



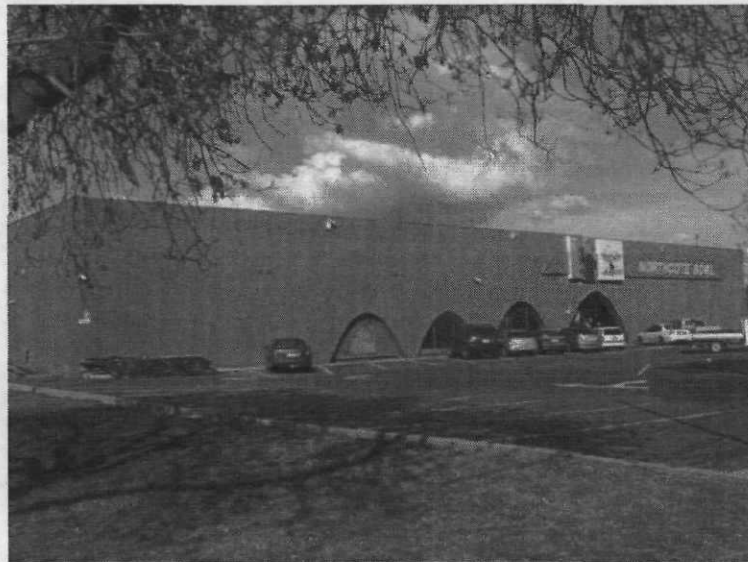
## HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

**Name** Northcote Bowl  
**Address** 166 Victoria Road NORTHCOTE

**File No**  
**Grading**  
 2008  
 Local

**Date**  
**Building Type** Bowling Green  
**Assessment by**

**Extent of Overlay**  
 Refer recommendations



### Condition

**Recommended Heritage Protection** VHR - HI - PS Yes

**Designer / Architect** No information held

**Architectural Style** Late Twentieth Century (c.1960-c.2000)

**Maker / Builder** No information held

### Integrity

Moderate

### History and Historical Context

#### Thematic context

Theme: 4. Developing Darebin's Communities; Sub-theme: 4.6 Retailing, hospitality and entertainment

# HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

---

## History of Northcote

The site was part of the land controlled by the Northcote Brick Company, which had a large complex on the corner of Separation and High Streets in the 19th and early twentieth century, when brickmaking was Northcote's most important industry and the Company was Northcote's largest employer. The Company held exploration rights for suitable clay over a large area east of Victoria Road, which included the present McDonnell Park. It was known as Northcote Brick Company paddock, it was a swampy rural area, where the churches held their Sunday school picnics (Lemon, 1983:105)

In 1911 the subject site in Victoria Street had a small house on it, but there was little development in the area. (MMBW Detail Plan 2422). Very little further development took place in that part of Victoria Street until the 1960s.

## History of Northcote Bowl

The Northcote Bowl was constructed on this site for Bowling Centres Holdings Ltd in 1963. The architects were the Sydney firm Fisher and Jackson, who also designed the bowling alley at Melbourne's Southern Cross Hotel (now demolished). The alley originally had twenty lanes. Management of the Northcote Bowl was later taken over by the American Machine and Foundry Co (Australia) Pty Ltd, usually known as AMF, which bought the property in 1974 (planning files). Ten Pin Bowling was introduced to Australia from the U.S.A. after the second world war. It's growth in popularity was partly due to its exposure through people seeing bowling on movies or television shows in the 1960's.

By this time seven schools were using the Northcote Bowl on a regular basis, and it had become inadequate to the needs of the local community generally. AMF had the alley extended to thirty lanes soon after they acquired the site (City of Darebin planning files).

## Primary sources

MMBW Detail Plan 2422, dated 1911

Sands & McDougall Directory

City of Darebin Planning files

## Secondary sources

Darebin Historical Encyclopedia

Lemon, Andrew, *The Northcote side of the river*, North Melbourne, Hargreen Publishing [for the] City of Northcote, 1983.

