



# REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

## 11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in September, 1991 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

*St. Patrick's Basilica* has a strongly modelled facade with rusticated stonework which creates a landmark quality in Adelaide Street. The place terminates the vista for the main northern approach to the central city core of Fremantle. (Criteria 1.1, 1.3)

Together with the former *Boy's School* (1852), Princess May park and the adjacent presbytery, *St. Patrick's Basilica* contributes a significant streetscape presence and defines Adelaide Street at its north-eastern end. (Criterion 1.4)

*St. Patrick's Presbytery* is a landmark. It terminates the eastern vista of the intersection of Parry Street and Adelaide Terrace, creating a strong visual statement. (Criterion 1.4)

### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*St. Patrick's Basilica* has a close association with the history of Roman Catholic settlement of the State of Western Australian and the establishment of the Oblate mission in Western Australia in the 1890s. (Criteria 2.1, 2.3)

*St. Patrick's Basilica* is closely associated with the provision of religious services and spiritual support to migrant communities in Fremantle. (Criterion 2.2)

*St. Patrick's Basilica* is closely associated with the prominent ecclesiastical architect Michael Cavanagh. (Criterion 2.3)

### 11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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### 11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

*St. Patrick's Basilica* is valued by the Roman Catholic community in Fremantle as a place of spiritual worship and celebration. The gifting of the organ as a means of commemorating the Oblates' service to the Fremantle community illustrates this. (Criterion 4.1)

*St. Patrick's Basilica* is held in high regard by the Roman Catholic migrant communities in Fremantle. It is used as a regular place of worship and as the starting point for the annual Blessing of the Fleet procession. (Criterion 4.1)

*St. Patrick's Basilica* is held in high regard by the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church and has recently been recognised as a minor basilica by the Vatican. (Criterion 4.1)

*St. Patrick's Basilica* contributes to the community's sense of place as the site of a place of worship and commemoration in use by the Oblate order for the past one hundred years. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12.1. RARITY**

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### **12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*St. Patrick's Basilica* is an important example of the Federation Gothic style of architecture, embodying all the principal characteristics of the style. (Criterion 6.1)

*St. Patrick's Basilica* is representative of the substantial ecclesiastical structures built by missionary orders in Western Australia at the turn of the century. (Criterion 6.2)

*St. Patrick's Presbytery* is representative of Cavanagh's style of presbytery/convent architecture. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12.3 CONDITION**

In 1994, a program of refurbishment of the interior of *St. Patrick's Basilica* was undertaken under the supervision of architect, Michael Broderick. Although there is minor fretting of the mortar between the stonework on the south-eastern facade, *St. Patrick's Basilica* is in excellent condition. A regular program of maintenance is in place.

*St. Patrick's Presbytery* has some weathering to the external structure, particularly on the western side where the building receives the full impact of the westerlies. Apart from this, *St. Patrick's Presbytery* is in good condition.

### **12.4 INTEGRITY**

*St. Patrick's Basilica* and *St. Patrick's Presbytery* continue to be used for the purposes for which they were built and, therefore, retain a high degree of integrity.

### **12.5 AUTHENTICITY**

The fabric of *St. Patrick's Basilica* is in its original state, although additions were made in the 1950s. The alterations incorporate response to change over time, changes in aesthetics and changes in liturgical practice. Although not all

of these changes have been in the style of the original design, *St. Patrick's Basilica* has a high degree of authenticity. *St. Patrick's Presbytery* has a high proportion of the original fabric intact although there has been some adjustment to the internal access points in the interior of the building, including the removal of a staircase. Nevertheless, most of the original fabric has been retained and *St. Patrick's Presbytery* has a high degree of authenticity.

