HO16 – Kelly Park, 2 Synnot Street, Werribee

Heritage Place: Kelly Park	**HO Reference:** HO16 **Date updated:** 16 October 2026

Address: 2 Synnot Street, Werribee



Figure 1: Kelly Park, 2 Synnot Street, Werribee. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd 2025.

Item Group: Parks, Gardens and Trees **Item Type:** Reserve, Memorial	**Key Theme:** Building towns and cities **Key Sub-theme:** Planting trees and cultivating gardens
Designer: N/A **Builder:** N/A	**Construction:** 1864 **Style:** N/A

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Retain tree controls. Retain solar energy controls. Amend curtilage. Update place address.

Controls:	○	External paint controls	○	Internal alteration controls	●	Tree controls (Moreton Bay Fig trees (*Ficus macrophylla*), Black Ironbox trees

						(*Eucalyptus raveretiana*), Tasmanian bluegum (*Eucalyptus globulus*), peppercorn trees (*Schinus molle*), a Golden Elm tree (*Ulmus glabra 'Lutescens'*), purple leaf plum (*Prunus cerasifera*), Canary Island Palms *(Phoenix canariensis)* and other juvenile eucalyptus species)
	○	Included on Victorian Heritage Register	○	Incorporated Plans	○	Outbuildings and fence not exempt
	○	Prohibited uses may be permitted	○	Aboriginal Heritage Place	●	Solar energy system controls

Curtilage



Figure 1. Kelly Park, 2 Synnot Street, Werribee. *Aerial Basemap source*: Nearmap. 2025. *Spatial data source*: VicMap & Department of Transport and Planning

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	Kelly Park is of historical significance as a dedicated public park provided for in the early establishment of the Werribee township. The redevelopment of the park was part of a broader push to beautify the parklands in the early twentieth century, which resulted in the planting of the Canary Island Palms *(Phoenix canariensis)*. Kelly Park is also of significance for its associations with the Returned Service League (RSL) who established their headquarters in the park during the twentieth century, becoming a place of gathering and remembrance for returned servicemen.
B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	The place does not meet this criterion.
C	*Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history*	The place does not meet this criterion.
D	*Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments*	Kelly Park is representative of the parks within the City of Wyndham, offering recreational areas including picnicking facilities, play equipment and a collection of mature trees of varying species which provide a place for recreation.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	The place does not meet this criterion.
F	*Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*	The place does not meet this criterion.
G	*Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions*	Kelly Park is of social significance for its connection to the Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League of Australia, now the Returned Service League (RSL), as a place of gathering with a continued strong membership and annual events including a commemorative service on ANZAC Day, Vietnam Veterans Day and Remembrance Day.

H	*Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.*	The place does not meet this criterion.

Statement of Significance – Kelly Park, 2 Synnot Street, Werribee

Address: 2 Synnot Street, Werribee	**PS ref no:** HO16



Figure 3: Kelly Park, 2 Synnot Street, Werribee. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.

What is significant?

Kelly Park, including the open park, mature trees including Moreton Bay Fig trees (*Ficus macrophylla*), Black Ironbox trees (*Eucalyptus raveretiana*), Tasmanian bluegum (*Eucalyptus globulus*), peppercorn trees (*Schinus molle*), a Golden Elm tree (*Ulmus glabra 'Lutescens'*), purple leaf plum (*Prunus cerasifera*), Canary Island Palms *(Phoenix canariensis)* and other juvenile eucalyptus species and garden beds with rosemary, roses and lavender, the memorial plaques and gun emplacement, is significant. The RSL Club and other built structures are not significant.

How is it significant?

Kelly Park is of historical, representative and social significance to the City of Wyndham.

Why is it significant?

