

## **Wellington Education Board Building (Former)**

65-69 Abel Smith Street



The Wellington Education Board Building (Charles Collins, 2015)

### **Summary of heritage significance**

- The Wellington Education Board Building (former) has aesthetic value as a good representative example of the stripped Classical style of architecture common in Wellington between the two World Wars, and is interesting for the overlay of Art Deco derived ornamentation on a Classical framework.
- The Wellington Board of Education was an institution of considerable importance in the development of education in this province. From 1871 until the end of the provincial era in 1876, the Board led the provision of education. It continued this work for another 118 years until it was disbanded in 1989. The building is historically significant because it was almost certainly the first built exclusively for the Board, and remained in its use for nearly 50 years.
- The front façade of the building remains in authentic condition, retaining decorative features such as the symbolic lamp of knowledge on the front elevation, which proclaims something of the role of the building in the educational life of the region.

District Plan:	Map 16, reference 1
Legal Description:	Pt Sec 98 Town of Wellington
Heritage Area:	No
HPT Listed:	No
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	
Key physical dates:	Built: 1939-1940
Architect / Builder:	Architect: B. F. Kelly / Builder: J. A. Scarff
Former uses:	Wellington Education Board office
Current uses:	Toi Poneke Arts Centre
Earthquake Prone Status:	NOT EQP 30/1/13 (SR 187869)

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



## 1.0 Outline History

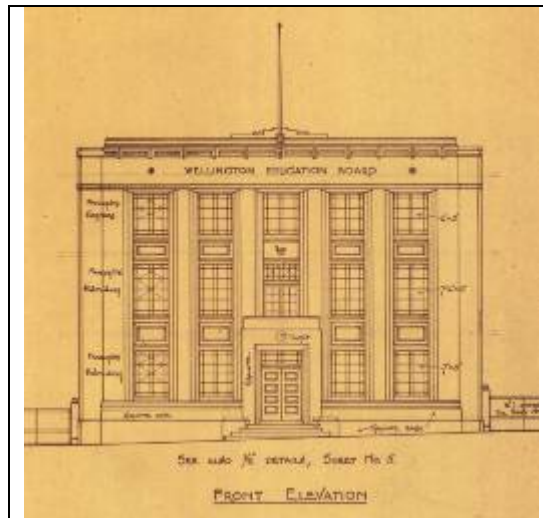
### 1.1 History

The Wellington Board of Education was established in 1871 by the Wellington Education Act, relatively late in comparison with other provinces, which each had its own Board and Act.<sup>1</sup>

Up to that time education had been provided by private or religious schools and only to a privileged minority. In order to fund the board's activities the Provincial Council collected rates from fathers and guardians of children aged between five and 14.<sup>2</sup> This was later replaced by a school fee.<sup>3</sup>

The various education boards were re-established by the 1877 Education Act, which centralised control of education in New Zealand under the Department of Education and made it secular, compulsory and free. The boards were elected by school committees; they appointed staff, apportioned funding, set education standards, trained prospective teachers (until teachers' colleges became independent in 1970) and assessed teachers. The Wellington Education Board acquired land, opened new schools or took over former private and religious schools. By 1894 there were 98 schools under its jurisdiction. From the beginning, the boards were accountable to the Department of Education and their survival was frequently threatened by proposed reforms.

For some period the Board was located in the Technical School (1886) in Mercer Street. However the Board outgrew this office and in the late 1930s new premises were planned. A site on Willis Street was selected for the new offices; however this site was wanted for the dental clinic, so the new building was constructed in Abel



Detail of the front elevation (WC Archives 00056:221:B18846)

<sup>1</sup> This report is based on the following document: Wellington City Council, "65-69 Abel Smith Street: Wellington Education Board Building," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), ABEL1.

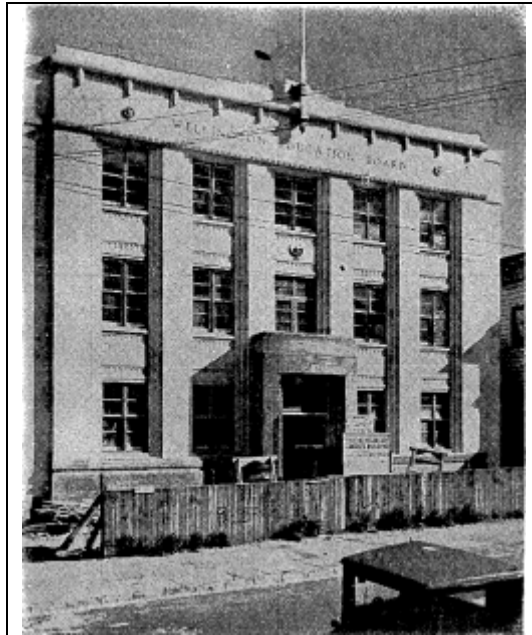
<sup>2</sup> Tritt, T. 1973, *It Was Resolved*, Wellington Education Board p.9.