## Relevant Historical Australian Themes

No information held

## Description

### Physical Description 1

## HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

---

The Northcote Bowl was constructed for Bowling Centres Holdings Ltd in 1963. The architects were the Sydney firm Fisher and Jackson, who also designed the bowling alley at Melbourne's Southern Cross Hotel (now demolished). The alley originally had twenty lanes. Management of the Northcote Bowl was later taken over by the American Machine and Foundry Co (Australia) Pty Ltd, usually known as AMF, which bought the property in 1974 and had the alley extended to thirty lanes soon after they acquired the site to cater for increased demand. It is a single-storey Modernist brick ten pin bowling alley, situated on the east side of Victoria Road, Northcote, north of a 7-Eleven convenience store (northeast corner of Separation Street, and to the south of the Northcote Aquatics and Recreation Centre. The building is set back from Victoria Road behind a car park, which is used by patrons of the bowling alley. Along the street frontage, is an illuminated AMF sign with a large ten pin fitted above it. At the rear of the bowling alley residential units have been built in recent years.

The bowling alley is rectangular in plan and is expressed as one mass in its street facing (west) elevation. The building is faced in brickwork with a projecting brick decorative element at intervals towards the top of the facade. Slightly projecting pipes, generally in pairs, have also been used to embellish the facade. A series of catenary-type arches extend along the base of the facade, one of which, towards the centre of the elevation, forms the front door of the complex. Brickwork has been painted a deep blue colour (not original).

The complex has thirty lanes in total that are grouped into two: lanes 1-10 and 11-30. The two groups are separated by a locker room and auxiliary spaces. The complex contains elements usually found in bowling alleys, such as a raised viewing area that steps down to the players seating and the lanes; a shoe and lane hire counter; café; and ancillary spaces including toilets, office and an area for electronic games and vending machines. Some original elements, such as fittings and fixtures are extant internally.

### Physical Condition

Good

### Conservation Policy

#### Objectives

To conserve the surviving fabric that contributes to the Modernist era appearance of the complex.

#### Policy Basis

This place is the only ten pin bowling alley within Darebin and for this reason it is of social significance to the community, as a facility that is known, used and valued, and for this reason should be retained. This does not mean that development cannot occur provided that it is carefully designed, however, it does place some limits upon the type of new development. The overall conservation objective therefore is to conserve and maintain the historic fabric, with an emphasis upon the elements that are visible from Victoria Road.

#### Guidelines (General)

In order to conserve the heritage significance of this place, it policy to:

. Conserve the fabric of the building/s or other elements that contribute to the significance of the place and in particular to:

- Encourage the accurate restoration or reconstruction of missing or modified elements on the basis of available

## HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

---

evidence.

- Encourage the removal of non-significant or intrusive elements, particularly where this would assist in revealing or interpreting the significance of the place.
- Encourage a contextual approach to new development that is complementary in form, scale and materials to the elements of primary significance, but is clearly contemporary in design.
- Ensure that new development does not become a visually dominant element as a result of its scale, form or siting; i.e. it should appear as a secondary element when compared to the original building/s.
- Discourage the demolition of elements of primary significance except where it can be demonstrated that:
  - The building is structurally unsound and cannot feasibly be repaired without undertaking significant alterations that would diminish the integrity of the building, and
  - The proposed replacement building embodies design excellence that is complementary in form, scale and materials to the elements of primary significance, but is clearly contemporary in approach.

Demolition of part of an element of primary significance may be allowed when it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the responsible authority that its demolition or removal will not adversely affect the significance of the place and, as appropriate:

- It will assist in the long term conservation or maintenance of the place, or
  - It will support the viability of the existing use of the place or will facilitate a new use that is compatible with the on-going conservation of the building, or
  - It will upgrade the building to meet contemporary living standards such as improving energy efficiency.
- Consider the demolition or modification of elements of secondary significance only if the proposed replacement building embodies design excellence that is complementary in form, scale and materials to the elements of primary significance, but is clearly contemporary in approach.

### **Guidelines (Specific)**

The following specific conservation actions are recommended, should the opportunity arise:

- Remove paintwork from exterior brickwork.

