

# Recommendation of the Executive Director and assessment of cultural heritage significance under Part 3, Division 3 of the *Heritage Act 2017*



**Name** Eltham War Memorial Buildings  
**Location** 903-907 Main Road, Eltham, Nillumbik Shire Council  
**Hermes Number** 202079  
**Heritage Overlay Number** HO126 Eltham War Memorial Cenotaph (covers World War I obelisk only; no buildings are covered)



Eltham War Memorial Buildings (March 2020)

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE HERITAGE COUNCIL:**

- That the Eltham War Memorial Buildings not be included in the Victorian Heritage Register under Section 37(1)(b) of the *Heritage Act 2017*.

The Heritage Council may wish to consider exercising its powers under s.49(1)(c)(i) of the *Heritage Act 2017* to refer the recommendation to the relevant planning authority for consideration for an amendment to a planning scheme.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Avery".

**STEVEN AVERY**  
Executive Director

**Recommendation Date:** 18 May 2020

**Advertising Period:** 22 May 2020 – 20 July 2020

This recommendation report has been issued by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria under s.37 of the *Heritage Act 2017*.

## EXTENT OF NOMINATION

Date that the nomination was accepted by the Executive Director

13 December 2018

### Written extent of nomination

“The land covering 903-907 Main Road, Eltham, VIC, 3095, specifically including the war memorial gates and three Eltham War Memorial Buildings, namely Eltham Preschool (along with its playground areas), Eltham War Memorial Hall and the former Infant Welfare Centre.”

### Nomination extent diagram



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RESPONSE SUMMARY

The Executive Director recommends that this place should not be included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) for the reasons outlined in this report.

The Executive Director is of the view that the buildings and other features are of historical interest and may be of potential local significance. There were many halls, swimming pools, baby health centres and pre-schools/kindergartens constructed in Victoria as memorials following World War II. There were also many baby health centres and pre-schools/kindergartens constructed during this period unrelated to war memorials. To reach the threshold for inclusion in the VHR, a place must meet at least one of eight criteria at a State level. The Eltham War Memorial Buildings cannot be elevated above other examples in the State and do not meet this threshold for any of the criteria.

This report indicates that the Eltham War Memorial Buildings may be of potential local significance. The Heritage Council may wish to refer the Executive Director's recommendation to the relevant planning authority for consideration for an amendment to a planning scheme to include the place in the Heritage Overlay.

### INSPECTION OF THE PLACE

This assessment was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the risks associated with site visits during this time, the Eltham War Memorial Buildings complex was inspected from the footpath and surrounding public land. The interiors of the buildings were not inspected.

## BACKGROUND

### WHAT IS AT THE PLACE?

The Eltham War Memorial Buildings are located on a sloping site on western side of Main Road in the Melbourne suburb of Eltham. Along the Main Road frontage are the war memorial gates (1954) and a formally landscaped terrace area (2010s). This area also includes a World War I obelisk which was re-located to the site in 2012. Stepped down from this area is a row of single storey cream brick buildings comprising an Infant Welfare Centre (1952), Pre-School (1956) and War Memorial Hall (former Children's Library, 1961). A Senior Citizen's Centre (1967) lies to the rear of these buildings on the western side of the site.

### WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THE PLACE?

In 1943, like many community organisations in Victoria, a Women's Auxiliary in Eltham began fundraising for a war memorial for the Eltham community.<sup>1</sup> The Eltham War Memorial Trust was formed in 1945 at a meeting of the Eltham Progress Association. It was decided at this time that the memorial should take the form of facilities for children. The Trust purchased the block of land on Main Road Eltham in late 1945. The foundation stone was laid by the Governor Sir Dallas Brooks at a ceremony in November 1950. It was reported at this time that a creche, soldiers rest rooms, children's library and remembrance garden would be constructed once funds became available.<sup>2</sup> The architectural firm A K Lines & MacFarlane (later A K Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall) designed the first component of the complex – the Infant Welfare Centre (equivalent to a Baby Health Centre). It opened in November 1952.<sup>3</sup> The war memorial gates, including a wrought iron arch with the words 'Eltham War Memorial', were installed in 1954. Community fundraising events were held regularly throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, particularly by the Women's Auxiliary of the War Memorial Trust. A K Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall called for tenders for the library and pre-school

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<sup>1</sup> The history of the Eltham War Memorial Trust and Buildings is described in Westbrook, S., *War Memorial Building Complex, 903-907 Main Road Eltham: Cultural Heritage Significance Assessment*, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> 'Children Featured in Eltham's Day', *The Age*, 25 November 1950, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> 'Weigh-in at Infant Centre', *The Age*, 17 November 1952, p. 3.

buildings in July 1955.<sup>4</sup> The pre-school was completed in 1956.<sup>5</sup> The Children’s Library opened in November 1961.<sup>6</sup> A strip of land on the north of the site was utilised for the Country Fire Authority building. Memorial gardens, including the stone retaining walls along Main Road, were installed in the 1960s. The Children’s Library was re-named the Eltham War Memorial Hall in 1966. The War Memorial Trust handed the site to the Eltham Shire Council in 1965. The Senior Citizens Centre was completed in 1967. The landscape surrounding the buildings was progressively changed to meet contemporary needs. The street frontage was further altered in the 2010s by relocation of a World War I obelisk to the site and installation of a formally landscaped terrace area.

## EVIDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUES AT THE PLACE

### HOW ARE THE CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUES EXPRESSED AT THE PLACE?

The potential local cultural heritage values of the place are expressed in the buildings and features that were constructed as part of the war memorial complex in the 1950s and 1960s. This includes the Infant Welfare Centre, Pre-School and War Memorial Hall (former Children’s Library). The buildings’ function and era of construction are legible in their design and choice of building materials. The cultural heritage values of the place are also evident in the war memorial gates which date from the 1950s.

