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# Former Willsmere Hospital



City of Kew Urban  
Conservation Study 1988

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## Location

1-258 Wiltshire Drive KEW, Boroondara City

## Municipality

BOROONDARA CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0861

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO109

## Heritage Listing

Boroondara City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The Statement of Significance given here is that adopted by the Australian Heritage Commission: 'Kew Mental Hospital, Princess Street Kew, is one of the few landmarks prominent throughout Melbourne. The complex is

probably the largest erected in the nineteenth century in Victoria and is architecturally a most notable example of such an institution erected by the Public Works Department of Victoria in the Italianate style. The complex is distinctive for its design, the central block being the most important part, but is of greater significance for its overall planning complete with surrounding dwarf walls.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Boroondara - City of Kew Urban Conservation Study, Pru Sanderson Design Pty Ltd, 1988;
Hermes Number	22304
Property Number	

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## Physical Description 1

In the north-west corner of Kew, and bounded by the Yarra, land was initially set aside for a village reserve but the site subsequently was occupied by the Kew Asylum [28]. Commenced as a replacement for the overcrowded lunatic asylum at Yarra Bend [29], the earliest buildings on this site are the two lodges and the entrance gateways designed by architects in the Public Works Department [30]. The first section of the main building was begun in 1864 and completed in December 1871 at a cost of £155,958 [31], while throughout 1870s and 1880s the Department continued the construction, additions and repair of Asylum buildings [32]. The Asylum is massive in extent and forms an 'E' shape in plan: the same form as those at Ararat and Beechworth, but far larger. The overall style of the building is the Italianate, with a pavilioned form, squat tower flanking the entrance, and a slate mansarded roof. The building itself is tall, and it is set on a very high point of land above the Yarra River. As a result is clearly visible for a great distance around Melbourne.

References --

- 1 HBC, 'Willsmere Hospital, Princess Street, Kew: Background', held in file No.83/3780
- 2 Contributing architects were also members of the Public Works Department, HBC, loc.cit..
- 3 'Kew Urban Conservation Study: History - Final Draft'
- 4 .Trethowan, loc.cit
- 5 ArchitectsIndex, University of Melbourne
- 6 National Trust of Aust.(Vic), 'Research into Former Male Attendants' Mess Room...', 29 May 1979
- 7 The Architects' Index and Trethowan'srepon give a comprehensivelisting of works undertaken.

*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/>*