### **Review of significance and policy**

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this citation is accurate, it is possible that more detailed investigation may reveal further information about the significance of the place. For example a detailed internal inspection was not made of buildings at the time of initial assessment, and this type of inspection may reveal further significance. In the time since the place was first assessed it is also possible that the condition of buildings or trees may have changed.

The information contained in this citation should therefore be reviewed at the time that it is proposed to make changes to the property. This would likely require a more detailed assessment of any significant or contributory element that is

## HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

---

affected by any proposed buildings or works. Once this more detailed assessment has been made, a review of the significance of the place and the conservation policy should be carried out by Council's Heritage Adviser or an appropriately qualified professional.

### Comparative Analysis

While there are numerous bowling alleys throughout metropolitan Melbourne, there are no comparable examples within the municipality. In terms of comparison with other bowling alleys, the Northcote Bowl is contemporary with many of the other surviving suburban bowling alleys, which were first established around 1960. In terms of numbers of lanes, the Northcote Bowl, with Sunshine Bowl, is the largest suburban bowling alley in metropolitan Melbourne. Most other larger complexes have around 28 lanes.

### Statement of Significance

#### *What is significant?*

The Northcote Bowl was constructed for Bowling Centres Holdings Ltd in 1963. The architects were the Sydney firm Fisher and Jackson, who also designed the bowling alley at Melbourne's Southern Cross Hotel (now demolished). The alley originally had twenty lanes. Management of the Northcote Bowl was later taken over by the American Machine and Foundry Co (Australia) Pty Ltd, usually known as AMF, which bought the property in 1974 and had the alley extended to thirty lanes soon after they acquired the site to cater for increased demand. It is a single-storey Modernist brick ten pin bowling alley. The building is set back from Victoria Road behind a car park, which is used by patrons of the bowling alley. Along the street frontage, is an illuminated AMF sign with a large ten pin fitted above it. The bowling alley is rectangular in plan and is expressed as one mass in its street facing (west) elevation. The building is faced in brickwork with a projecting brick decorative element at intervals towards the top of the facade. Slightly projecting pipes, generally in pairs, have also been used to embellish the facade. A series of catenary-type arches extend along the base of the facade, one of which, towards the centre of the elevation, forms the front door of the complex. Brickwork has been painted a deep blue colour (not original). The complex has thirty lanes in total that are grouped into two: lanes 1-10 and 11-30. The two groups are separated by a locker room and auxiliary spaces. The complex contains elements usually found in bowling alleys, such as a raised viewing area that steps down to the players seating and the lanes; a shoe and lane hire counter; cafe; and ancillary spaces including toilets, office and an area for electronic games and vending machines. Some original elements, such as fittings and fixtures are extant internally.

#### *How is it significant?*

The Northcote Bowl at 166 Victoria Road, Northcote is of historic, architectural and social significance to Darebin City.

#### *Why is it significant?*

Historically, it is significant as a representative example of demonstrates the popularity of ten-pin bowling, which was introduced from America in the 1950s. It's significance is enhanced by its rarity value as one of a small number of centres still operating and that are relatively intact. It is also significant as an example of the work of architects, Fisher and Jackson (AHC criteria A.4, D.2 & H.1).

The Northcote Bowl has architectural significance as a representative example of a Modernist building, which remains externally intact (AHC criterion D.2).

Socially, the Northcote Bowl at 166 Victoria Road, Northcote is of significance as a bowling alley and entertainment facility that is known, used and valued by the Darebin community. (AHC criterion G.1)

# HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

---

## Levels of significance

The following levels of significance apply to this place:

*Primary:* The exterior of the complex (excluding the paintwork on the brickwork) and intact original elements.

*Secondary:* None specified

*Limited/Not significant:* Non original interior fittings and fixtures

## Assessment Against Criteria

### Social

#### RNE Criterion G.1

*Importance as a place highly valued by a community for reasons of religious, spiritual, symbolic, cultural, educational, or social associations.*

The Northcote Bowl is of social significance to Darebin as a facility that is known, used and valued by the community.

