown
Former uses	Transport – Tramway - urban
Current uses	Traffic sign pole
Earthquake-prone Building Status at the date of assessment.	



Extent: WCC Onemap, accessed [date]



## Historical Summary

This section provides the results of documentary research into the historical background of the Tram Pole on the corner of Wakefield Street and Jervois Quay, Te Aro. This research provides context and informs our understanding of the heritage values of the buildings.

### Land history

Wellington's nearly circular harbour (about 10 kilometres in diameter) began as a shallow basin between two tilted land blocks. Repeated uplifting along the Wellington Fault raised the block on the western side, creating a cliff from Thorndon to the Hutt Valley. The block to the east tilted down towards the fault, creating a depression that later filled with water. Matiu (Somes Island) and Mākaro (Ward Island) are the exposed peaks of a submerged ridge running parallel with the extensive ridges of Miramar Peninsula and Hataitai.

The area which became Wellington, Te Whanganui-a-Tara (or Port Nicholson as the New Zealand Company called it) had been occupied for centuries by various Māori groups (Waitangi Tribunal Report, 2003). Two tribes of Ngāi Tara (in the Wellington area from c1405-1650) and Ngāti Ira (in the Wellington area until 1829)



amalgamated and became known as Ngāti Ira. Ngāti Ira were the inhabitants of Te Whanganui-a-Tara and its environs including Porirua and the area up to the Kāpiti Coast. The principal chief of Ngāti Ira in the late 1810s, Whanake and his son Te Kekerengu both lived on the west coast of Wellington near Porirua Harbour (Murray, 2014).

Incoming tribes from far to the north of Wellington area began to push out Ngāti Ira and they faced consistent pressure as an influx of people continued from western Waikato and Taranaki (Waitangi Tribunal Report, 2003). Many war parties and migration of other tribes, such as Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Whatua, and Ngāti Toa, drove the last remaining Ngāti Ira out of the area (Murray, 2014). Ngāti Toa and its allies defeated Ngāti Ira and gained ascendancy over the Kāpiti Coast in 1824, although some Ngāti Ira continued to live at Porirua (Murray, 2014). By 1840, the groups holding customary rights within the Port Nicholson block were complex, with Te Ātiawa, Taranaki, Ngāti Ruanui, Ngāti Tama, and Ngāti Toa all claiming rights established through conquest, occupation, and use of resources (Waitangi Tribunal Report, 2003).

### **Te Aro**

In 1839, the New Zealand Company chose Wellington's Port Nicholson as the site for its first settlement of British immigrants. At the time, Te Aro was a low swampy area and covered in toi, raupo and flax (Menzies, n.d.). It was also the site of Te Aro pā established by Ngāti Mutunga of Taranaki in 1824. After they left the Wellington area, their whānau and hapū, Ngāti Ruanui, Te Ātiawa and Taranaki iwi, took up residence. The pā was one of the largest Māori communities in Wellington until the 1880s (Wellington City Council, 2022b).

The New Zealand Company purchased the area from Te Puni-Kokopu, a chief of the Pitoone (Petone), and Te Wharepouri a Ngauranga chief. This was despite a general understanding that Te Puni-Kokopu did not have the authority to sell Pipitea (Thorndon) or Te Aro. The sale was denounced by Māori of the Te Aro pā so vociferously that New Zealand Company surveyors worked armed with swords and pistols. Te Aro Māori showed their opposition by pulling out their survey pegs at night (Menzies, n.d.). Despite resistance, Thorndon and Te Aro were among the first areas of Wellington to be settled (Menzies, n.d.).

The 1855 Wellington earthquake raised the height of Te Aro and allowed for land reclamations which would occur from around 1880 (Wellington City Council, 2022c). Although Te Aro initially developed as a rural area, because of its centrality it quickly developed into a hub of commerce including factories and light industries. Residentially, the flat became home to merchants and labourers (Menzies, n.d.).





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As new roads and tramways opened up the outer suburbs, Te Aro also became important as a transport route to and from the inner city (Menziess, n.d.).

### **Electric Trams**

“The history of Wellington transport is the history of Wellington’s development” (Mulgan, 1939, p. 207).

Tramways in Wellington began in August 1878 under the auspices of the Wellington City Tramway Company Ltd and Te Aro was one of the inner city areas served by this private tramway from its inception. The tramway was operated by a small steam engine running on steel rails which pulled a single passenger car. In total the company had five locomotives, eight large passenger cars, six smalls one, and three goods waggons. Although the tramway was initially said to “work smoothly with very little noise”, the engines were in fact quite noisy, smelly and in constant need of repair (New Zealand Times, 1878; Wellington City Council, 2022a). In 1882 the Company took the apparently retrograde step of replacing steam with horse power. The steam engines had proved too expensive, and were more dangerous to pedestrians than horse drawn passenger carriages (New Zealand Times, 1883; Wairarapa Standard, 1882).

The Company only established a limited number of tram lines but by the end of the nineteenth century there was an obvious need to develop Wellington’s public transport infrastructure. Wellington’s population was increasing but the outer suburbs were not expanding at the same rate, given residents could not get into the central city easily. Car ownership was in its infancy, roads were rough and often unsealed making walking and biking unpleasant. Horses required stabling which was not practical for all families. To resolve these issues, in 1900 the Wellington City Council purchased the tram service from the Wellington Tramway Company although it was not until 1902 that the street lease expired (New Zealand Times, 1900; Wellington City Council, 2022a). The City Council borrowed £225,000: an enormous sum for the times but a “move planned to help Wellington develop” (Wellington City Council, 2022a).

The Council, through the Tramways Department, invested the funds in the electrification of a tramway network which had significantly more routes: “A separate power station was built...kilometres of hard steel track were laid, an overhead wire system was strung up and tram sheds and tram stops were constructed” (Wellington City Council, 2022a). In 1904 the first electric trams rumbled into the centre of town from Newtown, and within a few months the city route was complete. The tram lines were built to a narrow gauge because of Wellington’s narrow streets, but the tram cars were still capable of holding and moving large numbers of people. By 1907 trams were running to localities with



smaller populations such as Kilbirnie, Miramar and Seatoun; through Berhampore to Island Bay; and up to Brooklyn and Karori. Many of these areas were “remote, semi-rural localities with small populations but the arrival of the tram drew them into the city and they prospered. Along these routes, residential speculator-led development flourished, with proximity to the tram a key determinant in housing intensity” (Wellington City Council, 2013). The impact on Wellington suburban life was enormous as hitherto rural suburbs began to boom (G Stewart, 1999, p. 1).