Kelly Park is of historical significance as a dedicated public park provided for in the early establishment of the Werribee township. The redevelopment of the park was part of a broader push to beautify the parklands in the early twentieth century, which resulted in the planting of the Canary Island Palms *(Phoenix canariensis)*. (Criterion A)

Kelly Park is also of significance for its associations with the Returned Service League (RSL) who established their headquarters in the park during the twentieth century, becoming a place of gathering and remembrance for returned servicemen. (Criterion A)

Kelly Park is representative of the parks within the City of Wyndham, offering recreational areas including picnicking facilities, play equipment and a collection of mature trees of varying species which provide a place for recreation. (Criterion D)

Kelly Park is of social significance for its connection to the Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League of Australia, now the Returned Service League (RSL), as a place of gathering with a continued strong membership and annual events including a commemorative service on ANZAC Day, Vietnam Veterans Day and Remembrance Day. (Criterion G)

Primary Source

Kelly Park citation, Extent Heritage, 2026.

Description

Bunurong Country

Kelly Park is situated on the lands of the Bunurong peoples of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Custodians of Country. Despite the effects of colonisation, including dispossession of land, the Traditional Custodians have maintained a continuing connection to land, waters and culture within the City of Wyndham.

Physical Analysis

Kelly Park is a triangular public park within the Werribee City Centre. The park is bound by the Princes Highway (Synnot Street) to the south, Cherry Street to the east and Synnot Street Service Road to the west. The surrounding site context is broadly commercial. The site itself is an open area with internal pedestrian paths and low-rise buildings located centrally to Synnot Street. The buildings within the park include the Werribee RSL.

Plantings within the reserve include a row of Canary Island palms *(Phoenix canariensis)* along Cherry Street, five mature Moreton Bay fig trees (*Ficus macrophylla*) located at each of the corners of the park (with two collections in pairs), at least four black ironbox trees (*Eucalyptus raveretiana*) including one mature specimen to Synnot Street, a mature Tasmanian bluegum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) on Cherry Street, centrally within the reserve, several peppercorn trees (*Schinus molle*), a golden elm tree (*Ulmus glabra 'Lutescens'*), purple leaf plum (*Prunus cerasifera*) and other juvenile eucalyptus species. Garden beds include a collection of rosemary, roses and lavender amongst areas of lawn (Figure 15, Figure 16 and Figure 14).

Military memorabilia has been incorporated into the garden beds of Kelly Park including a gun, and a rock with a plaque (Figure 13). Play equipment, tables and chairs, benches and a public toilet are located within the reserve (Figure 11 and Figure 12). Attached to the southern wall of the public toilet block is a mural by artist Minna Leunig (2019), inspired by native wildlife and flora.

Werribee RSL

The Werribee RSL Building is a one and two-storey contemporary building designed in the post-Modern style (Figure 9). The two-storey component of the building adopts a central pitched roof with adjoining flat roof to either side, and timber barge boards in an aquamarine finish. The central gable end has a timber finial with an overhanging eave. The building is constructed of rendered masonry, painted in an apricot finish with a central entrance on the ground floor. The ground floor is largely constructed of dark glazing. Above the central entry is a trapezoid shaped window with the expressed rendered moulding. The rectangular windows to either side of this window do not have surrounds.

The single storey component is constructed south of the two-storey element, and mimics the details of the larger building. The single storey component had a flat roof clad in sheet metal with overhanging eaves. At regular intervals, the buildings has floor to ceiling dark glazing with express rendered moulding in a darker apricot finish.

The building is set behind a large arch constructed of rendered masonry in an apricot finish to match the building (Figure 10). The arch has a linear upper with a roof structure with overhanging eaves supported by timber brackets. At the apex of the arch is an emblem which appears to have been removed. Beneath the location of the emblem the arch reads 'Werribee RSL' and 'Welcome and good luck'. The underside of the arch is curved with expressed moulding in the darker apricot finish.

The RSL building has garden beds in front of the built form with a collection of Coconut palms (*Cocos nucifera*) in front.

Alterations and Additions

- Construction of Werribee RSL*
- Construction of the Kelly Park Centre* and subsequent demolition
- Construction of play ground and park furniture*
- Construction of public toilets*
- Inclusion of car parking*
- New plantings*

Kelly Park is in good condition and of high integrity.