## Recommendations 2008

### External Paint Controls

### Internal Alteration Controls

### Tree Controls

### Fences & Outbuildings

### Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted

### Incorporated Plan

### Aboriginal Heritage Place

Yes
No
No
No
No
None Specified
No

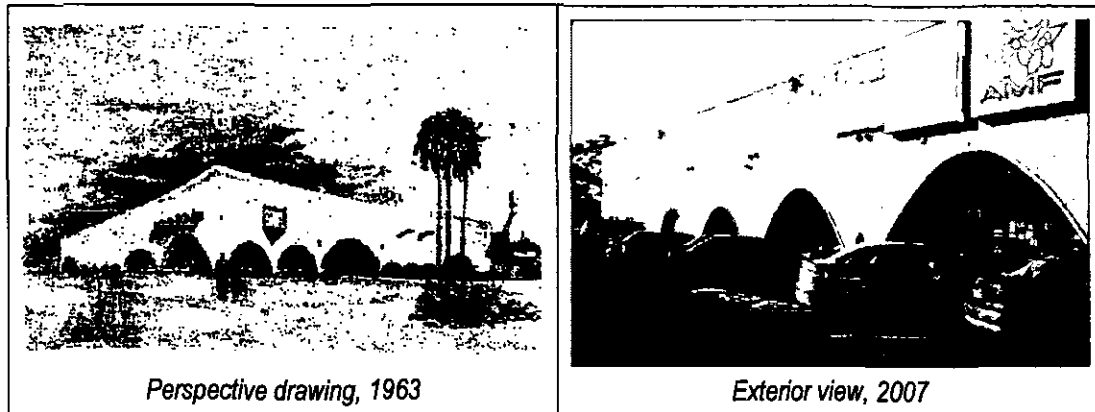
## Other Recommendations

It is recommended that the Northcote Bowl at 166 Victoria Road, Northcote be added as an individual place to the Heritage Overlay of the Darebin Planning Scheme with the schedule entry as shown below. The extent of registration is the whole of the property as defined by the title boundaries.

## References

Tenpin Bowling Alleys in Victoria: A Typological Study: – DRAFT AT DEC 2008

<b>Current name</b>	Northcote Bowl (AMF)
<b>Former name/s</b>	-
<b>Address</b>	166-174 Victoria Road NORTHCOTE
<b>Municipality</b>	City of Darebin



<b>Date on drawing/spec</b>	February 1963	<b>Date of alterations</b>	1974
<b>Date of opening</b>	30 November 1963	<b>Date of closure</b>	-

<b>Architects</b>	Fisher & Jackson (Sydney) ) in Bernard Evans & Partners Pty Ltd (Melbourne) ) association
<b>Builders</b>	
<b>Engineers</b>	Woolacott, Hale, Bond & Corlett (Sydney)

<b>Original operator</b>	Bowling Centres (Holdings) Pty Ltd		
<b>Number of lanes</b>	20 (1963); 30 (1974-)	<b>Equipment type</b>	AMF

<b>Current condition</b>	Excellent	<b>Current intactness</b>	Good
--------------------------	-----------	---------------------------	------

**History**

Australia's first fully-automated bowling alley, which opened in the Sydney suburb of Hurstville in October 1960, was a triumph for a Sydney-based firm known as Bowling Centre (Holdings) Pty Ltd. Over the next twelve months, the company went on to build other bowling centres at Sylvania, Enfield, Blacktown and Parramatta. It expanded into Victoria in early 1962 when it won the tender for a bowling alley to be incorporated in the new Southern Cross Hotel on Exhibition Street.

Although numerous rival companies had already built bowling centres in Victoria by that time, Bowling Centre (Holdings) Pty Ltd nevertheless sought a piece of the local market by proposing two new bowling alleys in Victoria in early 1963. One was to be built in Humffray Street, Ballarat and the other in Victoria Road, Northcote. Drawings for both were prepared by Sydney architects Fisher & Jackson, who had designed most of the company's previous bowling alleys in New South Wales. The Melbourne firm of Bernard Evans & Associates was engaged to provide local supervision.