## RECOMMENDATION REASONS

### REASONS FOR NOT RECOMMENDING INCLUSION IN THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER [s.40]

Following is the Executive Director's assessment of the place against the tests set out in *The Victorian Heritage Register Criteria and Thresholds Guidelines (2019)*.

#### CRITERION A

**Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria’s cultural history.**

#### STEP 1: A TEST FOR SATISFYING CRITERION A

The place/object has a *CLEAR ASSOCIATION* with an event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life in Victoria’s cultural history.

**Plus**

The association of the place/object to the event, phase, etc *IS EVIDENT* in the physical fabric of the place/object and/or in documentary resources or oral history.

**Plus**

The *EVENT, PHASE, etc* is of *HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE*, having made a strong or influential contribution to Victoria.

#### **Executive Director’s Response**

The Eltham War Memorial Buildings have a clear association with the phase of the erection of functional community war memorials following World War II. Unlike earlier war memorials, which were primarily in the form of statues and monuments, World War II memorials often took the form of functional community facilities.

<sup>4</sup> *The Age*, 23 July 1955, p. 50.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Cookery Book for Christmas’, *The Age*, 18 December 1959, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Children’s Library Opens at Eltham’.

This association is evident in the physical fabric of the Eltham War Memorial Buildings, including in the Infant Welfare Centre, Pre-school and Former Children’s Library buildings and in the war memorial gates. It is also evident in documentary resources.

The ways towns and suburbs in Victoria have memorialised those who served and died in war is of historical importance.<sup>7</sup> The tendency for Victorian communities to construct practical amenities as war memorials following World War II represents evolving views on memorials and the priorities and constraints of the post-war environment.

The Eltham War Memorial Buildings also have an association with the expansion of facilities for babies and children in the post-war period. In the 1920s and 1930s, facilities like baby health centres and kindergartens had become common in the established inner suburbs of Melbourne. Following World War II, they expanded into middle and outer suburban areas, and smaller townships, as a result of population increase and the associated demand for community facilities. This is a phase of historical importance, reflecting post-war population growth, the expansion of the suburbs and evolving ideas about the health and education of babies, children and mothers. It is evident in the physical fabric of the place and in documentary resources.

Criterion A is likely to be satisfied.

**STEP 2: STATE LEVEL SIGNIFICANCE TEST FOR CRITERION A**

The place/object allows the clear association with the event, phase etc. of historical importance to be *UNDERSTOOD BETTER THAN MOST OTHER PLACES OR OBJECTS IN VICTORIA WITH SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME ASSOCIATION.*

***Executive Director’s Response***

A great number of community facilities were constructed as war memorials throughout Victoria following World War II.<sup>8</sup> These included swimming pools, halls, hospitals, lawn bowls clubs and baby health centres. David Rowe’s study of War-related heritage in Victoria identifies 44 memorial swimming pools alone.<sup>9</sup> The construction of these facilities was often the product of sustained and intensive local efforts. Many such places survive today and still carry their memorial associations. The phase of community facilities being constructed as war memorials after World War II can be said to be evident to some degree in all surviving places with this association. There are other surviving memorial child-related facilities, such as the Ivanhoe East Memorial Kindergarten.

The Eltham War Memorial Buildings are of interest as a complex of small buildings related to babies and children and constructed as a war memorial. However, functional war memorials took many forms. Their role was to honour service men and women while also providing much-needed facilities for the community. In this context, the Eltham War Memorial Buildings do not allow the phase of community facilities being constructed as war memorials following World War II to be better understood than most other places or objects in Victoria with substantially the same association. Successive modifications to the area surrounding the buildings have impacted on the place’s integrity and its ability to be read as a memorial complex.

Similarly, the Eltham War Memorial Buildings do not allow the phase of the expansion of facilities for babies and children in the post-war period to be understood better than most other places with the same association. They are like many other facilities constructed at this time and reflect the architectural tastes of

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<sup>7</sup> Heritage Council of Victoria, *Victoria’s Framework of Historical Themes*, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> See the Victorian War Heritage Inventory.

<sup>9</sup> Rowe, D. *War-related Heritage Study*, 2011.

the period. Cumulative changes the landscaping around the buildings has impacted on its ability to be read as a post-war facility for babies and children.

Criterion A is not likely to be satisfied at the State level.

## **CRITERION B**

### **Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria’s cultural history.**

#### **STEP 1: A TEST FOR SATISFYING CRITERION B**

The place/object has a *clear ASSOCIATION* with an event, phase, period, process, function, movement, custom or way of life of importance in Victoria’s cultural history.

#### **Plus**

The association of the place/object to the event, phase, etc *IS EVIDENT* in the physical fabric of the place/object and/or in documentary resources or oral history.

#### **Plus**

The place/object is *RARE OR UNCOMMON*, being one of a small number of places/objects remaining that demonstrates the important event, phase etc.

OR

The place/object is *RARE OR UNCOMMON*, containing unusual features of note that were not widely replicated

OR

The existence of the *class* of place/object that demonstrates the important event, phase etc is *ENDANGERED* to the point of rarity due to threats and pressures on such places/objects.

#### ***Executive Director’s Response***

The Eltham War Memorial Buildings have a clear association with the construction of community facilities as war memorials following World War II. They also have an association with the expansion of facilities for babies and children in the post-war period. These associations are of importance to Victoria’s cultural history and are evident in the physical fabric of the place and in documentary sources.

