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# Former Cheltenham RSL Hall



City of Kingston Heritage  
Study

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## Location

1261 Nepean Highway CHELTENHAM, KINGSTON CITY

## Municipality

KINGSTON CITY

## Level of significance

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## Heritage Listing

Vic. War Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 1, 2001

The Fernwood Female Fitness Centre building (former Protestant Alliance Friendly Society and RSL Club Hall) is of social, historical and architectural significance at a local level. It is historically and socially significant for the wide range of community functions associated with the site through the twentieth century most notably its relationship with the RSL. It is of architectural significance as an unusual building type, for its simple design and its intactness to its early state.

Heritage Study/Consultant Kingston - City of Kingston Heritage Study, Bryce Raworth P/L, 2001;  
Other Names Former RSL Club,  
Hermes Number 127253  
Property Number

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## Physical Conditions

Good

## Integrity

Altered Sympathetically

## Veterans Description for Public

In the early 1920's, the Cheltenham RSL purchased the public hall and in 1923, it was renamed the Soldiers Hall. ANZAC day ceremonies were held on the small assembly ground at the entrance to the hall from the early 1920s until the 1970s when the highway was widened to absorb the assembly area. Several monuments were also located in front of the hall until this time. These were relocated to Cheltenham Park and subsequently to the new Cheltenham RSL Club in Centre Dandenong Road, Heatherton. In addition, the hall was used by the Methodist Home for Children as a School until the home could afford to build its own building. The Beaumaris School (now Cheltenham State School) also used the building to accommodate excess students. Church groups and sporting organisations used the hall for annual balls, regular dances and other social functions. From the 1920's until the 1950s, the hall served as Cheltenham's picture theatre with regular showings of films and newsreels. The first public viewing of television in Cheltenham took place at the hall.

The hall remained in use by the RSL until the late 1970s when it became Columns Reception Centre. It has subsequently been used as a bingo hall and more recently as Fernwood Female Fitness Centre.

At the time of the construction of the Cheltenham Protestant Hall, another hall appears to have occupied the rear of the adjacent site to the south. This hall was often referred to as 'the orderly room' and was the home of the Cheltenham Rangers Unit before becoming the meeting place for the Returned Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League. A further building closer to the highway frontage was constructed c.1910s and was subsequently used as a billiards room. Both of these structures have since been demolished. The site of the Soldiers Billiard Room became part of a Catholic School in the late 1950s.

As constructed, the Cheltenham RSL hall was a massive single storey building set back from the Nepean Highway with a grassed area at the front. It had an austere facade with minimal decoration other than some detail at the parapet and around the central formal arched entry. The building was constructed from brick with the front facade in ashlar ruled render. It originally remained unpainted render. Either side of the main entry were two blind windows. The entrance ramps date from at least before World WarTwo and may even date from the original construction. The building has since been altered with the facade painted, the blind windows opened up and some of the parapet detail and the denticulated lintel above the door removed. Four classically inspired pilasters were added to the facade presumably when the building became Columns Reception Centre in the c.1980s.

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

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