The suburb of Northcote seemed an odd choice for the new centre, as another company was already in the process of converting the former Plaza Theatre, at 401 High Street, into a 15-lane bowling alley. Plans for the rival 20-lane centre in Victoria Road were approved in March 1963, and construction commenced in May. At the time, it was estimated that construction would be completed within six months (ie by October of that year). The centre was officially opened on 30 November, only four months after its rival, known as the Plaza Lanes, had opened in High Street.

In 1974, the centre was taken over by the AMF chain, and a further ten bowling lanes were added.

### Description

The building, set back from the street beyond a carpark, presents a relatively stark face brick façade to Victoria Road, since overpainted in the dark blue hue that reflects the corporate image of AMF. The façade is enlivened by a row of parabolic concrete arches of various sizes (with board-marked concrete edges), with the main entrance set into the largest arch to the right side. The wall above incorporates pairs of terracotta pipe spouts, and, at the parapet level, a repeating motif of stepped header bricks. An illuminated box sign, surmounted by an overscaled bowling pin, stands on the street boundary.

Internally, the alley has been remodelled but retains its distinctive ceiling: a sawtooth portion above the lanes, with perforated acoustic tiles, and a flat portion above the concourse with exposed timber joists and proprietary boarding with a squiggle-like pattern. The thirty lanes have been divided into two areas (comprising ten and twenty lanes), and have modern computerised scoring systems and indicators. The original bowlers' seating has been replaced by new plastic seating in an L-shaped configuration, with new handrails between the concourse and the lanes. The bowler's area retains square vinyl tiles, but elsewhere the floor is lined with non-original carpet. The reception counter, expressed as an island-like element in the centre of the concourse, is also of relatively recent origin.

### Significance

The Northcote Bowl is of considerable historical, architectural and aesthetic significance.

Historically, it is significant as a rare survivor of the tenpin bowling boom of the early 1960s. Since the closure, demolition or conversion of most of its early counterparts in the metropolitan area, it is now one of only four 1960s bowling centres that still operate in suburban Melbourne. With others at Chadstone, Mentone and Moorabbin, the Northcote example is of especial note as the only intact survivor in the outer northern and eastern areas. Purpose-built bowling alleys at Hawthorn, Camberwell, Heidelberg, Essendon, St Kilda and Box Hill have all been demolished, while others at Ringwood, Preston, Dandenong and Frankston have closed and been altered beyond recognition. Three other centres that were fitted out in disused theatres, at Northcote (High Street), Caulfield and Coburg, have also been converted to other uses, and now demonstrate little, if anything, of their former lives as bowling alleys.

The Northcote Bowl not only provides rare evidence of an ambitious foray into Victoria by the Sydney-based company that pioneered bowling alleys in Australia, but is also a rare local example of the work of the firm's architects, Fisher & Jackson. Together, they were responsible for three other Victorian alleys. The first, in the Southern Cross Hotel, was been razed; another at Ballarat has closed and been altered almost beyond recognition. The third alley, at Chadstone Shopping Centre, is still in operation but is not directly comparable, as it was buried in the bowels of the (now much-altered) complex, and was never expressed as a freestanding bowling centre, as was the case at Ballarat and Northcote.

The Northcote Bowl is also of interest as one of Victoria's largest bowling alleys. The earliest local examples (eg Footscray and Brighton) had 18 or 20 lanes, while later ones tended to have a standard 24 (eg Chadstone, Preston, Geelong, Dandenong, Mentone and Box Hill). The Moorabbin centre, which opened in late 1962 with 28 lanes, remained the largest until the 20-lane Northcote Bowl was extended in 1974 with ten additional lanes. New bowling alleys erected since the late 1970s have tended to be similarly large-scaled, with 28 lanes (eg Frankston and Keon Park) or even 30 (Sunshine).