#### World War II memorials

The place is not rare or uncommon as one of a small number of places or objects remaining that demonstrates the phase of the erection of functional World War II community memorials. Memorials in the form of community facilities were constructed in many towns and suburbs across Victoria following World War II. Specifically, there are several other surviving examples of places constructed as a war memorials and related to providing services for babies and children including the Ivanhoe East Memorial Kindergarten, Malvern Memorial Kindergarten, Glenroy Memorial Kindergarten and Whittington War Memorial Kindergarten.

#### Post-war baby health centres and pre-schools/kindergartens

The Eltham War Memorial Buildings are not one of a small number of places that demonstrate the post-war expansion of facilities for babies and children. Post-war baby health centres and pre-schools/kindergartens are not endangered to the point of rarity. The Former Baby Health Care Centre, Echuca, (VHR H0073) and Robert Cochran Kindergarten (VHR H2309) are included in the VHR. More are included in Heritage Overlays.

The Eltham War Memorial Buildings complex was established over a period of more than 10 years. This was in part a practical approach that allowed funds for the different parts to be raised over time. The Eltham War Memorial Buildings may be of interest as a complex of three buildings providing facilities for babies and

children that was also constructed as a war memorial, however this relies upon too many qualifiers to meet the threshold for rarity at a State level (XB1 of the exclusion guidelines for Criterion B).

Criterion B is not likely to be satisfied.

### CRITERION C

Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria’s cultural history.

#### STEP 1: A TEST FOR SATISFYING CRITERION C

The:

- visible physical fabric; &/or
- documentary evidence; &/or
  - oral history,

relating to the place/object indicates a likelihood that the place/object contains *PHYSICAL EVIDENCE* of *historical interest* that is *NOT CURRENTLY VISIBLE OR UNDERSTOOD*.

**Plus**

From what we know of the place/object, the physical evidence is likely to be of an *INTEGRITY* and/or *CONDITION* that it *COULD YIELD INFORMATION* through detailed investigation.

#### **Executive Director’s Response**

It is unlikely that the Eltham War Memorial Buildings contain physical evidence of historical interest that is not currently visible or understood. The form, function and historical interest is clearly evident in the fabric of the place and it is well documented. There is unlikely to be any archaeological evidence associated with the cultural heritage significance of the place.

Criterion C is not likely to be satisfied.

### CRITERION D

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

#### STEP 1: A TEST FOR SATISFYING CRITERION D

The place/object is one of a *CLASS* of places/objects that has a *clear ASSOCIATION* with an event, phase, period, process, function, movement, important person(s), custom or way of life in Victoria’s history.

**Plus**

The *EVENT, PHASE, etc* is of *HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE*, having made a strong or influential contribution to Victoria.

**Plus**

The principal characteristics of the class are *EVIDENT* in the physical fabric of the place/object.

#### **Executive Director’s Response**

Functional World War II memorials took many forms, including swimming pools, halls and bowls clubs. Although these places share an association with the phase of erection of war memorials following World War II, they belong to different classes of place and do not share principal characteristics. The Eltham War Memorial Buildings are therefore best considered as part of the classes of post-war baby health centres and post-war pre-schools/kindergartens.

These classes have a clear association with the expansion of facilities for babies and children in Victoria in the post-war period. The development of these facilities in this era is of historical importance to Victoria, reflecting post-war population growth, the expansion of the suburbs and evolving ideas about the health

and education of babies, children and mothers. The principal characteristics of these classes are evident in the physical fabric of the place, including the functional design, domestic scale, wide areas of glazing and access for prams.

Criterion D is likely to be satisfied.

#### **STEP 2: STATE LEVEL SIGNIFICANCE TEST CRITERION D**

The place/object is a <i>NOTABLE EXAMPLE</i> of the class in Victoria (refer to Reference Tool D).
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#### ***Executive Director's Response***

The Eltham War Memorial Buildings are not a notable example of the classes of post-war baby health centres or post-war preschools/kindergartens. To be found notable under Criterion D, a place must be fine, highly intact, influential or pivotal.

#### Post-war baby health centres

In the post-war period, the design of baby health centres tended to continue to combine more traditional domestic and civic influences, as seen in the Baby Health Centre, Echuca (H0073). Later examples, such as the Emerald Street Community Centre (HO332 in the Moonee Valley Planning Scheme), erected in 1963, became more adventurous in their design. The Infant Welfare Centre within the Eltham War Memorial Buildings sits somewhere between the two in its modernist design influences. Although the Infant Welfare Centre building within the Eltham War Memorial Buildings complex demonstrates some characteristics that are typical of post-war baby health centres, and reflects the architectural tastes of the period, it cannot be considered fine, highly intact, influential or pivotal.

#### Post-war pre-schools/kindergartens

The design of pre-schools and kindergartens had become an architectural specialism by the 1950s. This is demonstrated in places such as the Robert Cochrane Kindergarten (VHR H2309), completed in 1950, which combined Modernist design principles and progressive ideas about pre-school education in an innovative building. The pre-school within the Eltham War Memorial Buildings demonstrate some of the principal characteristics that are typical of pre-schools/kindergartens built during this period however when compared to other places in this class, the Eltham War Memorial Buildings cannot be considered fine, highly intact, influential or pivotal examples of this class of place.

Criterion D is not likely to be satisfied at the State level.

### **CRITERION E**

**Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.**

#### **STEP 1: A TEST FOR SATISFYING CRITERION E**

The <i>PHYSICAL FABRIC</i> of the place/object clearly exhibits particular aesthetic characteristics.
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#### ***Executive Director's Response***

The physical fabric of the Eltham War Memorial Buildings exhibits particular aesthetic characteristics associated with post-war civic buildings including their modest size, use of cream brick and functional Modernist-influenced design.

