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# Mentone Tenpin Bowl

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## Location

120-124 Nepean Highway, (Cnr Warrigal Road), MENTONE VIC 3194 - Property No B5517

## Municipality

KINGSTON CITY

## Level of significance

State

## Heritage Listing

National Trust

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The Mentone Tenpin Bowl is a single-storey modernist building comprising a large red brick hall-like rear wing (containing bowling lanes) and an elongated flat-roofed glass-walled front wing (containing offices, locker rooms, cafe, etc). It is enlivened with deliberately eye-catching detailing including projecting header bricks to the side wall, a feature wall of random coursed stonework, original illuminated signage and a giant roof-mounted bowling pin. It was designed in late 1962 by the architectural firm of Osidacz & Lehrke, and officially opened in June 1963.

How is it significant?

The Mentone Tenpin Bowl is of historical, architectural and aesthetic significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Historically, the building is significant for associations with the introduction of tenpin bowling in Australia in the early 1960s. Automated lanes were first demonstrated at the Sydney Easter Show in 1960, and the first modern bowling centre opened in Hurstville later that year. It was followed by Victoria's first, in Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn, in 1961, and by many others across Australia over the next few years. While the example at Mentone is neither the oldest surviving bowling centre in Victoria (cf Geelong), or even the oldest still in operation (cf Moorabbin), it is by far the most intact centre remaining in the Melbourne metropolitan area, and thus the most evocative of the sport's heyday of the early 1960s. It therefore provides rare and valuable evidence of a fad sport that was hugely, if only fleetingly, fashionable at that time but which has since experienced successive peaks and troughs of popularity.

Architecturally, the building is significant as a rare early surviving example of this distinctive building type. When the popularity of tenpin bowling began to abate in the later 1960s, many centres were closed and either demolished or converted to other purposes. Although there were more than twenty bowling centres in the Melbourne metropolitan area by the end of 1964, one third of these had closed by the early 1970s. Many centres have since been demolished (including several in very recent times), and others survive in a much remodelled

state, adapted to other uses such as reception centres and commercial showrooms. Today, only four of the original early 1960s centres remain in operation in suburban Melbourne. Of these, one has been slated for demolition, another has been altered and still another forms part of a shopping centre and is not interpreted as a freestanding building.

Aesthetically, the building is significant as a fine and remarkably intact example of the so-called Featurist style of the late 1950s and early 1960s, as applied to a commercially-oriented recreational building. The term, first used by architect and critic Robin Boyd in his book *The Australian Ugliness* (1960), was coined to refer derisively to commercial buildings with non-structural and deliberately eye-catching decorative elements. This distinctive style corresponds to what was known in the United States as 'Googie', after a famous coffee shop of the same name in Los Angeles designed by John Launter in 1949. With side walls enlivened by projecting header bricks, feature walls of random coursed stonework, and original illuminated signage and a giant bowling pin, the Mentone Bowl strongly recalls its American counterparts in the best Googie tradition. It is by far the most explicitly Featurist or Googie style bowling alley to survive in Victoria, comparable only to the recently-demolished example at Essendon. The building's striking appearance is enhanced by its prominent siting on a prominent bend on one of Melbourne's most prominent thoroughfares.

Classified: 01/06/2009

Hermes Number 104821

Property Number

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*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*