## 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*St. Patrick's Basilica* was commissioned by Thomas Ryan OMI as a place of worship for the Oblate order. The order arrived in Fremantle, in 1894, to start a mission, catering to the large influx of population caused by the gold boom. In addition to tending to the small but growing Catholic flock, the order was busy with apostolic works in Fremantle itself:

We have the Prison to attend to two days a week. Mass is said there every Tuesday and instruction every Sunday; a depot for the aged and infirm, and two asylums. During the past five months we had to visit several times a week, by day and by night, no less than three fever hospitals; a fever is very prevalent here owing to the want of proper sanitation.<sup>1</sup>

The Oblates took over a church and presbytery built, on the site, by the Benedictine Order. The church was described as being in a poor state and 'liable to be blown away during any storm'.<sup>2</sup> By 1899, five years after the Oblates arrival, £1,136 had been raised from bazaars, run by parishioners, to fund the first stage of a new church.<sup>3</sup>

The architect of *St. Patrick's Basilica* was Michael Cavanagh, a prominent Adelaide architect who, attracted by the gold boom prosperity in Western Australia, established a practice in Perth in 1895. Cavanagh was responsible for many of the Catholic Church's ecclesiastical buildings in Western Australia, as well as numerous other commercial, civic and residential buildings. By the time he designed *St. Patrick's Basilica*, Cavanagh's commissions for the Roman Catholic Church included the *Christian Brothers' College*, Perth (1895); *Mercedes School House*, Perth (1896); a small convent in Guildford (1896); *St. Brigid's Convent*, Northbridge (1897); the *Convent of Mercy*, Bunbury (1897); a home for the aged for the Little Sisters of the Poor, Glendalough (1897); a *Boy's Industrial School*, Glendalough (1897); *St. John's Convent and Chapel*, Subiaco (1897), and the Roman Catholic Church in Northam (1897). Later commissions in Perth were to include the *Redemptorist Monastery* in North Perth (1902) and alterations to *St. Mary's Cathedral*, and the *Archbishop's Palace* in Perth (1911). Cavanagh died in 1941.

*St. Patrick's Basilica* was consecrated in June 1900, with Sir John Forrest in attendance. £793 was collected on the day and the Oblates overseas contributed a further £300 to the cost of construction. A pew rent of threepence was introduced to help defray the remaining cost of the building.<sup>4</sup> The adjacent *St. Patrick's Presbytery*, also designed by Cavanagh, was begun in June 1916 and completed later the same year.

*St. Patrick's Basilica* has always played an important role in the ethnic community of Fremantle. As the Roman Catholic church for Fremantle, it

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<sup>1</sup> Cooper, A. OMI *A Little by Ourselves. Oblates of Mary Immaculate Australia. 1894-1994.* (Mazenod Press, Mulgrave, 1994) p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Record* 25 August 1994, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

was an important focal point for social and religious activities for migrants who arrived in the port with the gold boom and after the two world wars. As a port based church, it was often the first familiar institution new migrants found and has always functioned as a 'staging post' church, from which members would leave to go elsewhere as they became assimilated into the new society. Today, *St. Patrick's Basilica* retains an important role in the multi-cultural diversity of Fremantle. The parish includes Italian, Egyptian, Portuguese, French, Australian and Irish participants. *St. Patrick's Basilica* functions as a church with masses celebrated in Italian and Polish as well as English. The annual Blessing of the Fleet which is of major spiritual and social significance to the fishing communities in the City of Fremantle, starts from *St. Patrick's Basilica*.

In 1994, the Vatican bestowed upon *St. Patrick's Basilica* the honour of being named a minor basilica, in recognition of the important role the church played in the Fremantle migrant community, particularly to the Italians and Portuguese.<sup>5</sup> *St. Patrick's Basilica* is only the third basilica in Australia, after *St Mary's Cathedral* in Sydney and *St. Patrick's Cathedral* in Melbourne.

### 13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*St. Patrick's Basilica* is situated on the eastern side of Adelaide Street, a main approach road to central Fremantle, near a sweep in the road which gives a long, curving approach to the building which terminates the vista. Opposite is the former *Boy's School* (now the Film and Television Institute) (1852) and Princess May park, and the Proclamation plaque and Tree. Behind the church, there are a number of large pine trees which can be viewed from the northern approach to the church. The presbytery, also designed by Cavanagh (1916), situated to the north-east of *St. Patrick's Basilica*, has mature date palms in its garden area. A low wall runs in front of the church and the presbytery.