Criterion E is likely to be satisfied.



## STEP 2: STATE LEVEL SIGNIFICANCE TEST FOR CRITERION E

The aesthetic characteristics are *APPRECIATED OR VALUED* by the wider community or an appropriately-related discipline as evidenced, for example, by:

- *critical recognition* of the aesthetic characteristics of the place/object within a relevant art, design, architectural or related discipline as an outstanding example within Victoria; or
- wide public *acknowledgement of exceptional merit* in Victoria in medium such as songs, poetry, literature, painting, sculpture, publications, print media etc.

### **Executive Director's Response**

The aesthetic characteristics of the Eltham War Memorial Buildings have not received critical recognition or wide public acknowledgement of their exceptional merit.

Criterion E is not likely to be satisfied at the State level.

## CRITERION F

**Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.**

### STEP 1: A TEST FOR SATISFYING CRITERION F

The place/object contains *PHYSICAL EVIDENCE* that clearly demonstrates creative or technical *ACHIEVEMENT* for the time in which it was created.

**Plus**

The physical evidence demonstrates a *HIGH DEGREE OF INTEGRITY*.

### **Executive Director's Response**

The Eltham War Memorial Buildings exhibit design and construction techniques that were commonly used by the period of their construction. They do not demonstrate a high degree of creative or technical achievement.

Criterion F is not likely to be satisfied.

## CRITERION G

**Strong or special association with a particular present-day community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.**

### STEP 1: A BASIC TEST FOR SATISFYING CRITERION G

Evidence exists of a community or cultural group.  
(*A community or cultural group is a group of people who share a common interest, including an experience, purpose, belief system, culture, ethnicity or values.*)

**Plus**

Evidence exists of a strong attachment between the COMMUNITY OR CULTURAL GROUP and the place/object in the present-day context.

**Plus**

Evidence exists of a time depth to that attachment.

**Executive Director’s Response**

There is an attachment between the Eltham War Memorial Buildings and current and former users of the buildings, and with the Eltham community more broadly. These attachments relate the place’s functions as both a war memorial and a facility for babies and children. The place has played an important role in the local community since the 1950s and there is a time depth to this attachment.

Criterion G is likely to be satisfied.

**STEP 2: STATE LEVEL SIGNIFICANCE TEST CRITERION G**

Evidence exists that the social value resonates at a State Level, that is across the ‘broader Victorian community’.  
*(‘Resonance’ means the extent to which the social value of a place/object can be demonstrated to exert an influence. The social value must resonate beyond a particular local, social or cultural community into the ‘broader Victorian community’).*

**Plus**

Evidence exists that the social value is part of an event or story that contributes to ‘Victoria’s identity.’

**Executive Director’s Response**

Although there is an attachment between the place and the Eltham community, the same could be said of many similar places across Victoria. Many Victorian suburbs and towns have long established facilities for babies and children that the local community has an attachment to. Many Victorian suburbs and towns also have war memorials. Whether they are sculptures, monuments or functional buildings, there is often a strong attachment between the memorial and the community in which it is located. The Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne (VHR H0848) is an example of a memorial that resonates across the broader Victorian community as the focal point for ANZAC Day remembrance services. There is no evidence that the social value of the Eltham War Memorial Buildings resonates across the broader Victorian community.

Criterion G is not likely to be satisfied at the State Level.

**CRITERION H**

**Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria’s history.**

**STEP 1: A TEST FOR SATISFYING CRITERION H**

The place/object has a *DIRECT ASSOCIATION* with a person or group of persons who have made a strong or influential *CONTRIBUTION* to the course of Victoria’s history.

**Plus**

The *ASSOCIATION* of the place/object to the person(s) *IS EVIDENT* in the physical fabric of the place/object and/or in documentary resources and/or oral history.

**Plus**

- The *ASSOCIATION*:
- directly relates to *ACHIEVEMENTS* of the person(s) at, or relating to, the place/object; or
  - relates to an *enduring* and/or *close INTERACTION* between the person(s) and the place/object.

***Executive Director's Response***

The Eltham War Memorial Buildings have a direct association with groups such as the Eltham War Memorial Trust and the Women's Auxiliary of the Trust. The place also has an association with the leadership of both groups, including Louise Cairns Officer and Stanley Addison. Although these groups and individuals have made a valuable contribution to the Eltham township and to other areas of cultural life, they could not be said to have made a strong or influential contribution of the course of Victoria's history more broadly.

Criterion H is not likely to be satisfied.

# ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE [s.40(1)(3)(c)]

The Eltham War Memorial Buildings are a good example of the type of community facilities that were constructed throughout Victoria as memorials following World War II. The Eltham War Memorial Buildings are also a good representative example of small civic buildings constructed in the mid-twentieth century and of post-war facilities for babies and children. The place is important as an expression of the efforts of the citizens of Eltham to fund and develop a place that both memorialised the dead and provided useful facilities for the community.

Although the Eltham War Memorial Buildings are of interest, they cannot be elevated above other similar places in Victoria as a place of State-level significance. The individual buildings are reasonably intact, however the integrity of the place has been compromised by progressive modifications to the landscaping surrounding the buildings. As a complex the place no longer retains its integrity.

The place may be of potential local heritage significance for the reasons outlined above. The Heritage Council may wish to refer the Executive Director's recommendation to the relevant planning authority for consideration for an amendment to a planning scheme to include the place in the Heritage Overlay.