**** Denotes element that does not contribute to the cultural significance of the place.***

History

Kelly Park, located on 2 Synnot Street, Werribee, is situated on the lands of the Bunurong peoples of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Custodians of Country. Despite the effects of colonisation, including dispossession of land, the Traditional Custodians have maintained a continuing connection to land, waters and culture within the City of Wyndham.

Kelly Park is located close to Wirribi Yaluk. This is the Bunurong name for the waterway we now know as Werribee River. Wirribi Yaluk is a predominant feature of this Country, carving its way through these plains as it flows from its headwaters north of Ballan into the saltwater of Naarm (the Bunurong word for Port Phillip Bay). It is also the border between the lands of Bunurong and Wadawurrung peoples. Bunurong peoples are the Traditional Owners of this Country, and Wirribi Yaluk is a place of sustenance, abundance and community. The majestic River red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) growing along its banks have provided bark for containers and canoes, while the river's waters have sustained nutritious crustaceans and fish, including the Short-finned eel (*Anguilla australis*), and have supplied fresh water throughout the year. (BLCAC, 2026, 11).

The early township of Werribee was positioned in proximity to a ford over Werribee River, connecting the route between Melbourne and Geelong (Murray 1974, 11; Lovell Chen 2024, 51). As traffic grew along the Melbourne to Geelong route, the Werribee settlement expanded. In 1849, Surveyor General Robert Hoddle reserved land for a township—gazetted as 'Wyndham' in 1850 (James and Pritchard 2008, 15; Hocking 2013, 177; Murray 1974, 14). The 1857 arrival of the railway firmly positioned the commercial centre on the east side of the river. A post office, churches, schools and additional inns soon followed (James and Pritchard 2008, 103).

While the surrounding land prospered economically under sheep and cattle grazing, the township itself changed little throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century (*Werribee Shire Banner* 29 July 1937, 3). Ongoing beautification works and new infrastructure, accompanied by the establishment of new civic and social institutions, helped to enliven the Werribee township in the early twentieth century (James and Pritchard 2008, 62).

Place History

The Park

Kelly Park was first gazetted in 1864, contemporaneously with the creation of the Werribee Shire. The park comprises one acre, positioned on Section 23A of the Werribee subdivision (Context 1997, 218). The park soon became known as Kelly Park, named after prominent local Councillor Patrick Kelly, who went on to serve as Shire President 1876-1880 (Context 1997, 219). From the 1860s, Kelly Park was landscaped with rose gardens and fountains and was utilised by locals for promenade walks (Context 1997, 219). It remained relatively unchanged throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century.

In 1909, the Bacchus Marsh Express published an article criticising the park's landscaping as being outdated, as part of a broader criticism of the Werribee township being 'still in the '60s.' The article went on to recommend additional plantings as a solution, including 'grass and pathways, with a few small sunk beds for Japonicas' (Bacchus Marsh Express 1909, 2). From

this time onwards, significant pressure mounted on Council to undertake beautification works at Kelly Park. Discussions between Council, the Werribee Progress Association (WPA) and residents were ongoing throughout the 1920s, floating proposals to revegetate, install seating and construct a children's playground (Werribee Shire Banner 1921, 3). The swings installed at this time were enthusiastically taken up by the community, illustrating a renewed engagement with Kelly Park as 'an ideal breathing space' for Werribee (Werribee Shire Banner 1926, 5). The WPA recommended that Council remove the dilapidated fencing, undertake cleaning works, and discourage people from camping in the park, as part of the beautification works (Werribee Shire Banner 1925, 6). The discussions on expanding the use of Kelly Park included a proposal to allocate one corner of Kelly Park to the Fire Brigade for 20 years, however this plan was never actualised (Werribee Shire Banner 1922, 3).

Beautification works continued into the 1930s, including the planting of six palms in 1938 (Lovell Chen 2019, 49). The mature Moreton Bay fig trees extant in the northern portion of the park are estimated to have been planted in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century as well (National Trust 2012) (Figure 2).

