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# Moorabbin Bowl



B0514 Moorabbin Bowl



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## Location

938 - 954 Nepean Highway,, MOORABBIN VIC 3189 - Property No B0514

## 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 Moorabbin Bowl is a single-storey modernist building comprising a large concrete block wing (containing 28 bowling lanes) with parapet roof, and a lower curtain-walled amenities wing (containing cafe,

offices, locker rooms, etc) with flat roof and broad eaves. Wall surfaces are enlivened by ceramic tiling and textured concrete blocks, while a low random stone wall defines a series of planter boxes. The fifth bowling alley to be established in Victoria by Indoor Bowling Australia Ltd (which had introduced the sport in this state two years earlier), the Moorabbin Bowl was designed in early 1962 by the Office of Theodore Berman, and officially opened on 17 November that year.

How is it significant? The Moorabbin 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. Most, however, have since closed and been demolished or adapted for other uses. Pre-dated only by a slightly earlier centre at Geelong (now no longer in operation), the Moorabbin Bowl stands out as the oldest tenpin bowling centre in Victoria that still remains in use as such. It thus 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. While more than 20 bowling centres existed in metropolitan Melbourne by the end of 1964, one third had closed by the early 1970s. Today, only four original 1960s bowling centres remain in operation in suburban Melbourne. Of these, one has been already slated for demolition, another has been altered and still another forms part of a shopping centre and is not readily interpreted as a freestanding building. With 28 lanes, the Moorabbin Bowl stands out as the largest bowling centre ever built in Victoria during the sport's boom period of the early 1960s. It was also the first to incorporate a 'pro shop' amongst its facilities, which subsequently became standard. By the architect's own admission, it was also the most resolved and successful design of the numerous bowling alleys that he designed in the early 1960s.

Aesthetically, the building is significant as a representative and substantially 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 Lautner in 1949. With its stark rectilinear massing, flat roofs, planar surfaces and glazed curtain walling, the Moorabbin Bowl is set within the conventional modernist idiom. However, its playful use of contrasting surface treatments, namely the various types of concrete blockwork (eg plain, split, pierced or with projecting fins), the ceramic tiled feature wall and the random stone planter boxes, firmly places the building in the best US-inspired Googie tradition. Notwithstanding unsympathetic overpainting, and the recent removal of original signage, the building remains as a highly distinctive element in this prominent regional thoroughfare.

Classified: 27/04/2010

Hermes Number 120511

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/>*