## RELEVANT INFORMATION

<b>Local Government Authority</b>	Nillumbik Shire Council
<b>Heritage Overlay</b>	HO126 Eltham War Memorial Cenotaph (covers World War I obelisk only; no buildings are covered)
<b>Other Overlays</b>	Environmental Significance Overlay Significant Landscape Overlay Parking Overlay
<b>Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register</b>	No
<b>Other Listings</b>	Victorian War Heritage Inventory (Eltham Memorial Hall)
<b>Other Names</b>	Eltham Baby Health Centre Eltham Infant Welfare Centre Eltham War Memorial Hall Eltham Memorial Hall Eltham Pre-School

## HISTORY

### *Baby Health Centres in Victoria*

In the early decades of the twentieth century, infant mortality rates were high and improving the health of babies and young children became a concern for communities throughout Australia. Concurrently, new scientific approaches to child rearing had emerged and gained popular acceptance. Specialised services to provide for babies, and to impart knowledge on childrearing to mothers, came to be viewed an essential part of Victorian towns and suburbs. The first baby health centre in Victoria was opened in Richmond in 1917 in a church hall and the Victorian Baby Health Centres Association formed the following year.<sup>10</sup> Initially, these services were provided in existing buildings. The first purpose-built baby health centre in Victoria was constructed in East Kew in 1925. Baby health centres built at this time were generally modest and functional and tended to blend the institutional and the domestic in their design. These inter-war centres largely

<sup>10</sup> Darian-Smith, K. and Willis, J., 'A Healthy Start: Buildings for Babies', in Lewi, H. and Nichols, D. (eds.), *Community: Building Modern Australia*, Sydney, UNSW Press, 2010, p. 33.

echoed domestic bungalow forms.<sup>11</sup> The construction of new baby health centres peaked in the 1930s, but the immediate post-war period saw a great number of new facilities constructed in the middle and outer suburbs of Melbourne, where populations were increasing.<sup>12</sup> The social welfare reforms of the post-World War II Chifley government provided an environment for further developing services for families. In Victoria in the post-war period the design of baby health centres still tended to combine the domestic and civic, and both basic or more inventive Modernist forms began to emerge.

#### *Kindergartens and pre-schools in Victoria*

Kindergartens initially emerged in Victoria in the early twentieth century influenced by developments in Europe and the United States. They were typically community organisations attached to religious and charitable groups and were concerned with the conditions of children of working mothers in poorer neighbourhoods of Melbourne. The first free kindergarten in Victoria opened in South Melbourne in 1909. Kindergartens were increasingly common by the 1930s. While they often operated from existing premises, such as church halls, consideration began to be given to the design of kindergartens to provide optimal conditions for young children. In Victoria, the Lady Gowrie Centres provided models for optimal pre-school design. After World War II, pre-school education came to be viewed as essential for all children, and communities across the social spectrum came to expect access kindergartens and pre-schools in their neighbourhood.<sup>13</sup> Local governments and proactive community groups assisted in the construction of new pre-schools and kindergartens, particularly in the middle and outer suburbs of Melbourne.

#### *War memorials after World War II*

In Australia, memorials erected in the immediate aftermath of World War I typically took the form of obelisks, plaques, statues and avenues of honour. Each would be adapted by the communities of the towns or suburbs they were constructed in, taking on local peculiarities. Although these traditional memorial forms predominated, functional war memorials increased in popularity toward the end of the war.<sup>14</sup> In the Inter-war period some took the form of community facilities, and the memorial hall was a reasonably common expression.<sup>15</sup> Although more traditional memorial monuments continued to be erected, by the end of World War II there was widespread public support for memorials that also provided community amenities. New community facilities were also in demand due to the increasing post-war population, scant building resources, emergent urban planning thinking and an expectation that civic amenities were a necessity for modern Australian communities.<sup>16</sup> New community halls, schools, hospitals, swimming pools and bowls clubs and other functional community facilities became popular memorial forms. As well as memorial civic complexes, facilities for babies and children, including baby health centres, pre-schools and kindergartens were also erected.

#### *The Eltham War Memorial Buildings*

In 1943, an Eltham Women's Auxiliary began fundraising for a war memorial for the Eltham community. The Eltham War Memorial Trust was formed in 1945 at a meeting of the Eltham Progress Association. It was decided at this time that the memorial should take the form of facilities for children. The Trust purchased the block of land on Main Road, Eltham in October 1945.<sup>17</sup> The foundation stone was laid by the Governor Sir Dallas Brooks at a ceremony in November 1950.<sup>18</sup> It was reported at this time that a creche, soldiers rest

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<sup>11</sup> Darian-Smith, K. and Willis, J., 'A Healthy Start: Buildings for Babies', p. 36.

<sup>12</sup> Heritage Alliance, *Survey of Post-War Built Heritage in Victoria: Stage One*, 2008, p. 27.

<sup>13</sup> Context, *Mid-Century Modern Heritage Study – Council-owned Places*, 2019, p. 27.

<sup>14</sup> Inglis, K., *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1998. p. 131.

<sup>15</sup> Rowe, D., *War-related heritage study*.

<sup>16</sup> Lewi, H. and Jordan, C., 'Commemorating and Enhancing the Everyday' the everyday in Lewi, H. and Nichols, D. (eds.), *Community: Building Modern Australia*, Sydney, UNSW Press, 2010, p. 207.