In 2018, a major upgrade of the western portion of Kelly Park took place, involving the removal of the brick toilet block, construction of modern toilet blocks and installation of an extensive paved seating area.



Figure 2. Picture Victoria. c.1936. Aerial View of Werribee showing Kelly Park in c.1936.
https://www.picturevictoria.vic.gov.au/site/wyndham/miscellaneous/9771.html

The RSL

In 1916, the Returned Soldiers Committee was first established, commencing the long tradition of commemoration and caring for Werribee's veterans (Werribee Shire Banner 1916, 3). In 1941

the Returned Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia (RSSAILA, now known as the RSL) advocated for a portion of land within Kelly Park to be reserved for the construction of a hall for returned servicemen. Although Council was supportive of the idea, the decision rested with the Lands Department as the authority with control over the park (Werribee Shire Banner 1941, 3). In the years that followed, the proposal was met with mixed responses. Although the Lands Department was supportive of the project, the Werribee Progress Association, as well as Council, expressed that Kelly Park was not the most suitable location as it would reduce the amount of green open space the park afforded the community (Werribee Shire Banner 1945, 2). Despite these objections, in 1946 the Lands Department released an area of two roods, 2 4-10 perches from Kelly Park and sold it to the RSL Memorial Fund.

Due to post-war material and labour shortages, the construction of a hall had been delayed from the outset (Werribee Shire Banner 1947, 2). Born out of this roadblock, the idea to relocate the existing Diggers Road Memorial Hall, located in Werribee South, to Kelly Park was raised by the RSL in 1948 (Werribee Shire Banner 1948, 2). This proposal was met with significant community outcry, with it still functioning as a key community amenity in Werribee South (Werribee Shire Banner 1948, 3).

It was decided in 1949 that a hall in Melbourne's Royal Park, which was used during WWII as an amenities hall, would be relocated to Kelly Park. The wall was 'externally sheeted with weatherboards and cement sheets, and the interior with Masonite and canite. The area of the building is 90ft x 66ft' (Werribee Shire Banner 1949, 2). Upon its delivery to Kelly Park, the hall was planned to be veneered in brick (Werribee Shire Banner 1949, 2). The exact date of the hall's arrival in Kelly Park has not been identified, however, by 1957, works had commenced on the RSL. In November of 1958, Governor of Victoria Sir Dallas Brooks officially opened the RSL Hall (Lovell Chen 2024, 131; James 1985, 105). The relocated hall is still extant today within the Werribee RSL complex.



Figure 3. Roy Davis. c.1976. The RSL in the 1970s. Retrieved from the Lost Werribee Facebook Page

Throughout the 1980s, the RSL underwent extensive extension, with components added to the north and south of the original hall (Figure 4 & Figure 5). By the twentieth century, the whole of

the RSL had been rendered and the archway had been added. Sometime between late 2014 and early 2015, the coat of arms mounted on the archway was removed.

Attendance to the Werribee RSL has remained high throughout its history, continuing to have a strong role in uniting the community and commemorating the sacrifices of Werribee's veterans.



Figure 4. Aerial of Kelly Park in 1979. *Source:* Unknown. 1979. Landata.



Figure 5. Kelly Park in 1989, depicting the additions to the RSL centre. *Source:* Unknown. 1989. 'Revision Mapping Photography.' AUS223-588. Geoscience Australia. https://aerialphotography.ga.gov.au/Scanned/AUS/AUS223/AUS223_frame588.tif

The Kelly Park Centre

From 1952, the Workingman's Club entered into discussions with Council and the Lands Department, to purchase part of Kelly Park for the construction of club rooms and a garage (Werribee Shire Banner 1952, 1). Although a Workingman's Club building never eventuated, it was eventually approved for Council to deliver a Senior Citizens Centre, positioned west of the RSL (Figure 4). From the mid-1960s, architects B.Smith and J.E. Bourier began to draw up plans for the development of a senior citizens centre, including a hall and stage, kitchen, library and TV room. By 1966, the final design had been reached, comprising a rectangular building, with the hall at the northern extent of the building, flanked by two terraces. The club rooms and facilities were located at the southern extent of the building (Figure 6).