<sup>3</sup> Tritt p15

Smith Street.<sup>5</sup> Designed by architect B. F. Kelly in 1938, the building was constructed by J. A. Scarff for approximately £23,000. The new building was opened by the Prime Minister the Rt. Hon. P. Fraser on 16 July 1940.<sup>6</sup>

Little is known about the interior modifications made to the building but in 1977 it was proposed that the building be “renovated”<sup>7</sup> to cater for growing staff numbers. In 1981/2 two houses on the adjacent block (61-63) were demolished<sup>8</sup> and a new five-storey building erected on the site in 1984<sup>9</sup> with a glass bridge linking the two buildings.

The Education Boards were abolished in 1989 when the Labour Government introduced “Tomorrow’s Schools” and passed the administration of schools to Boards of Governors.



The building in April 1940, approaching completion.<sup>4</sup>

Today this building, along with the building alongside (#61), operates as Toi Poneke Arts Centre.

## 1.2 Timeline of modifications

1939-40	Building constructed (00056:221:B18846)
1964-66	Addition to enclose an existing balcony on the south side to provide additional space for offices, loading bay, garage door, replace with concrete wall. (00058:456:C19592)
1972-73	Glass replaced. Addition of new fire escape. Internal alterations. (00058:841:C37568 and 00058:861:C38358)
1984	Neighbouring building is built as the new office for the Education Board. A glass bridge is built to link the two buildings together.
1986	Alterations (00044:2:46)

## 1.3 Occupation history

*Not assessed*

<sup>4</sup> *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIX, Issue 83, 8 April 1940, Page 5

<sup>5</sup> “NEW QUARTERS,” *Evening Post*, Volume CXXX, Issue 15, 17 July 1940, Page 13

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> File 91/111/236 “Wellington Education Board Building Structural Report”, 1977.

<sup>8</sup> WC Archives, 00058:0:C58427

<sup>9</sup> WC Archives, 00044:4:63



## 1.4 Architect

### Bertie Fleming Kelly (1887-1962)

Bertie (Albert) Fleming Kelly was born on 28 December 1887 in Christchurch<sup>10</sup> to James Patrick and Elizabeth Gertrude Kelly.<sup>11</sup>

His father worked for the Railways Department in Christchurch and was transferred to Wellington c1900.<sup>12</sup> In Wellington Bertie attended St Patrick's College.<sup>13</sup> The family lived in Eastbourne<sup>14</sup> and James became the Mayor of Eastbourne in 1915.<sup>15</sup>

In December 1904 Bertie passed the Civil Service Examination.<sup>16</sup> He trained as an architect in the Public Works Department from 1906 – 1932.<sup>17</sup> He entered as an architectural cadet, progressing to draughtsman and eventually assistant architect.<sup>18</sup> In 1932 he entered private practice, with an office in the National Bank Chambers on Courtenay Place.<sup>19</sup>

For the next twenty odd years Kelly designed many houses and very practical buildings throughout the region, including the British Medical Association Building (now NZMA) at 26 The Terrace. His residential designs include notable houses for Dr P.P. Lynch in Khandallah, and for Sir Timothy Cleary in Messines Road, Karori,<sup>20</sup> and a beautiful block of flats at 123 Brougham Street, Mount Victoria.<sup>21</sup>

As architect to the Education Board, he was responsible for The Wellington Education Board Building in Able Smith Street.<sup>22</sup> He also designed new classrooms, additions, and various buildings for the following schools: Wairarapa College in Masterton; a new Catholic Primary School in Karori<sup>23</sup>; Horowhenua College in Levin<sup>24</sup>; Hutt Valley High School<sup>25</sup>; Weraroa Boys' Training Farm in Levin<sup>26</sup>; Hutt Valley Memorial Technical College in Petone<sup>27</sup>; and Sacred Heart College in Lower Hutt.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>10</sup> "BIRTHS," *Press*, Volume XLV, Issue 6970, 25 January 1888, Page 3.