The main city route extended between Newtown Park to the Railway Station in Bunny Street. With some deviations, the route travelled the length of Riddiford Street, Adelaide Road, and Kent Terrace before turning west into Courtenay Place, and from there to Manners Street, Willis Street, Lambton Quay and then on to the Railway Station. The tramway was popular with the public: “The trams became part of Wellington life: the squeal of the steel wheels rounding sharp corners, the hum of the electric compressors under the floorboards, the buzz and clang of the bells” (G Stewart, 1999, p. 1). Tram enthusiast and author, Graham Stewart, vividly described the experience of Wellington residents on the trams: “To travel around the city and suburban streets of Wellington in the days of electric tramcar was to experience freedom...The Open platform entrances meant you could board or alight at your own pace and when you wished...You could sit on a solid wooden seat and travel by an open doorway with nothing between you and the road flashing by at speed”(G Stewart, 1999, p. 1).

### **The Wakefield Street Extension**

In 1923 the Wellington City Council first proposed a tram line extension along Wakefield Street. The Order-in-Council for the extension was recorded on 23 June 1924. Construction was to start by 1 June 1924 and to be completed by 1 January 1926. The new route was drawn up in 1924 and declared to be “a city work of considerable importance” (Evening Post, 1924). The main object of the new line was to provide an express service to and from the city’s business centre, and to do away with the risk of serious traffic hold-up within the inner city. It ran in parallel to the existing line from Lambton Station to Courtenay Place “bearing a big share of the traffic now carried through the shopping streets and capable of carrying all passengers in the event of a breakdown, smash, or other disastrous cause of hold-up, or, for that matter, while lines are being renewed” (Evening Post, 1923d).

The new extension route was a double line of tramway with a total length of 70.5 chains (about 1.5 km). It began on Wakefield Street, ran through the intersection of Jervois Quay and Taranaki Street and then turned down Victoria Street. Following the length of Victoria Street the line then turned right down the short length of Hunter Street. Here the car would turn on a roundabout loop, a relatively new innovation, which enabled cars to run up and down the street “without the necessity



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of changing round trolley poles and the altering of seats and curtains, and the like” (Evening Post, 1923d, 1924; Wellington City Council, 1924a).

As the extension was a double line of tramway, Wakefield Street had to be widened before tramway works could commence (Evening Post, 1924). The road’s surface was also incompatible with tram lines, and was described in February 1925 as “bad, dusty or muddy, and always more than sufficiently pot-holed” (Evening Post, 1925b). The survey work in connection with the tramway and widening the road was finally completed in September 1925 (Evening Post, 1925b). Given the delays a “great quantity of the necessary infrastructure” had been stored at the Corporation depot for many months (Evening Post, 1925a).

Not everyone was in favour of the new route, however, and the “wisdom” of laying a tram line along Wakefield Street held up the development. In 1926, the Wellington Civic League Council undertook a deputation to the Mayor to stop the new tram route (Evening Post, 1926a). In May, however, the City Council decided to widen Wakefield Street immediately and the lessees of the surrounding properties were instructed to move their fences back to the new alignment (New Zealand Times, 1926). Tracks were laid by August 1926 and presumably the erection of tram poles took place around this time (Evening Post, 1926d). The Wakefield Street extension was opened on October 1926 (Dominion, 1926; Evening Post, 1926c; G Stewart, 1996).

The new express service via Wakefield Street took only 26 minutes (Dominion, 1926). Designated as the No. 10 route, and also known as the “Midland Car”, the tram line went from Island Bay into the city, stopping at the Midland Hotel (Dominion, 1926). The line was also used for a number of “specials” to help ease congestion in the city centre (Evening Post, 1926b). The Wakefield extension proved a successful and busy line during the early years of its operation. In 1932 the Town Clerk reported that “a number of well loaded cars run via Wakefield Street route every morning between 7.30 and 9 a.m. A number of cars are diverted from Lambton Quay via this route between 4.40 and 6 p.m.” (Wellington City Council, 1932).

### **Infrastructure**

Tram carriages used electric power to propel them along the rails. This required an extensive infrastructure including rails, overhead wires, and tram poles. Tram rails were made to the specifications of the British Engineering Standards Association. The sleepers on which the rail was laid were short lengths of old rail inverted. Tie-bars space at regular intervals tied the track to gauge. The sleepers and rails were encased in concrete to within a short distance from the surface, which was finished in bitumen or asphalt (Wellington City Council, 1903).



The tram car could use various devices to collect power from overhead lines. Most common was a roof-mounted trolley pole which connected with the overhead line. Contact was maintained by pressure from the spring-loaded trolley base. The trolley pole could be removed by the driver or conductor and connected to another line to draw the tram along different tracks (Jones, 2007; Graham Stewart, 1955).

The overhead wires, sometimes called span wires, were strung in a criss-cross fashion high above the city streets. They carried a current of between 500 to 550 volts (S. C. Smith, 1909; Wellington City Council, 1924b). The lines were connected to insulators on bracket or carrier arms near the top of the tram poles (Wellington City Council, 1903).

### *The Wakefield Street Tram Pole*

The Tram Pole on the corner of Wakefield Street and Jervois Quay was likely erected in 1926 when work was undertaken on the Wakefield Street extension. This work was undertaken by the Corporation's Tramways Department, who erected their own poles rather than use the electricity supplied from existing utility poles as they required a different voltage supply. Unlike utility poles, tram poles also had to be closer together, regular and on both sides of the road. Less common in Wellington were the large ornamental tram poles placed down the centre of wide streets (Unknown, 1900; Vines, 2011).

Thousands of poles were required in a city's tramway system. For example, Christchurch's tramway system used 2400 poles, 101 km of overhead wire and 5500 tons of rails (Bulovic, 1995). A similar number must have been used in Wellington as there was one tramway pole for every half mile section (Evening Post, 1923b). The heavy poles were sometimes set in place by using a derrick, which lifted the pole and dropped it "through the hole in the footpath scaffolding with the greatest precision" (New Zealand Times, 1904b, 1906). The 25 foot steel poles were then encased in six feet of concrete (Jones, 2005; Wellington City Council, 1926).