With Council having to incrementally source funding from the General Health Department (Gardner 1970), the Senior Citizens Centre had to be constructed in two phases. The southern portion commenced construction from 1967, including the library, crafts room, T.V. room, kitchen, office, rest room, and bathrooms. In 1969, appeals were made for additional funding to complete stage two of the centre. The whole project was forecasted to cost $69,000, with phase one having used $38,000 (Shire of Werribee 1971). It wouldn't be until 1972, however, that the second phase of funding would be released. In the interim, elderly citizens were having to carry equipment, such as lawn bowl mats, between the centre and the RSL club (Yeoman 20 August 1970). Alterations were made to the accessibility of the clubrooms, designed by architect M. John Flynn, to ensure the building was functional until the phase two works were able to be undertaken.

In November of 1972, with funds having been obtained, the Shire of Werribee advertised for tenders to complete stage two of the works on the Kelly Park Centre (Shire of Werribee 1972). Stage two included the completion of the main hall, the stage with store rooms off to each side, and the terraces flanking the east and west walls of the hall (Figure 6). By 1976, the Kelly Park Centre was complete (Figure 8). Aside from the extensions added to the RSL building, Kelly Park has remained relatively unchanged since this time.

The hall and attached club rooms were utilised primarily as a senior citizens centre and community venue for the remainder of the twentieth century (*Werribee Banner* 31 March 1976, 29). Owned and operated by Council, the centre was available for hire as a space for functions, classes and other activities (Venuebat, 2025).

In June of 2022, the Kelly Park Centre was damaged by fire and was closed to the public. Kelly Park Centre was demolished in 2025, with the area re-turfed and returned to open space.

Kelly Park continues to operate as a lively community hub, primarily revolving around use of the recreational park space, and the use of the RSL.