<sup>11</sup> Births, Deaths and Marriages Online, registration number 1888/3453, <https://bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home/>

<sup>12</sup> "DEATH OF MR. J. P. KELLY," *Evening Post*, Volume XCVI, Issue 29, 2 August 1918, Page 7

<sup>13</sup> Bertie's academic achievements are mentioned in the following articles: "ST. PATRICK'S COLLEGE," *Evening Post*, Volume LXVI, Issue 146, 17 December 1903, Page 2 and; "ST. PATRICK'S COLLEGE, WELLINGTON," *New Zealand Tablet*, Volume XXXIII, Issue 1, 5 January 1905, Page 29

<sup>14</sup> "DEATH OF MR. J. P. KELLY," *Evening Post*, Volume XCVI, Issue 29, 2 August 1918, Page 7

<sup>15</sup> "MAYORAL INSTALLATIONS," *Evening Post*, Volume LXXXIX, Issue 105, 5 May 1915, Page 8

<sup>16</sup> "St Patrick's College," *Free Lance*, Volume V, Issue 242, 18 February 1905, Page 9

<sup>17</sup> Russell Walden, *Voices of Silence: New Zealand's Chapel of Futuna* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1987), 45-6.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> *Evening Post*, Volume CXVIII, Issue 117, 14 November 1932, Page 16 (Advertisements Column 4)

<sup>20</sup> Russell Walden, *Voices of Silence: New Zealand's Chapel of Futuna*, 46.

<sup>21</sup> Joanna Newman, *Art Deco Mount Victoria: A Walking Guide* (Mt Victoria Historical Society, 2008)

<sup>22</sup> "NEW QUARTERS," *Evening Post*, Volume CXXX, Issue 15, 17 July 1940, Page 13

<sup>23</sup> "SPIRITUAL VALUES," *Evening Post*, Volume CXXVIII, Issue 20, 24 July 1939, Page 6

<sup>24</sup> "NEW COLLEGE," *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIX, Issue 47, 24 February 1940, Page 13

<sup>25</sup> "HUTT HIGH SCHOOL," *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIV, Issue 61, 9 September 1937, Page 17

<sup>26</sup> *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIX, Issue 32, 7 February 1940, Page 14 (Advertisements Column 4)

<sup>27</sup> "MORE ACCOMMODATION," *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIX, Issue 71, 25 March 1940, Page 3, and *Evening Post*, Volume CXXXIX, Issue 29, 3 February 1945, Page 2 (Advertisements Column 6)

<sup>28</sup> *Evening Post*, Volume CXXXI, Issue 75, 29 March 1941, Page 18 (Advertisements Column 8); *Evening Post*, Volume CXXXVII, Issue 20, 25 January 1944, Page 2 (Advertisements Column 5)

Kelly was a devout Catholic all his life<sup>29</sup> and he designed several buildings for the Wellington Catholic community including the Hospital Section Home of Compassion in Island Bay,<sup>30</sup> a Convent in Johnsonville for the Brigatine Nuns,<sup>31</sup> and a presbytery in Kilbirne.<sup>32</sup>

In the late 1940s and 50s Kelly joined with J Lindsay Mair and together they practised as Kelly and Mair. The Bulleymont Fortune collection, held by the National Library, includes several architectural plans produced by Kelly and Mair, mostly for houses, dating from 1947-1954. Kelly and Mair were also responsible for the Lisieux wing (1947) at Erskine College.<sup>33</sup>

Kelly had married Mary Ellen Geaney (1889-1953) in 1912.<sup>34</sup> When Mary died Bertie decided to fulfil an ambition to become a priest.<sup>35</sup> By this time he was 65, and it was too late to train for priesthood, so he became a lay-brother instead. He was a novice at Highden Novitiate in 1954.<sup>36</sup>

Although retired, he offered his architectural services to the Marist Order when he joined the Society of Mary. During this time he designed timber Catholic churches and chapels at Carterton, Greenmeadows in Napier, Eastbourne, and Highden Novitiate in Palmerston North.<sup>37</sup> In 1957, at the age of 70, Brother Albert Kelly was asked to design Futuna Chapel.<sup>38</sup> His design, which “followed the derivative pattern for the traditional timbered church,”<sup>39</sup> was regarded as too conservative and was rejected. On Kelly’s recommendation John Scott was employed to design Futuna.

Kelly died in 1962,<sup>40</sup> and is buried in the Marist section of the Karori Cemetery.