<sup>17</sup> Westbrooke, S. *War Memorial Buildings Complex*.

rooms, children's library and remembrance garden would be constructed once funds became available.<sup>19</sup> The architectural partnership of Albert Keith Lines and Jessica MacFarlane was selected to design the first building on the site, the Infant Welfare Centre. The firm focused on domestic architecture but would come to design numerous municipal buildings across Victoria, including the Shire Offices in Benalla (VHR H2189). The Infant Welfare Centre, serving the same purpose as a baby health centre, opened in November 1952.<sup>20</sup> It replaced an Eltham baby health centre that had initially opened in the public hall in 1945.<sup>21</sup>

A gate and wrought iron arch with the words 'Eltham War Memorial' was installed in 1954. Community fundraising events were held regularly throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, particularly by the Women's Auxiliary of the War Memorial Trust. The same architectural firm, which by this time had been joined by Bruce Marshall and was called A K Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall, called for tenders for the library and pre-school buildings in July 1955.<sup>22</sup> The pre-school was completed in 1956.<sup>23</sup> The Children's Library opened in November 1961.<sup>24</sup> A Memorial Garden, including stone retaining walls along Main Road, was established and further developed in the 1960s. A strip of land at the north of the site was isolated for a Country Fire Authority building. The War Memorial Trust handed the site to the Eltham Shire Council in 1965 and in 1966 the Children Library was re-named the Eltham War Memorial Hall. The Senior Citizens Centre was completed in 1967. The landscape surrounding the buildings was progressively modified to suit contemporary needs. The street frontage was further altered in the 2010s by installation of formal landscaping and World War I obelisk, relocated from the Eltham RSL. A pre-school and maternal health centre continue to operate from the site.

## CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

**Architect name:** A K Lines and MacFarlane (A K Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall)

**Architectural style name:** Post-war modernist

**Builder name:** R.J Squires

**Construction started date:** 1952

**Construction ended date:** 1961

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Eltham War Memorial Buildings is a complex of three small buildings and other associated features located in the Melbourne suburb of Eltham. The sloping site occupies an area between the railway line and the western side of Main Road. At street level, the war memorial gates (1954) alongside Main Road open on to a formally landscaped terrace area of lawn, paving and plantings installed in the 2010s. This area includes a World War I obelisk, re-located to the site in 2012. A series of ramps connect the street level to a row of single storey cream brick buildings comprising the Infant Welfare Centre (1952), Pre-School (1956) and War Memorial Hall (former Children's Library, 1961). The pre-school building is surrounded by a children's play area. A senior citizen's centre (1967) lies to the rear of these buildings on the western side of the site.

## Archaeology

There is no identified archaeology of State level significance at this place.

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<sup>19</sup> 'Children Featured in Eltham's Day'.

<sup>20</sup> 'Weigh-in at Infant Centre'.

<sup>21</sup> 'For Eltham Babies', *The Age*, 6 November 1945, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> *The Age*, 23 July 1955, p. 50.

<sup>23</sup> 'Cookery Book for Christmas'.

<sup>24</sup> 'Children's Library Opens at Eltham', *The Age*, 10 November 1961, p. 11.

## **INTEGRITY/INTACTNESS**

Intactness – The intactness of individual building and features is good; the three memorial buildings and war memorial gates survive. There has been some change to individual buildings. For example, the prominent ‘Infant Welfare Centre’ signage originally attached to the Infant Welfare Centre has been removed and the pre-school building has been externally altered.

The intactness of the place as a complex is poor. Land that was originally purchased by the War Memorial Trust for construction of the Eltham War Memorial Buildings has been impinged upon over time. Landscaping that was installed by the War Memorial Trust as part of the early scheme for the complex has been removed or substantially altered.

Integrity – The integrity of the individual buildings and the war memorial gates themselves is good and their cultural heritage values can still be read. However, the integrity of the place as a complex has been diminished by the accumulation of modifications to the area surrounding the buildings. The setting and context of the buildings has changed dramatically and no longer bears a resemblance to its appearance in the 1960s. The cultural heritage values of the place as a complex of memorial buildings set within a memorial garden can no longer be easily read.

## **CONDITION**

The place is still in use and in good condition.

## **COMPARISONS**

The place falls into several categories that are currently under represented on both the VHR and in the Heritage Overlays of local planning schemes. Generally, there are far fewer post-war places included in the VHR and Heritage Overlays than nineteenth-century or early twentieth century places. This is seen in the comparators below.

### Functional World War II Memorials

#### **Woodhouse-Nareeb Soldiers Memorial Hall, Glenthompson (VHR H2275)**

The Woodhouse-Nareeb Soldiers Memorial Hall is of historical significance to the state of Victoria. It is a large corrugated iron-clad hall in a rural setting east of Hamilton. It was erected by soldier settler families who had recently arrived in the area under the Soldier Settlement Scheme as a memorial to fellow servicemen. The hall was designed by the architect Stewart Handsaay and built in 1955. It is part of a complex that includes tennis courts, a sports oval and a plantation. The Woodhouse-Nareeb Soldiers Memorial Hall is historically significant for its direct association with the Soldier Settlement Scheme and is unusual as a memorial hall erected by soldier settlers.



Woodhouse-Nareeb Soldiers Memorial Hall (VHR H2275)

**Koroit Memorial Hall, Koroit (VHR H2222)**

The Memorial Hall, Koroit, is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria. The building was constructed in 1957 and served as a memorial to those men of the Koroit Catholic Parish who were killed during World War II. The Diocese of Ballarat commissioned the hall for the large Catholic community around Koroit. It was designed by architects Cowper Murphy & Associates of Melbourne as a multi-use complex with full cinema facilities, and was one of the last single-screen cinemas built in Victoria. It retains a high degree of intactness and integrity to the era of its construction, including furniture, fixtures, equipment and a slide collection.