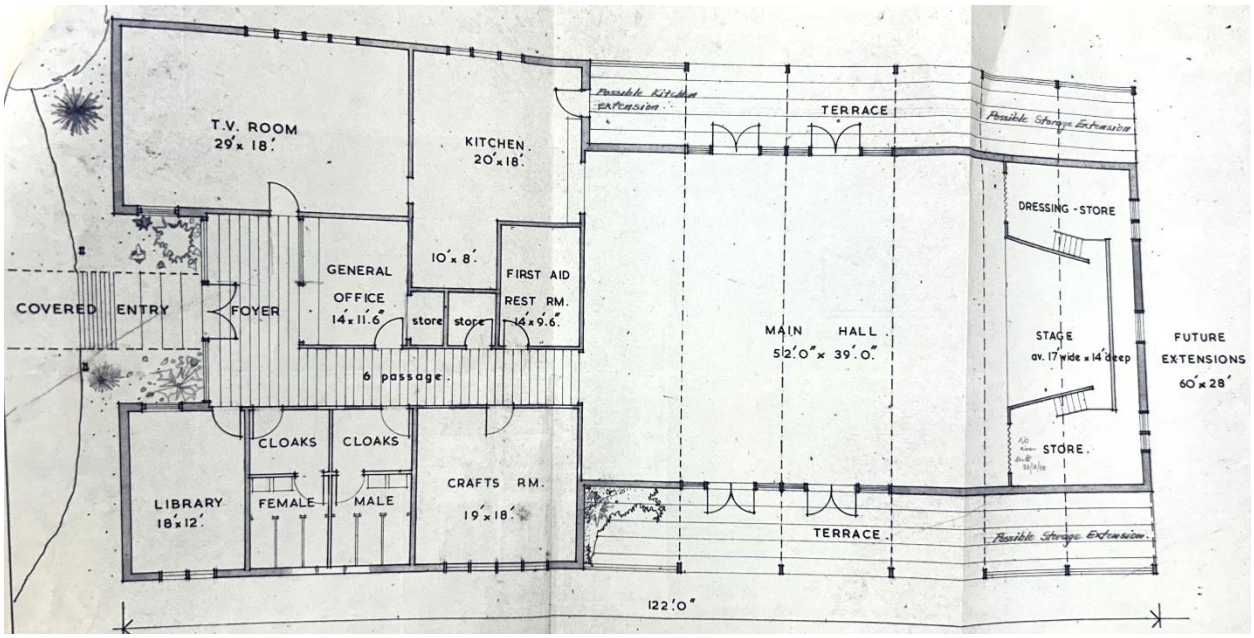


Figure 6. Smith and Bourier. 1966. Proposed Elderly Citizens Club for Werribee. Architectural drawing. Public Records Office of Victoria. VPRS 7882/P0001, 11882.

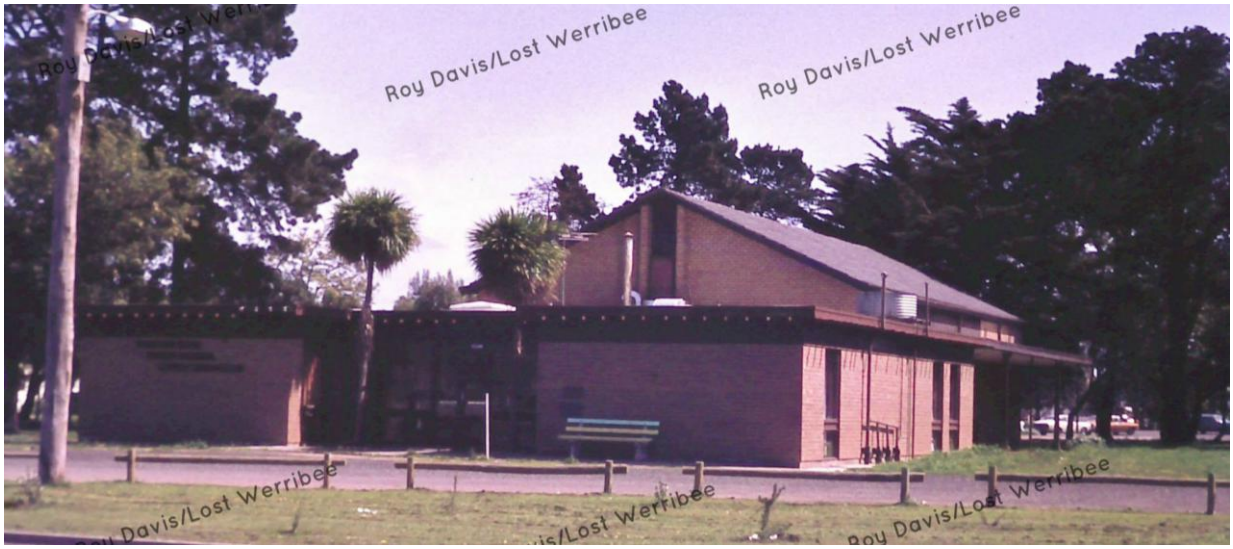


Figure 7. Roy Davis. c.1976. The Kelly Park Centre in the 1970s. Retrieved from the Lost Werribee Facebook Page.