*St. Patrick's Basilica* is a limestone building in the Federation Gothic style with a traditional design which employs decorated Gothic detailing.<sup>6</sup> The building exhibits a parapeted gable, rusticated stonework and the entrance is flanked by two turrets topped by pinnacles with flying buttresses supporting two smaller pinnacles on either side. This forms an elaborate decorative statement and extends the horizontality of the facade while retaining strong vertical elements. In contrast with the rusticated stone work the smooth stone work of the turrets and decorative elements, lightens the facade and gives it a graceful quality. The west window employs masonry mullions and a large amount of decorative tracery work in a large window of plain glass. At the base of the window the door is framed by exuberant modelling of the

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<sup>5</sup> *West Australian* 30 August 1994 p. 5. Minor basilica are required to be well known for liturgical and pastoral care, with sufficient clergy to offer different forms of Eucharistic celebration, especially with music and singing, encouraging penance and other forms of devotion, and decorated with a sacred image of outstanding quality. The church was nominated for the honour by the Australian bishops and now will bear the papal symbol of crossed keys over its entrance to show its special status.

<sup>6</sup> Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present.* (Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989) pp. 120-123.

stonework. The walls are of local stone, but the doorways, turrets, columns and traceries are of Sydney freestone.<sup>7</sup>

Cavanagh's original design for *St. Patrick's Basilica* was for a much larger church than that which was built. The original proposal depicted a tower, substantial side chapel and a long nave ending in a curved chancel with ambulatory. Although only one third of this was built, the elaborate detailing and the horizontal decorative elements to the front facade were completed and provide a strong streetscape element.<sup>8</sup>

Internally, *St. Patrick's Basilica* is a simple aisled building, with large columns supporting a hammerbeam roof exhibiting delicate decorative truss work. The west window is large and of clear glass and one of the largest expanses of glass in any Australian church.<sup>9</sup> A large white marble altar, imported from Italy, dominates the eastern end of the nave. The pews are made of jarrah timber.<sup>10</sup> At the time of construction the end of the building was boarded up and the original church, which was directly behind, served as the sanctuary.<sup>11</sup>

*St. Patrick's Basilica* has been enlarged to accommodate the needs of the parish, with a sanctuary and two chapels added, although not to the original design.

Alterations in the 1950s included the extension of the nave and the building of a sanctuary. This work was undertaken by builder Stan Costello and, although the external stonework was rusticated to match the existing, little of Cavanagh's original design was adhered to in the extension. Large cross windows were incorporated in either side of the sanctuary with purple, blue and white paned glass and the roof of the sanctuary was lined with pine boarding. The crucifix was suspended over a canopy and backdrop of green acoustic tiles. A chequerboard floor of light pink and dark pink marble was installed in the sanctuary.

After Vatican II, a new pine altar was installed in front of the marble altar. The floor of the sanctuary was carpeted. The slate roof was recovered with dark monier tiles. An external shrine imitating a rock grotto was created on the north-eastern side of the church near the front which obscures part of the wall from view.

In 1990, the pipe organ was increased in size to equip *St. Patrick's Basilica* with the largest pipe organ of any church in Australia.<sup>12</sup> The original organ is a two manual instrument, built by J. C. Bishop of London. This organ was electrified in 1960, and the wind chest which bears the inscription "Kendall, Kensington 1851" now serves as the positive organ for a new four manual instrument. Music of the original pipe work was incorporated in the new organ which was built by Bellsham Pipe Organs (Australia). The organ case is made of cedar. The proportions for the positive case were derived from

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<sup>7</sup> Ward, K. *Fremantle Sketchbook* p. 32.

<sup>8</sup> Cooper, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> *Record* 25 August 1994.

<sup>10</sup> Ward, p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> *St. Mary's Cathedral* in Perth had a similar arrangement.

<sup>12</sup> *Record* 25 August 1994.

that of the west window. These dimensions were then increased in scale for the other organs details and the height of the pedal tower were calculated by using the architectural geometry of the building. The organ has been given as a thanksgiving in memory of the many priests of the Oblates who have served the parish since 1894.

In 1991, the floor of the sanctuary was refloored with white Carrara marble with a central panel which incorporated the earlier checkerboard marble which contains fossilised remains within it.

In 1993, repairs were done to combat rising damp, including silica treatment, replacement of stones and repairs to the roof.

In May 1994, *St. Patrick's Basilica* underwent a major interior facelift. Additions built in the 1950s were removed and the interior decor simplified. \$330,000 was spent to repaint the walls, reposition and re-lead the stained glass windows and repair and redecorate the ceiling.