Koroit Memorial Hall (VHR H2222)

**Rutherglen Memorial Swimming Pool (HO592 in Indigo Shire Planning Scheme)**

The Rutherglen community began planning for a War Memorial Swimming Pool in 1945. Construction was funded by a combination of government grants and local fundraising. Initial building works were undertaken by volunteer labour. The Rutherglen Memorial Swimming Pool opened in 1955 and remains in use. The swimming pool is located within a memorial park.



Rutherglen Memorial Swimming Pool (HO592)



**Kerang Memorial Hall, Kerang (not in VHR or HO)**

The Kerang Memorial Hall was opened on the 21st September 1954. Inside the hall, honour rolls list the names of 1370 fallen and returned servicemen who fought in the Second World War, Korea, Malaya and Vietnam.



Kerang Memorial Hall, Kerang

Post-war memorial facilities for babies and children

**East Ivanhoe Memorial Kindergarten (East Ivanhoe Pre-School), Ivanhoe (not in VHR or HO)**

The East Ivanhoe Memorial Kindergarten was opened in 1958. At the time of opening its official name was the 'East Ivanhoe Preschool Memorial Kindergarten'. It was the culmination of years of fundraising by the City of Heidelberg War Memorial Trust and the East Ivanhoe Pre-School Committee and was a response to the increasing demand for children's services in the area.



East Ivanhoe Memorial Kindergarten

**Malvern Memorial Kindergarten (not in VHR or HO)**

Construction of the Malvern Memorial Kindergarten began in 1951 after intensive fundraising by the local community. It opened in February 1953. It has a marble plaque dedicated to those who had died during World War II and the quote "the foundation of every state is the education of its youth".



Malvern Memorial Kindergarten

**Glenroy Memorial Kindergarten. Glenroy (not in VHR or HO)**

The Glenroy Memorial Kindergarten was constructed in 1953 and was opened in 1954 by Health Minister Mr Barry. It was constructed at a cost of £7000 and initially provided accommodation for 50 children.



Glenroy Memorial Kindergarten

**War Memorial Kindergarten, Whittington (not in VHR or HO)**

Following World War II, members of the local community engaged with the Shire of Bellarine to establish a permanent memorial to those who died during the war. It was decided the memorial should take the form of an infant welfare centre and a kindergarten. In 1951 the Shire purchased the land. About one third of the cost of the infant welfare centre was raised by the community and the balance was contributed through the Shire and other grants. The infant welfare centre opened in 1955 and was extended in 1961 for a kindergarten.



War Memorial Kindergarten, Whittington

Post-war Baby Health Centres in the Victorian Heritage Register

**Former Baby Health Care Centre, Echuca (VHR H0073)**

The Former Baby Health Care Centre in Echuca is of cultural heritage significance to the State of Victoria. Completed in 1950 it was one of the first baby health centre buildings to be completed in country Victoria after World War II. Its existence is symbolic of the strength of the baby health care movement in Victoria at the time and the importance of baby health care centres to rural Victoria. Domestic in scale and design, the centre resembles a house and is typical of the austere period after World War II.



Former Baby Health Centre, (VHR H0073)

Post-war baby health centres in local heritage overlays

**The Aberfeldie Baby Health Centre, Aberfeldie (HO318 of Moonee Valley Planning Scheme)**

The Aberfeldie Baby Health Centre is of local historic, social and architectural significance to the City of Moonee Valley. The centre was designed by S.C. Steele and constructed in 1955. It is socially and historically significant at a local level as a place that symbolises the determined efforts of the Council and local community to establish a place that would improve the health and welfare of women and children.



The Aberfeldie Baby Health Centre (HO318)

**The Burnett Gray Infant Welfare Centre, Elwood (included in local heritage precinct H08 of Port Phillip Planning Scheme)**

The Burnett Gray Infant Welfare Centre opened in August 1950. It replaced an existing local baby health service that had been operating from St Bedes Church. At the time of opening it included noteworthy features such as a sound absorbing treatment to walls and insulation in the roof space. It was constructed by the City of St Kilda in response to increased need for baby services in the area.



The Burnett Gray Infant Welfare Centre (included in local heritage precinct H08)

**Emerald Street Community Centre, Essendon West (H0332 of Moonee Valley Planning Scheme)**

The Emerald Street Community Centre is of local significance to the City of Moonee Valley. Originally erected in 1963 as an infant welfare centre, it was designed by Garnet Price, Shire Engineer and Building Surveyor to the Shire of Keilor. Historically, the building is of local interest as one of a number of purpose-built infant welfare centres that were erected in the 1950s and 1960s in an area experiencing rapid population growth at that time. Architecturally, it can be considered as a quintessential, if rather late, example of the so-called 'Melbourne School' of contemporary architecture that emerged in the early 1950s.



Emerald Street Community Centre (H0332)

**Baby Health Centre, Coburg North (HO399 of Moreland Planning Scheme)**

The Merlynston Baby Health Centre is of local historic, social and architectural significance to Moreland City. It was designed by T.D. Gibson and constructed in 1955. It is of local heritage significance as a representative example of a baby health centre. It demonstrates the expansion of centres in the area in the post-war period.



Baby Health Centre, Coburg North

*Post-war pre-schools/kinderqartens in the Victorian Heritage Register*

**Robert Cochrane Kindergarten, Hawthorn (VHR H2309)**

The Robert Cochrane Kindergarten is of cultural heritage significance to the State of Victoria. Constructed from 1948-50 the design of the kindergarten is attributed to architect Horace Tribe. It demonstrates the combination of developing pre-school educational theories and modern architectural thinking of the 1950s and 1960s, as well as reflecting the economic austerity of the immediate post war period. Its Modernist design was highly regarded. It influenced the design of other kindergartens and was widely acknowledged as highly progressive. It is a highly intact example of an early post-war kindergarten in Victoria. It retains much of its original exterior and interior fabric and fittings.