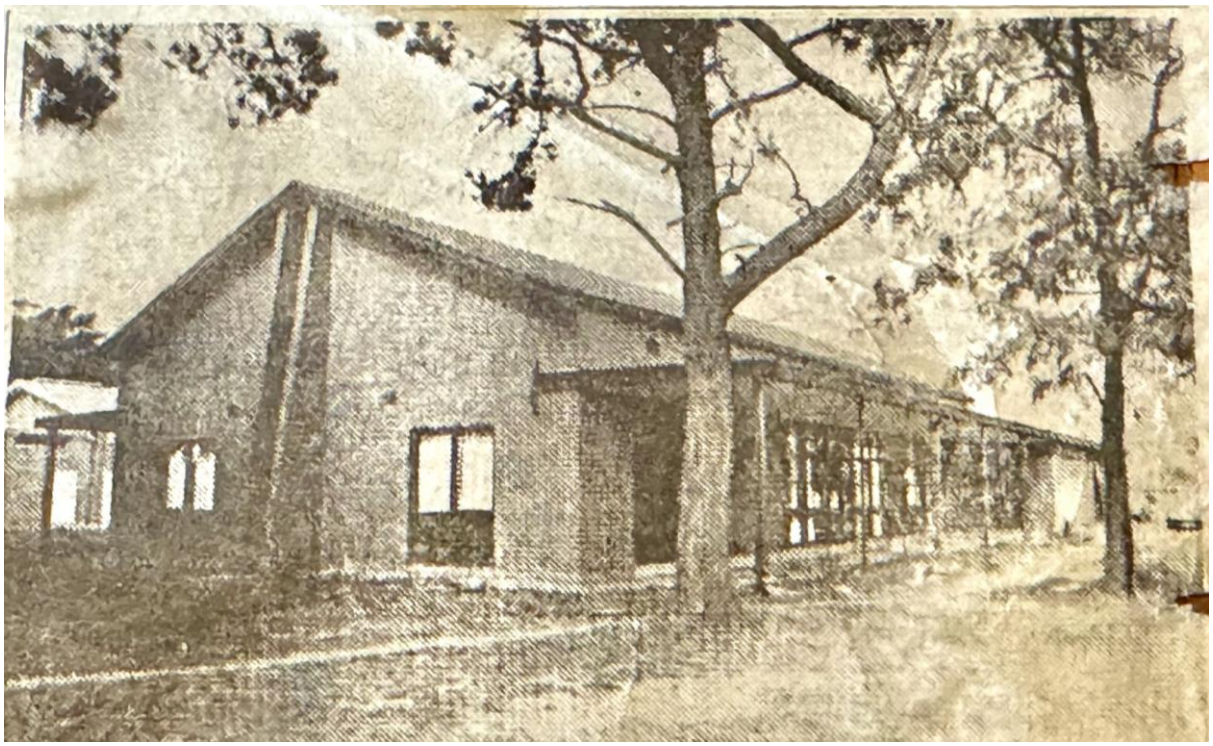


Figure 8. The Werribee Banner. 1976. The Kelly Park Centre shortly following its completion. 31 March 1976, 29. Retrieved from the Werribee Wyndham Community Facebook Group.

Comparative Analysis

Kelly Park is comparable to the following places:

Little River Recreational Reserve (HO124)

Little River Recreational Reserve is physically comparable to Kelly Park as it includes mature vegetation, open areas of lawn, facilities including toilets, playground equipment and picnic areas, and for its inclusion of memorial elements acknowledging World War I and II. While differing in appearance and size, the pair are comparable in both recreational offerings and memorial elements. Both parks were also established on land set aside for the establishment of a recreation reserve. Kelly Park does not include sporting facilities and therefore its parkland character is more readily identifiable when compared to the Little River Recreation Reserve.

Troup Park and Weighbridge (HO105)

Troup Park and Weighbridge are comparable to Kelly Park as an example of recreational space in Wyndham. Comparable to Kelly Park, Troup Park was established as a reserve in the mid-nineteenth century, to provide open space to the township of Werribee. Kelly Park was however reserved earlier than Troup Park but demonstrates the ongoing effort of the Shire of Werribee in the nineteenth and twentieth century to provide open space for Werribee and to beautify the township.

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Images



Figure 9. The RSL Club from Synnot Street. Source: Wyndham City Council, 2026.



Figure 10. The RSL arch. Source: Extent Heritage 2025.



Figure 11. The public toilets and recreation areas. Source: Extent Heritage 2025.



Figure 12. The playground and facilities. Source: Extent Heritage 2025.



Figure 13. Gun armament outside the RSL. Source: Extent Heritage 2025.



Figure 14. Garden bed of rosemary. Source: Extent Heritage 2025.



Figure 15. Canary Island palms *(Phoenix canariensis)* and Peppercorn trees *(Schinus molle)* within the park. Source: Extent Heritage 2025.



Figure 16. The mature fig trees *(Ficus macrophylla)*. Source: Extent Heritage 2025.