## 2.0 Physical description

### 2.1 Architecture

The former Wellington Education Board Building is a good representative example of a modest-sized office building of the late 1930s. It is stripped Classical in style, with six large pilasters rising through the full height of the building from the ground floor sill level to support a broad plain fascia at roof level. The Classical composition is overlaid with decorative features of Art Deco origin, including the stepped profile of the pilasters, the geometric motifs in the spandrels between the windows, and the chevrons that enliven the top edge of the parapet.

<sup>29</sup> Russell Walden, *Voices of Silence: New Zealand's Chapel of Futuna*, 46.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> “NEW CONVENT,” *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIV, Issue 28, 2 August 1937, Page 5

<sup>32</sup> Mt Victoria Historical Society, *7 Patterson Street: [Supporting information for Mt Victoria Historical Society's Nomination for Registration of 7 Paterson Street with New Zealand Historic Places Trust]* (Mt Victoria Historical Society, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> Historic Places Trust. Erskine College. 17 July 2009. Accessed 20 July 2012.

<http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=7795&m=advanced>

<sup>34</sup> “WOMEN IN PRINT,” *Evening Post*, Volume LXXXIV, Issue 63, 11 September 1912, Page 9

<sup>35</sup> Russell Walden, *Voices of Silence: New Zealand's Chapel of Futuna*, 45.

<sup>36</sup> Historic Places Trust, “Kelly, Albert – Architect”, *Professional Biographies*, accessed April 4 2013, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Kelly,+Albert>

<sup>37</sup> Russell Walden, *Voices of Silence: New Zealand's Chapel of Futuna*, 46.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> *Evening Post*, 8 Jan. 1962, pg 1 col. B

A strong central feature is the doorway projecting forward, flanked by lamp standards, yet severely plain in its finish. The Classical lamp of knowledge, worked in plaster relief, adorns the second floor spandrel above the doorway, and the symmetry of the building is further enhanced by the stepped parapet and central flagpole at roof level.

There were offices on all three floors of the main front section in the original layout of the building, with a two-storey portion behind, containing a large office on the ground floor and a board room with a large skylight on the first floor. The staircase and lift are centrally placed opposite the main entrance.

There is modest technical interest in the construction methods of the time and a high level of authenticity in its main architectural attribute, the front elevation. The design values of the other elevations are very low.

## **2.2 Materials**

Construction is reinforced concrete frame with concrete floors. External walls are unreinforced cavity brick with original internal partitions of lightweight “breeze blocks.”

## **2.3 Setting**

The building’s contribution to the townscape is slight, since it is set well back from the street frontage and adjoining buildings are of mediocre quality. The open space does, however, allow the significant architectural quality of the front elevation of the building to be appreciated. The open space and trees are also welcome in this densely built up part of the city.

### 3.0 Sources

Births, Deaths and Marriages Online, registration number 1888/3453,  
<https://bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home/>

Historic Places Trust. Erskine College. 17 July 2009. Accessed 20 July 2012.  
<http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=7795&m=advanced>

Historic Places Trust, "Kelly, Albert – Architect", *Professional Biographies*, accessed April 4 2013,  
<http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Kelly,+Albert>

Mt Victoria Historical Society, *7 Patterson Street: [Supporting information for Mt Victoria Historical Society's Nomination for Registration of 7 Paterson Street with New Zealand Historic Places Trust]* (Mt Victoria Historical Society, 2010).

Newman, Joanna. *Art Deco Mount Victoria: A Walking Guide* (Mt Victoria Historical Society, 2008)

Walden, Russell. *Voices of Silence: New Zealand's Chapel of Futuna* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1987), 45-6.

Wellington City Council, "65-69 Abel Smith Street: Wellington Education Board Building," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), ABEL1.

#### **Archives**

Tritt, T. 1973, *It Was Resolved*, Wellington Education Board p.9.

File 91/111/236 "Wellington Education Board Building Structural Report", 1977.

#### **Newspapers**

"BIRTHS," *Press*, Volume XLV, Issue 6970, 25 January 1888, Page 3.