As Mr A. Brecknell said in 1903, during his engineering firm's installation of the St Petersburg tramway poles, "If you can't hide it, make it a feature" (Hartland, 1999). Certainly, tram poles were far more decorative than utility poles. Moulded ferrules were often cast around the poles at various heights to reinforce or bind together pieces of the pole; curlicue brackets were sometimes added to support the insulators and overhead wires; and shaped finials topped the poles (Vines, 2011).

When electric trams were introduced to Wellington's streets, tram poles were seen as a means to improve the city's ornamentation:



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The work of beautifying the city by means of the tasteful decoration of the tram poles proceeds apace. The authorities are to be congratulated upon the excellent judgment displayed in the selection and blending of the colours employed, which are so combined as to produce an impressive artistic effect. The famous Carrara paint (about which paint experts all over the world are now so enthusiastic) is being used, and its rich gloss imparts a pleasant emphasis to the natural excellence of the selected shades. Altogether, it seems as though Wellington were to be peculiarly fortunate in its attempts to use its tram poles as an item in its plan of municipal ornamentation” (New Zealand Times, 1904c).

As a result, Wellington’s early tram poles were quite ornate. For example in Lambton Quay decorative steel centre poles were ornamented with wrought iron fancy work and a modern electric lamp (G Stewart, 1985; Unknown, 1900). Side tram poles on less central streets were more simple in form but still exhibited moulded bases, ferules and were topped with finials, usually of the ball and spike type (S. C. Smith, 1910a; Wellington City Council, 1903).

By 1926, when the Wakefield Street extension was under construction, tram poles on the side of the street were favoured over centre poles. As road traffic increased, centre poles had increasingly become seen as dangerous obstacles (Vines, 2011). No tender appeared for the construction of the Wakefield Street side tram poles. This may indicate the poles were constructed by the Corporation’s tramway workshop at Newtown (New Zealand Mail, 1905). A Corporation workshop was also established in 1923 to undertake works connected with the introduction of new voltage rates including the rewiring of street lighting (Evening Post, 1923c). Conversely there may have been a standing order with an engineering firm. The Wakefield Street Tram Pole was likely constructed in steel, which appeared to be Wellington’s material of choice (Evening Post, 1910; New Zealand Times, 1904a). It was also constructed in several pieces which were then joined together. This required the sections to be slightly tapered to strengthen the pole and as a pleasing aesthetic: “The most acceptable shape to the human eye is a taper with the diameter reducing from the base upwards. This, it could be argued, mimics the natural and relaxing image of a tree trunk profile, and we should do well to take note. It is also right in mechanical terms, for the bending moment on the pole reduces further from ground level...The traditional waisted pole is formed by joining two or three progressively smaller sections together, and this remains the neatest way of giving a nice-looking taper” (Hartland, 1999).



The Wakefield Street Tram Pole was without the ornamental base common in the first two decades of the tramway (Wellington City Council, 1903). This may have been due to a spate of vandalism in the early 1920s which saw the ornamental cast iron bases of the poles smashed. It was then discovered that the vandals may have inadvertently done the Council a favour: “the cast iron bases are no doubt pleasing to the eye, but it has been found that they are decidedly bad for the tramway pole for the reason that the water collects at the point where they join up with the pole proper and slowly but quite surely rusts away the pole. Consequently the ornamentation has to go” (Evening Post, 1923a).

Near the top of the Wakefield Street Tram Pole was a bracket arm, or carrier arm, to which the overhead wires were attached. There were several forms of available attachments and insulators, but the Tram Pole was constructed using “the double insulator system, and is so constructed that no insulation depends any one insulator” (Vines, 2011; Wellington City Council, 1924b). The Wakefield Street Tram Pole brackets were two narrow metal rods, one mounted on each side of the pole just below the finial. Ceramic insulators sat on the arms to which the wires were attached (Te Toi Uku, 2022). Today the bracket arms remain, as do two ceramic reel-shaped insulators with the ends of overhead wires still attached.

The Wakefield Street Tram Pole was topped with a ball and spike finial. There was a great range of possible finial shapes, which ranged from the “traditional spike and ball arrangement, to the unusual and the obscure” (Hartland, 1999). Wellington had favoured the traditional ball and spike finial from the early days of the tramway (Muir and Moodie, 1906). Indeed one commentator noted that finials provided a cause of “endless debate” (Hartland, 1999). Although a decorative finish to the pole, finials had a far more practical use by preventing water ingress into the hollow metal pole which caused rust and, eventually, disintegration (Hartland, 1999).

Once erected, the Wakefield Street Tram Pole was painted in a single colour as a 1927 photograph of the tram poles seems to indicate (Wellington City Council, 1927). Images of other tram poles indicate some bases were painted a darker colour, probably green, while the upper pole was painted a lighter colour. Two bands of colour could also be painted around the upper pole at the joins, with the finial painted the same colour as the base (for example Muir and Moodie, 1906). Other images suggest the bases of tram poles were later painted a lighter colour topped by a darker one (For example Wellington City Council, 1947). Certainly the standard paint colour evolved over the years.

### **Tram Poles in the Public Eye**

While tram poles were essential to the function of the tramway system, and an ornament to the street, they also entered the public consciousness in a quite



unforeseen manner. Tram poles were often at the centre of newspaper articles for the public danger they presented. While the Wakefield Street Tram Pole does not appear to have presented any particular obstacle, many poles were the cause of accidents and even fatalities (for example Evening Post, 1906). Bikes, cars, dogcarts, and people jumping from the tram car itself all resulted in a large number of serious injuries and fatalities (for example Dominion, 1907; Evening Post, 1910, 1912; New Zealand Times, 1913). On one occasion a City Council employee fell from a tram pole while maintaining the wires and was killed (Dominion, 1921a). On another occasion, a pole was dropped on a child while it was being hoisted into place: the boy was crushed and killed (Dominion, 1919). The poles proved far more dangerous than the tracks or tram cars, since their solid construction was capable of cutting a moving car in half (Wairarapa Daily Times, 1926). Tram poles were certainly solid structures: in 1939 in Coventry, England, a bomb was attached to a tramway pole at an important junction. When the bomb detonated, the pole and wires remained standing; although the force blasted out 30 windows in the vicinity (Evening Post, 1939). The danger of the tramway pole even became the butt of jokes in Wellington: “Girls were harder to kiss in your day, weren’t they, grandpa?” “Mebbe, mebbe,” ventured the old man, “but it wasn’t so dangerous. The old parlour sofa wouldn’t smash into a tramway pole” (Dominion, 1934).