Robert Cochrane Kindergarten (VHR H2309)

*Post-war pre-schools/kindergartens in local heritage overlays*

**Greenwood Park Kindergarten, Ringwood (HO28 of Maroondah Planning Scheme)**

Greenwood Park Kindergarten is of local heritage significance. It is a timber building constructed in 1954/55. It is located in a fine landscape setting and is intact. It is historically significant as an early embodiment of the post-war kindergarten movement. It is architecturally significant as a fine example of the Modernist style as an example of its building type.



Greenwood Park Kindergarten, Ringwood (HO28)

**East Keilor Pre-School & Infant Welfare Centre, Keilor East (HO432 of Moonee Valley Planning Scheme)**

The East Keilor Pre-School and Infant Welfare Centre is of local historic and social significance to the City of Moonee Valley. It was constructed in 1967-68. It is historically and socially significant at a local level for its association with the development of Keilor the suburb and as a representative example of a combined pre-school and infant welfare centre of the post-war era.



East Keilor Pre-School & Infant Welfare Centre (HO432)

### **Progress Kindergarten, Ascot Vale (HO391 of Moonee Valley Planning Scheme)**

The Progress Kindergarten is of local historic, architectural and social significance to the City of Moonee Valley. It was constructed in 1953 and is of simple gable roofed building. It is historically significant for its association with the Free Kindergarten movement and with the significant expansion of free kindergartens that occurred in the post-war period. It is also significant as a representative example of the simply designed kindergartens erected by local committees in the post-war period, which are often simple gabled timber buildings with large square windows. The economical design of the kindergartens reflect post-war building restrictions as well the limited resources of the local committees that established them.



Progress Kindergarten (HO391)

### **SUMMARY OF COMPARISONS**

#### *Functional World War II Memorials*

The Eltham War Memorial Buildings have a historical association with the phase of erecting functional community memorials following World War II. Unlike the Eltham War Memorial Buildings, which provided buildings for existing services, the Woodhouse-Nareeb Soldiers Memorial Hall (VHR H2275) is distinguished by being a functional memorial complex erected by families who were part of the Soldier Settlement Scheme – a key Federal Government initiative specifically formulated in response to the after effects of World War II. It is part of an intact complex that includes a tennis court, sports oval, cairn and memorial plantation that retains a good degree of integrity. The Koroit Memorial Hall (VHR H2222) is distinguished by the unusual degree of its intactness to the era of its construction. These places allow the phase to be better understood than most other places in Victoria with the same association. There is no such characteristic or association to elevate the Eltham War Memorial Buildings. It does not enable the phase to be understood better than the many community war memorials erected in Victoria following World War II and surviving today.

#### *Post-war baby health centres and kindergartens/pre-schools*

Many baby health centres and kindergartens/pre-schools were constructed in Victoria in the 1950s and 1960s. Several are included in the VHR and in Heritage Overlays. Of those in the VHR, the Former Baby Health Centre, Echuca, (VHR H0073) is distinguished by being one of the first baby health centres established in a rural location following World War II. Its design is typical of baby health centres of the era. It is earlier than the Eltham War Memorial Buildings and allows the development of this initiative in a State-wide context to be better understood than the Infant Welfare Centre within the Eltham War Memorial Buildings complex. The Robert Cochrane Kindergarten (VHR H2309) is notable as a fine and highly intact example of kindergarten design from the 1950s. The pre-school building within the Eltham War Memorial Buildings complex references the architectural tastes of the period but is comparatively simple. It is not as expressive of post-war kindergarten design as the Robert Cochrane Kindergarten and is not a notable example of the style. In this context, the Eltham War Memorial Buildings have more in common with the baby health centres and kindergartens/pre-schools included in local Heritage Overlays. These places speak to the development of suburbs and townships and the importance of facilities for babies and children to their immediate communities.

## KEY REFERENCES USED TO PREPARE ASSESSMENT

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'Garden of Remembrance', *The News: The Newspaper of the City of Heidelberg and of the Shire of Eltham*, 11 April 1947.

'Third unit of Eltham's memorial opened', source unrecorded, November 1961.

'Weigh-in at Infant Centre', *The Age*, 17 November 1952, p. 3.



**ADDITIONAL IMAGES**



March 2020, war memorial gates.



March 2020, formal landscaping along Main Road frontage.



March 2020, World War I obelisk relocated to the site in 2012.



March 2020, Infant Welfare Centre, east elevation.



March 2020, War Memorial Hall, east elevation.



March 2020, Pre-school, east elevation.



March 2020, Infant Welfare Centre, south elevation.



March 2020, Senior Citizens Centre.

**HISTORIC IMAGES**



c1954, Infant Welfare Centre.

Source: *Eltham War Memorial Buildings Complex: Cultural Heritage Significance Assessment.*



1961, Opening of Children's Library (War Memorial Hall).

Source: unsourced newspaper clipping, Victorian Collections.



c1968, landscaping in front of Eltham War Memorial Buildings.  
Source: Victorian Collections.



c1968, landscaping in front of the Eltham War Memorial Buildings.  
Source: Victorian Collections.



c1968, landscaping in front of Eltham War Memorial Buildings.  
Source: Victorian Collections



1985, Infant Welfare Centre.  
Source: Victorian Collections.



c1990s, Main Road frontage.  
Source: Victorian War Heritage Inventory.