"ST. PATRICK'S COLLEGE," *Evening Post*, Volume LXVI, Issue 146, 17 December 1903, Page 2

"ST. PATRICK'S COLLEGE, WELLINGTON," *New Zealand Tablet*, Volume XXXIII, Issue 1, 5 January 1905, Page 29

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"DEATH OF MR. J. P. KELLY," *Evening Post*, Volume XCVI, Issue 29, 2 August 1918, Page 7



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"SPIRITUAL VALUES," *Evening Post*, Volume CXXVIII, Issue 20, 24 July 1939, Page  
6

*Evening Post*, Volume CXXIX, Issue 32, 7 February 1940, Page 14 (Advertisements  
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13

"MORE ACCOMMODATION," *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIX, Issue 71, 25 March  
1940, Page 3

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"NEW QUARTERS," *Evening Post*, Volume CXXX, Issue 15, 17 July 1940, Page 13

*Evening Post*, Volume CXXXI, Issue 75, 29 March 1941, Page 18 (Advertisements  
Column 8)

*Evening Post*, Volume CXXXVII, Issue 20, 25 January 1944, Page 2 (Advertisements  
Column 5)

*Evening Post*, Volume CXXXIX, Issue 29, 3 February 1945, Page 2 (Advertisements  
Column 6)

*Evening Post*, 8 January 1962, page 1 (column B)

## 4.0 Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance

### **Cultural heritage values**

#### **Aesthetic Value:**

**Architectural:** *Does the item have architectural or artistic value for characteristics that may include its design, style, era, form, scale, materials, colour, texture, patina of age, quality of space, craftsmanship, smells, and sounds?*

The Wellington Education Board Building (former) has aesthetic value as a good representative example of the stripped Classical style of architecture common in Wellington between the two World Wars, and is interesting for the overlay of Art Deco derived ornamentation on a Classical framework. The scale of the composition, with full height pilasters, belies its modest three storeys. The logical nature of the design, with the neat symbolism provided by the lamp of knowledge on the front elevation, proclaims something of the role of the building in the educational life of the region.

**Townscape:** *Does the item have townscape value for the part it plays in defining a space or street; providing visual interest; its role as a landmark; or the contribution it makes to the character and sense of place of Wellington?*

The value of the building in the townscape derives from the open space with greenery in front of it, allowing it to be well seen from the street.

**Group:** *Is the item part of a group of buildings, structures, or sites that taken together have coherence because of their age, history, style, scale, materials, or use?*

#### **Historic Value:**

**Association:** *Is the item associated with an important person, group, or organisation?*

The Wellington Board of Education was an institution of considerable importance in the development of education in this province. From 1871 until the end of the provincial era in 1876, the Board led the provision of education. It continued this work for another 118 years until it was disbanded in 1989. The building is historically significant because it was almost certainly the first built exclusively for the Board, and remained in its use for nearly 50 years.

**Association:** *Is the item associated with an important historic event, theme, pattern, phase, or activity?*

#### **Scientific Value:**

**Archaeological:** *Does the item have archaeological value for its ability to provide scientific information about past human activity?*

The building is located in the Central City archaeological site reference NZAA R27/270.

**Educational:** *Does the item have educational value for what it can demonstrate about aspects of the past?*

**Technological:** *Does the item have technological value for its innovative or important construction methods or use of materials?*

The building has some technical interest for the construction methods of the time.

**Social Value:**

**Public esteem:** *Is the item held in high public esteem?*

**Symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual:** *Does the item have symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual or other cultural value for the community who has used and continues to use it?*

**Identity/Sense of place/Continuity:**

*Is the item a focus of community, regional, or national identity?*

*Does the item contribute to sense of place or continuity?*

The building has had few intrusive modern alterations or additions over the past 70+ years and contributes to the sense of place and continuity of Abel Smith Street

**Sentiment/Connection:** *Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?*

**Level of cultural heritage significance**

**Rare:** *Is the item rare, unique, unusual, seminal, influential, or outstanding?*

**Representative:** *Is the item a good example of the class it represents?*

The former Wellington Education Board Building is a good representative example of a medium-sized office building of the late 1930s.

**Authentic:** *Does the item have authenticity or integrity because it retains significant fabric from the time of its construction or from later periods when important additions or modifications were carried out?*

The front façade retains a high level of authenticity of design and fabric.

**Local/Regional/National/International**

*Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?*

This building is of regional importance for its historical association with the Wellington Education Board, which played a significant role in the development of education in the province.

## 5.0 Appendix

### Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory		
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
WCC Records – building file	Y	
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)		
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
Plan change?		
Heritage Area Report		
Heritage Area Spreadsheet		
Heritage items folder (electronic)	Y	
HPT website	N	NOT REGISTERED
HPT files	N	
Conservation Plan	Y	STUDENT PLAN
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	

### Background research

*Insert any relevant background information into this section. This may include:*

- *Additional plans, such as those for alterations*
- *Chunks of text from other sources such as Cyclopedia of NZ, Papers Past*
- *Additional images*