The Wellington City Council was occasionally sued as the owner of the offending tram poles (Dominion, 1921b). Dr Platts Mills, for example, sued the Council for damages resulting from a collision with a tram pole in Customhouse Quay. The jury found in favour of the plaintiff, which the Council thought was a “very one sided view of the case” (Wellington City Council, 1914). After all, Dr Platts Mills “knew that these posts were in the street and also that the tramway track lights were switched off at midnight. In spite of this knowledge she ran into the post and claimed that it was left unlighted” (Wellington City Council, 1914).

Tram poles also proved attractive to the odd larrakin: “A small boy, with a tear-stained and grimy face, occupied a seat in the police station last evening... It appears that, armed with a pineapple, he had climbed, a tramway pole and, from that point of vantage, looked for something to hit with the fruit which apparently did not commend itself to his taste. A motorist came along, and the boy took a shot at the machine. His aim was only too true, and the motorist stopped the flying pineapple with his face. He promptly pulled up, hauled the boy from his exalted position, and gave him a drive to the police station in the motor-car. The indignant motorist's face was bleeding freely from several cuts, as the pineapple must have struck him with considerable force. The boy's parents were sent for by the police and, no doubt, they impressed on their offspring an appreciation of the dangerous character of his amusement” (Dominion, 1910). Another young boy “got a piece of wire, tied it round a tramway pole, opened the box on the pole, and tied the other



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end of the wire to the fuse, thus making a short circuit and introducing a voltage of 500 volts to the pole". Described as "highly ingenious", it was also generally agreed it was a miracle the boy was still alive (Evening Post, 1911).

### **The End of the Trams**

By the mid-1940s trams had begun to be replaced by trolley buses, and in 1946 the Tramways Department reported that the Wakefield Street trams were not well patronised except by a small percentage of commuters going to work in the morning: "We have tried various services on this route but have been compelled to abandon them as they ran practically empty; and trams running through the City were heavily over loaded. Result we run our trams were the passengers desire to go" (Wellington City Council, 1954). In 1952 the Tramways Department concluded the Wakefield Street No.10 route was "disliked" by the public: "the greater the number of trams sent along No. 10, the greater the inconvenience to the public" (Wellington City Council, 1954).

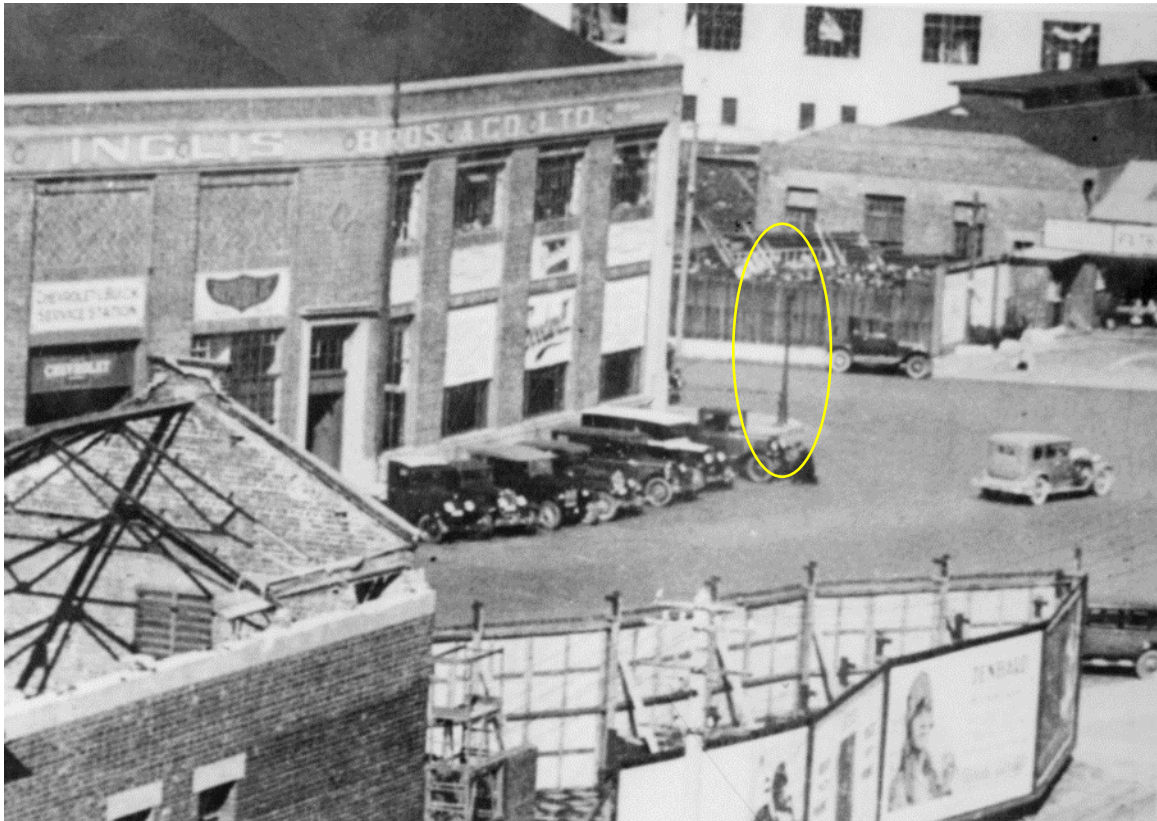
Like other routes, the Wakefield Street tram rumbled along until the 1960s, but was steadily losing patronage to trolley buses. The general decline in public support for tram services was echoed throughout the country. After the running of the last tram in Auckland in 1956, Wellington became the last strong-hold of the tramway system (G Stewart, 1985, p. 108). In 1961 the Council closed several routes and uplifted the tram line in various roads including Wakefield Street. In May 1964 the tram service in Wellington was officially closed (G Stewart, 1996, p. 81).

After this time Wellington's remaining tram poles were gradually removed, although it could take two days to remove a single pole as they were embedded in six feet of concrete (Wellington City Council, 1926). For reasons unknown, the Wakefield Street Tram Pole survived the removal process. In 1975 Wakefield Street and Jervois Quay underwent realignment but, again, the tram pole survived the changes (Wellington City Council, 1975). Today it is Wellington's last surviving tram pole and is a rare testament to the beloved tramway system that was the country's first public transport system.