Aesthetically, the building is significant for its highly distinctive façade. Although rather more stark than some of the lively Featurist-style bowling alleys that were built in Victoria, the use of parabolic arches of varied sizes is unusual. This is not just a unique expression amongst bowling alleys in Victoria, but is rarely seen in post-war architecture in general. It can only be compared to the multi-storey carpark of the former Old Melbourne Hotel in North Melbourne (1971), with its similar receding parabolic arches. The eye-catching illuminated signpost on the street, surmounted by an overscaled bowling pin, is not only a significant visual element in its own right, but also a rare surviving example of its type.

### References

"New bowl in Northcote", *Northcote Leader-Budget*, 8 May 1963, pp 1-2;

"Northcote bowl to open next Saturday", *Northcote Leader-Budget*, 27 November 1963, p 10;

12 December 2008

Ms Rachel Haynes  
Senior strategic planner  
City of Darebin  
PO Box 91  
PRESTON 3072

Dear Ms Haynes,

**Re: Northcote Bowl, Victoria Road, Northcote**

Based on research and comparative analysis that I have undertaken over the past few years in relation to tenpin bowling alleys in Victoria, I have arrived at the conclusion that the above building is of heritage significance at the local, regional and potentially state level.

The building is most important for its association with the company that built it, Bowling Centre (Holdings) Pty Ltd. This company pioneered tenpin bowling in Australia when they opened the first ever bowling alley in Sydney in 1960. It built many centres in New South Wales and tried to expand into Victoria in 1962-63, although the local market was already flooded by that time, with bowling alleys erected by rival companies. Apart from the example at Northcote, Bowling Centre (Holdings) P/L was responsible for the alleys installed within the Southern Cross Hotel (demolished) and Chadstone Shopping Centre (much altered), as well as another freestanding centre at Ballarat (no longer in operation and since remodelled beyond recognition)

The Northcote Bowl is thus most significant for associations with a pioneer bowling company, and as a rare local example of the work of the Sydney architectural firm, Fisher & Jackson, that designed most of the firm's bowling alleys in New South Wales. In this sense, it is unique in Victoria and potentially of historical and architectural significance at the **state** level.

In addition, the building is of historical and architectural significance at the **regional** level, as one of only four 1960s bowling alleys that remain in operation in the Melbourne metropolitan area. Of these, only three are freestanding buildings that remain in more or less intact condition, with the fourth being enclosed within the much-altered Chadstone Shopping Centre. Melbourne's other vintage bowling alleys (at Mentone and Moorabbin) are all located in the southern suburbs, leaving the Northcote example as a unique survivor in the outer north and eastern suburbs. Those centres at Hawthorn, Camberwell, Coburg, Preston, Heidelberg, Ringwood and Box Hill have either been demolished or closed and remodelled. There are a number of other examples in regional Victoria (eg Colac, Warrnambool and Bendigo)

The Northcote Bowl is also of aesthetic significance at a **regional** level for its highly distinctive facade treatment, which is not only unique amongst bowling alleys in Victoria, but also quite unusual in any building type. I have only seen those receding parabolic arches in one other building - the multi-storey car-park at the rear of the Old Melbourne Hotel in Flemington Road, North Melbourne, which dates from c.1971. I also consider the original illuminated signpost, with its bowling pin motif, to be a significant element, and a rare survivor of its type.

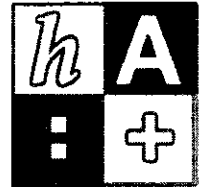
Finally, the bowling alley is of historic interest as one of the largest bowling alleys in Victoria. With 30 lanes, it is rivalled only by the centre at Sunshine, which is of much later date (and falls outside the scope of my study, which considers only those bowling alleys that were built during the initial tenpin bowling boom of the early 1960s.) It must be noted, though, that the Northcote Bowl was originally built with only 20 lanes - its current grand size is a result of an additional ten lanes built in 1974.

Do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information or clarification,

Yours faithfully,



Simon Reeves  
Architectural Historian



**Heritage ALLIANCE** Conservation Architects and Heritage Consultants  
41 Cobden Street, North Melbourne, VIC 3061. Phone: 03 9328 5133 Fax: 03 9328 5144 Email: heritage.alliance@bigpond.com  
AEN 23 308 903 866