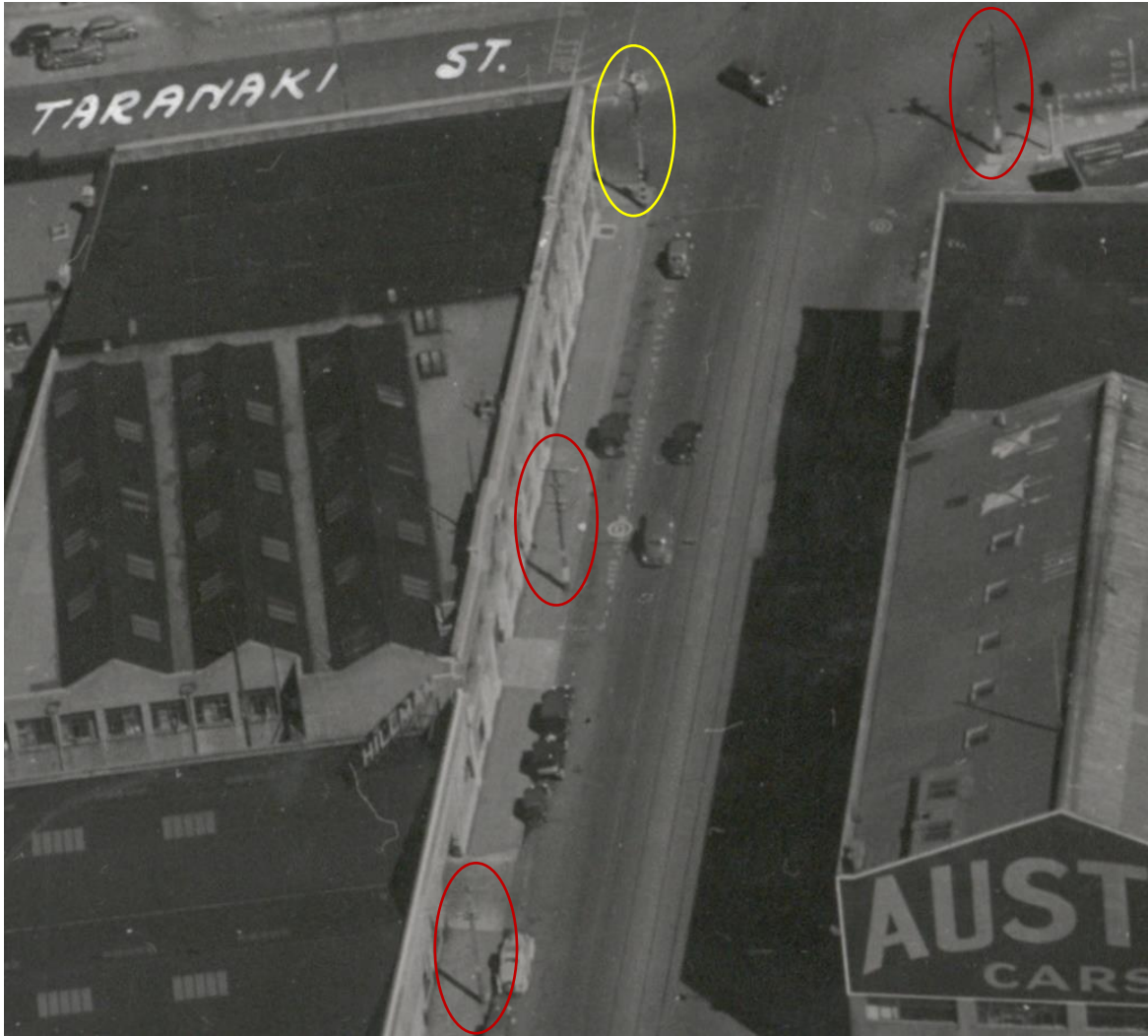




## Photographs and Images



*Detail from "Demolition of the Wakefield Street Power Station", 1927, showing the tram pole outside Inglis Bros & Co. Note it appears to be painted one dark colour (Wellington City Council, 1927).*



*Tram poles once lined Wakefield Street. The tram poles are circled in red. The tram pole on the corner of Jervis Quay and Wakefield Street is circled in yellow (Wellington City Council, 1947).*



A view of the 'rear' of the Tram Pole from Market Lane (Google Street View September 2022).





A close up view of the top of the Tram Pole as it stands today. Note insulators and wires (Google Street view September 2022).



A close up view of the bottom of the Tram Pole as it stands today. Note the various small fixtures (Google Street view September 2022).



## Chronologies and Timelines

### Timeline of events, including modifications

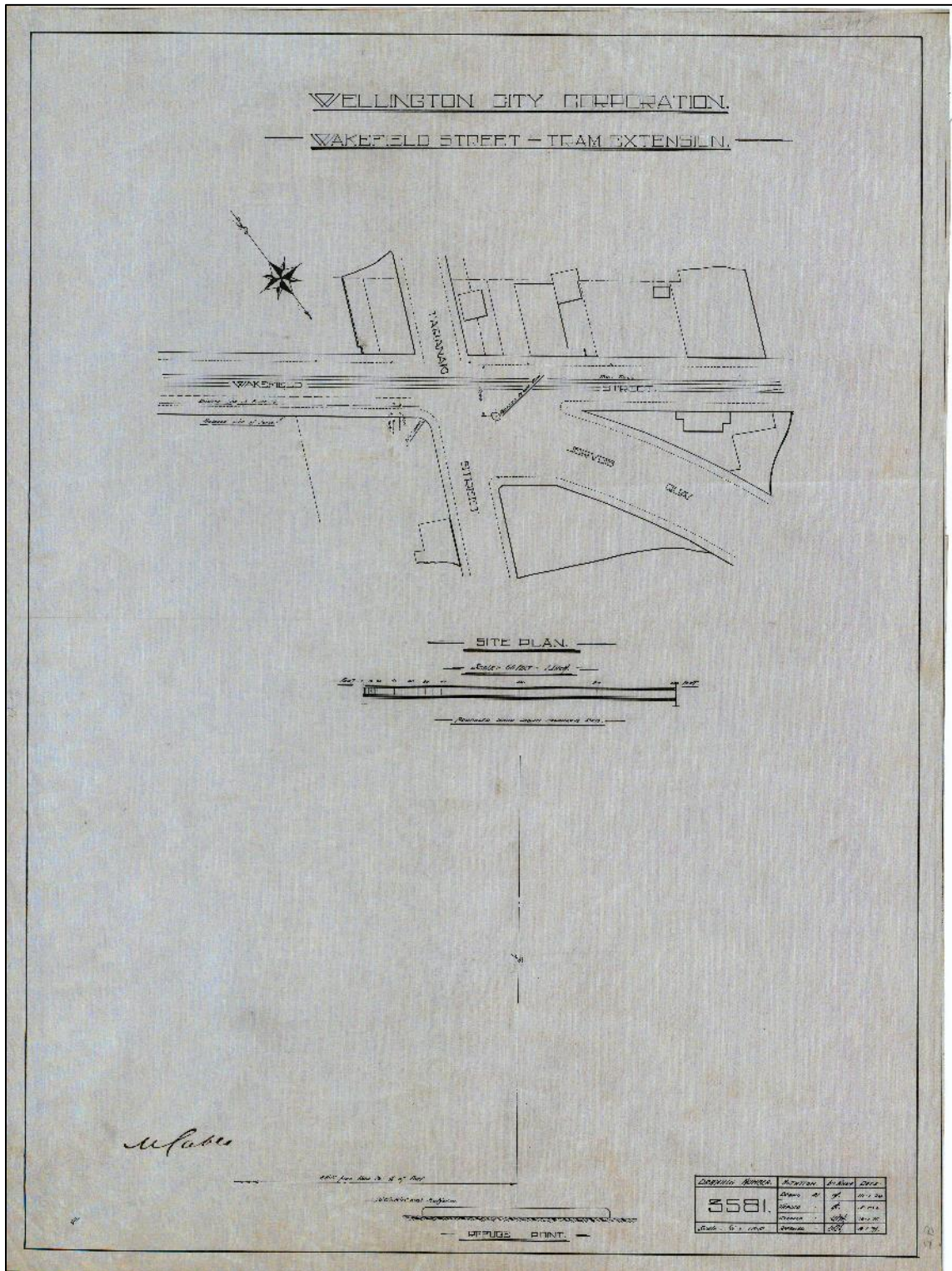
1923	Wakefield Street tram route extension proposed
1924	New route drawn up
1925	Survey work for tramway and widening the road completed
May 1926	City Council decided to widen Wakefield Street immediately
August 1926	Laying of tram tracks completed. Erection of tram poles also likely completed
October 1926	Wakefield Street extension route opened
1961	Wakefield Street extension route opened
May 1964	Wellington tramway service closed
1975	Tram pole survives realignment of Wakefield Street and Jervois Quay

### Occupation history

N/A



Plans and Elevations



Wakefield Street - tram extension route (Wellington City Council, 1924a).



## Physical Description

### Setting – geographical / physical context

The Tram Pole sits on the corner of the busy intersection of Wakefield and Taranaki Streets, and Jervois Quay. The location is in Te Aro, an inner city suburb which has long been in a centre of commerce. It is close to numerous amenities, including parks, bars, shopping malls, Te Papa, and various waterfront activities. The land is flat and is dominated by buildings of around ten stories high. A limited number of character buildings remain, including Aulsebrook's Building which sits opposite the tram pole. The width of the streets provides a sense of openness, while the busy traffic corridor exemplifies why the tramway route was originally built on this street.

### Buildings or structures

The Wakefield Tram Pole comprises a number of joined metal sections. The pole tapers from the bottom towards a ball and spike finial at the top. Two narrow metal rod brackets, or carrier arms, with original ceramic insulators to which electrical wires were attached, are located immediately below the finial. The Wakefield Tram Pole is painted. It features no other ornamentation.

### Materials

- Steel
- Timber

### Archaeological sites

N/A

### Setting – surroundings / site description

The Tram Pole sits on a small pedestrian island bordered by Jervois Quay and Market Lane which provides access and parking to the buildings behind. The island also contains bus stops and low plantings. The Tram Pole sits close to a pedestrian traffic crossing and is bordered by two modern utility poles.

## Comparative Analysis Summary

Research indicates there appear to be only two other tram poles in New Zealand which are still in situ. One sits in Auckland's CBD and the other in Dunedin's North East Valley suburb. Apart from their locations, the Dunedin and Auckland poles are



very similar. Both metal poles appear to have been constructed of three pieces of column joined together, gently tapering to the top. Both finials are spikes, although the Dunedin version is slightly more ornamental. These metal columns now carry street signage and are less obviously tram poles than Wellington's Wakefield Street version. This is because the last Wellington tram pole is the only one in New Zealand to retain the brackets to which the overhead wires were attached. It also includes the remnants of insulators, overhead wires, and various other original small fixtures. This is an important distinction and justifies the Tram Pole on the corner of Wakefield Street and Jervois Quay as New Zealand's best remaining example of an original tram pole still in situ.

## Evaluation Criteria

***A. Historic values: these relate to the history of a place and how it demonstrates important historical themes, events, people or experiences.***

***(i) Themes: the place is associated with important themes in history or patterns of development.***

The Tram Pole on the corner of Wakefield Street and Jervois Quay is a testament to Wellington's electric tramway system, established by the Wellington City Council in 1903. It has **regionally significant** historic values for its association with two important themes. The Tram Pole is associated with the theme of suburban expansion as the electric tramway system opened up semi-rural settlements by providing easy access to the city. The suburbs quickly developed as a result. Secondly, the Tram Pole is linked to the theme of developing economies, specifically in relation to tramway alignment and infrastructure.

***(ii) Events: the place has an association with an important event or events in local, regional or national history.***

The Tram Pole has **no** association with any important events.





**(iii) People: the place is associated with the life or works of an individual, group or organisation that has made a significant contribution to the district, region or nation**

The Tram Pole is associated with the Wellington City Council and the pivotal role the Corporation played in establishing the electric tramway system in the city. Public transport was essential to the growth of Wellington, in particular its suburbs, and the Tramway Pole is a testament to this important work. For this reason the Tram Pole has **some** significance on a **regional** basis.

**(iv) Social: the place is associated with everyday experiences from the past and contributes to our understanding of the culture and life of the district, region or nation.**

The Tram Pole is associated with the Wellington electrical tramway system which ran from 1904 to 1964. The trams were vital to the infrastructure of the developing city and allowed outer rural areas to develop into city suburbs as tramway transport links allowed for easy access to the city. In an age when access to motor cars was only in its infant stages, electrical trams were essential to the everyday life of Wellington's residents. For this reason the Tram Pole has **significant** social value at a **regional** level.

**B. Physical values: these values relate to the physical evidence present.**

**(i) Archaeological: there is potential for archaeological investigation to contribute new or important information about the human history of the district, region or nation.**

The Tram Pole itself is not considered archaeological and so there is **little** archaeological information potential in investigating the Pole.

**(ii) Architectural: the place is notable for its style, design, form, scale, materials, ornamentation, period, craftsmanship or other architectural values**



The Tram Pole has **no** notable architectural style, and the ball and spike finial was relatively common. It is however notable for its enduring form and materials of a once critical piece of infrastructure that is now exceptionally rare nationally.

- (iii) ***Townscape: the place is strongly associated with other natural or cultural features in the landscape or townscape, and/or contributes to the heritage values of a wider townscape or landscape setting, and/or it is a landmark.***

The Tram Pole is a landmark object at the busy intersection of Wakefield and Taranaki Streets, and Jervois Quay. Although somewhat obscured by modern utility poles and other street furniture, it is a landmark and testament to the trams which once dominated the streets. The original bracket arm and finial, in particular, draw attention to the age of the pole and its former purpose. A plaque in the immediate vicinity of the Tram Pole recording its history would enhance its townscape values. Currently, the Tram Pole makes **some** contribution at a **local** level as a landmark structure.

- (iv) ***Groups: The place is part of a group of buildings, structures, or sites that taken together have coherence because of their age, history, style, scale, materials, or use.***

The Tram Pole is part of a diminishing group of tramway related items that testify to the age of the electric tram. Many of these objects and structures are held in museums and are not in situ. This elevates the importance of the Tram Pole as it appears to be the only one of the group that retains such a high degree of integrity to its original appearance and is in situ. For this reason the tram pole makes a **significant** contribution on a **national** level.

- (v) ***Surroundings: the setting or context of the place contributes to an appreciation and understanding of its character, history and/or development.***

Erected on a busy inner city intersection, the location of the Tram Pole continues to be part of a high density traffic corridor linking to the inner city. While many character buildings have been replaced, some remain as a testament to the 1920s streetscape. For this reason the surroundings make **some local** contribution to an appreciation of the Tram Pole's history.



**(vi) Scientific: The area or place has the potential to provide scientific information about the history of the district or region**

The Tram Pole has **no** potential to provide scientific information about the history of the district or region.

**(vii) Technological: the place provides evidence of the history of technological development; and/or demonstrates innovation or important methods of construction or design; and/or contains unusual construction materials.**

The Tram Pole has **considerable** technological value as a lasting testament to the electrification of trams and their importance to Wellington. The pole provides evidence of the technological history and advances of the tram and public transport in the development in the region.

**(viii) Integrity: the significant physical values of the place have been largely unmodified. This includes the retention of important modifications and/or additions from later periods.**

The Tram Pole retains a high degree of integrity and does not appear to have been modified since it was first erected. The metal pole is still topped with the traditional ball and spike finial, and the original bracket arms which connected to the electrical overhead wires. Insulators, the remains of overhead wires, and other small fixtures also remain. The Tram Pole, then, retains a **high degree** of integrity which is significant **nationally** given that few tramway poles remain and none that are known to retain their original bracket arms.

**(ix) Age: the place is particularly old in the context of human occupation of the Wellington region.**

The Tram Pole is **not** particularly old in the context of settlement of the Wellington region.



**C. Social values: these values relate to the meanings that a place has for a particular community or communities.**

- (i) **Sentiment: the place has strong or special associations with a particular cultural group or community for spiritual, political, social, religious, ethnic, national, symbolic or commemorative reasons.**

Trams retain a special space in the heart of Wellington. The Wellington Cable Car still runs from Lambton Quay to Kelburn offering an authentic experience and panoramic views to locals and tourists alike. Wellington's Tramway Museum, at Paekakariki offers displays and electric tram rides recreating the experiences of yesteryear. Wellington is also one of only three cities that still retain a tram pole as a testament to the electrical trams which once dominated our cityscapes For this reason the Tram Pole has **significant regional** recognition value.

- (ii) **Recognition: the place is held in high public esteem for its historic heritage values, or its contribution to the sense of identity of a community, to the extent that if it was damaged or destroyed it would cause a sense of loss.**

Tram enthusiasts undoubtedly hold Wellington's only remaining tram pole in high esteem. Public recognition of the heritage significance of the Tram Pole is no doubt much lower. If a plaque was placed by the pole and attention drawn to its importance, then recognition values would grow significantly. Currently the Tram Pole has **little** recognition value.

- (iii) **Sense of place/ continuity: the place provides evidence of cultural or historical continuity, or contributes to a sense of place for a community**

The Tram Pole speaks to the tram lines which once rumbled through Te Aro, in and out of the inner city. However, tram lines were common to many Wellington suburbs and the Tram Pole contributes **little** sense of place to the surrounding community.

**D. Tangata whenua values: the place is sacred or important to Māori for spiritual, cultural or historical reasons.**

Tangata whenua values have not been assessed.



***E. Rarity: the place is unique or rare within the district or region.***

The Tram Pole has outstanding **significance** on a **national** level as a rare and intact example of an electrical tramway pole. The pole is one of only three in New Zealand which remain in situ. It is also considered the only pole which retains its bracket arms, insulators and wires as a testament to the way in which electricity was supplied to the tram cars. It is also thought to be the only remaining pole still topped with the traditional ball and spike finial.

***F. Representativeness: the place is a good example of its type, era or class it represents.***

The Tram Pole is a testament to the poles erected every half mile on the Wakefield Street extension. It is also a testament to the thousands of tram poles that were erected throughout Wellington and to the many thousands more that once proliferated on the streets of New Zealand's cities. It is the last remnant of a tramway system that played an important part in New Zealand's public infrastructure. For this reason the Tram Pole has **significant** value for its representativeness on a **national** level.

## Recommendations

The Tram Pole on the corner of Wakefield Street and Jervois Quay meets the threshold for eligibility as a Historic Heritage Object and it is recommended the pole is added to the District Plan Schedule of Historic Items. The Tram Pole has significant **historic**, **physical** and **social** values, which relate in particular to its association with the historic themes of tramway alignment and infrastructure, and suburban expansion. The Tram Pole also has strong social values for its connection with everyday experiences relating to transport. Of particular significance is the Tram Pole's integrity and rarity: it appears to be one of only three tram poles in situ and may be the only one to retain the original bracket arms and the traditional ball and spike finial. The Tram Pole also has the potential to make a contribution to the surrounding townscape values, particularly for its position on a main thoroughfare. Overall the Tram Pole is assessed to have **some significant historic heritage values** at a **national** level.



**Other recommendations:**

It is also recommended that the Tram Pole is nominated for inclusion on the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga List/Rārangi Kōrero. Further, NZHP recommends that a plaque documenting its significance is added to the footpath by the pole to promote public recognition of its value.

It is recommended that a conservation specialist be consulted for advice and procedure for conserving the structure, and in particular the wooden bracket arms.

## Extent of the Place

It is recommended that the extent of the place is the exterior form of Tram Pole including all its fixtures. A protected curtilage should extend to at least the width of the barrier arms in all directions. Protection should not preclude regular maintenance and/or painting of the steel pole.

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# Appendices


Appendix 1 Comparative analysis


Appendix 2 Wellington Thematic Heritage Study 2013

Appendix 3 Supplementary images



## Appendix 1 Comparative analysis

Extant New Zealand Tram Poles				
Place name	Address/ location/ NZTM	Heritage Listing or recognition of significance	Photographs	Analysis
Auckland's last tram pole	Customs Street and Emily Place.	Auckland City Council District Plan, Schedule B: Monuments and Objects of Special Value Ref: 390, Category B)	 <p>Auckland's last tramway post (Google Street view 2018)</p>	<p>Like Wellington's last known remaining tram pole, Auckland's last known in situ pole was erected as part of the city's extensive tramway network. Auckland's electric tramway service opened just two years earlier than Wellington's, in 1902 (Stuff, 2009). When the tram poles were removed, after the closure of the service in 1956, several poles were retained. 107 poles are now preserved in the Museum of Transport and Technology (MOTAT). Only one pole is known to remain in situ. The pole was in a deteriorating condition by 2009 when interested locals petitioned the Auckland City Council to restore it (The Aucklander, 2009). The pole was restored and painted the original green, costing approximately \$11,000 (Stuff, 2009). The metal pole is</p>

				<p>tapered and is also topped with a finial. Rather than a ball and spike, it is a simpler spike finial. Like the Wakefield Street Tram Pole it sits on a busy inner city street in the CBD, and acts as a traffic sign post. Unlike the Wakefield Street pole, it no longer retains its bracket arms, nor associated fixtures.</p>
<p>Edwardian Tramway Pole</p>	<p>Corner of North Road and Gladstone Road, Dunedin</p>		 <p><i>Dunedin's last tramway pole (Google Street view 2020).</i></p>	<p>Dunedin's tramway pole is the only remaining tramway pole not situated in the central business district. North East Valley was a busy suburb but not part of the inner city commercial hub. The first electric tram route in Dunedin opened on 24 December 1903, and the Dunedin City Council has since claimed it was the "first council owned and operated electric tramway system in New Zealand" (Waymark, 2012). Dunedin's "comprehensive and very successful passenger tramway service" closed in 1956 (Waymark, 2012). In 2006 the pole was restored and a plaque erected to recognise "the outstanding service given to the people of Dunedin by the electric tramcars and the staff who operated this service in all weathers and</p>



				circumstances” (Waymark, 2012). Like the Auckland pole it has lost its bracket arms. The finial is an ornamental spike.
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## Appendix 2 Wellington Thematic Heritage Study 2013

Select the themes & subthemes which apply to the place		Yes / some (add explanation)
<b>A</b>	<b>MIGRATION/ IMMIGRATION</b>	
<b>A2</b>	<b>Settlement Patterns</b>	
<b>A2.3</b>	<b>Suburban Expansion</b>	
A2.3F	Electric tram/ cable car/ railway	Yes. The Tram Pole is connected with the electric tram which encouraged suburban expansion.
<b>B</b>	<b>DEVELOPING ECONOMIES</b>	
<b>B3</b>	<b>Transport</b>	
<b>B3.1</b>	<b>Rail transport links and routes</b>	
B3.1B	Tramway alignment/ infrastructure	Yes. The Tram Pole is part of tramway infrastructure.

## Appendix 3 Supplementary images



*Overlooking Te Aro pā and Te Aro Flat, where the tram pole would eventually be erected (Thomson, 1857).*



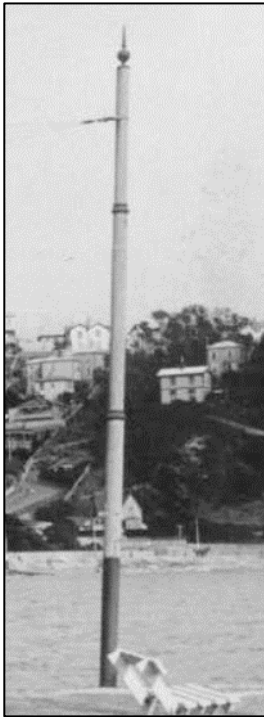


*"Laying tram lines along the Basin Reserve, Wellington"* (Unknown, 1900).



*"Lambton Quay": a view of centre tram poles in 1904* (S. C. Smith, 1904).





Detail from *Oriental Parade in 1905* showing a tram pole very similar to the Wakefield Street Tram Pole. Note the paint work (Muir and Moodie, 1906).



Detail from *"Fog, Riddiford Street, Newtown, Wellington"* Note the ornamental base of the tram pole, which in all other respects resembles the Wakefield Street Tram Pole (S. C. Smith, 1910a).



Aerial view of the intersection of Cuba and Manner Streets. Note the open-topped tram, and the number of tram tracks and overhead wires (S. C. Smith, 1910b).



People boarding a Wellington tram. Image dated to 1924 (Crown Studios Ltd, 1924).





Detail from "Pedestrians and tram, Manners Street, Wellington, Note the tram pole to the left of the image, which is in the same style as the Wakefield Street pole (S. C. Smith, 1949).



Details from an image of Wakefield Street in 1960. The Tram Pole looks much the same as today (Burt, 1960).





*“Wellington trams passing Lambton Quay”: a view of some of the last operational trams in 1963. Note the crisscross of overhead wires and the trolley pole connected from the car to the wires (A. E. Smith, 1963).*