The interior of the church was painted pale apricot with a darker apricot tone picking out the decorative plaster elements. The 1950s stained glass was replaced by yellow (amber) glass. Parts of the roof above the sanctuary were reinforced to take the weight of a new two-tonne plaster ceiling which features decorative mouldings based on trefoil elements from Cavanagh's design. The original stations of the cross, hung in sequence around the nave, were retained and refurbished. Pine doors installed in the 1950s were replaced with jarrah doors made to match the original doors on the confessionals.

A new marble altar was made to replace the pine altar. This new altar was designed to imitate design elements found in the earlier altar and the marble was quarried from the same quarry. This altar, together with the earlier altar at the rear, unifies the marble elements of the sanctuary. Behind the altar, green acoustic tiles which had been installed in the 1950s, were removed, and the central crucifix relocated to the side chapel. The sanctuary was hung with a specially-commissioned fifty sqm. one-tonne wool tapestry icon of the Blessed Trinity made in Ireland by world renowned tapestry artist Desmond Kyne of hand knotted Australian wool in thirty colours.<sup>13</sup>

Work on *St. Patrick's Basilica* has been under the direction of architect Michael Broderick since 1987.

*St. Patrick's Presbytery* is a double storey, brick and stucco presbytery built, in 1916, to the design of Michael Cavanagh in the Federation Free Classical style,<sup>14</sup> in place an earlier presbytery on the same site. The building is on the northern side of *St. Patrick's Basilica* and can be seen from Quarry Street and Parry Street, which intersection it defines.

The building has a wide verandah on each side, onto which the rooms have direct access. The pillars of the verandah and the balusters are of timber, although in a robust style more commonly cast in concrete in Fremantle at the time of construction. The front pillars of the building have been replaced by

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<sup>13</sup> *Fremantle Gazette* 3 May 1994, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Apperly, R., pp. 104-107.

brick at the first floor level on the western elevation because of weathering. The rear verandah has timber lattice work, in lieu of the balusters, for privacy and security. The entrance is marked by a projecting porch with stucco detailing surmounted by a cross. Two gables project to the verandah line on either side.

The entry features a large lead light glass door with double side lights opening onto a vestibule from which open an office and a small parlour. The standard of finish in the vestibule is impressive with decorative plaster work and panelled timber to the doors. The architraves of the doors are decorated with small wooden rosettes. The floor is original tessellated tiles laid in an intricate patterning which is typical of the period. The parlour and the office both feature original fireplaces and windows to the western facade.

On the other side of the vestibule are another set of identical doors leading to a hallway from which originally opened a storage room, a toilet and a small office. In the past two years, the storage room has been converted to a bathroom, and the toilet and the office amalgamated to form one large room, which is now used as a television room. The original window of the toilet space has been retained and converted into an alcove in which statuary is displayed.

At the southern end of the hallway is a large room with entertaining facilities. This room has doors opening to the southern elevation. At the northern end of the hallway is a large dining room with original fireplaces and access to the northern garden. Both the rooms feature original plaster work to the ceilings and decorative timber work to the windows.

Next to the dining room is a central jarrah dog-leg staircase with stained glass windows at landing level, which features the date 1916 in the glass. At the top of the stairs is a corridor which runs north-south. Bedrooms open from this corridor on the western side. The bedrooms feature direct access to the verandah through double hung, floor length windows. Recent conversion work (1993-1994) has included the connection of pairs of bedrooms, with one bedroom being used as a sitting room and the other provided with an artificial wall and storage and an ensuite. Care has been taken to match woodwork and stylistic details to those of the original.

At the northern termination of the corridor is the Chapel which is built into a projecting bay. The room features original leadlight, timber work and original double seats with kneeling stands. The room has doors with stained glass inserts which depict the cross and the Eucharist.

A separate double storey housekeepers quarters, with its own independent access and no through access was built the rear, in the same style. The housekeepers quarters has been converted into rooms with sitting rooms attached in a similar manner to that of the bedrooms. The original staircase to the house keepers quarters has been removed and relocated to the *Moore's Building* in Henry Street, Fremantle.

At the rear of the building, at ground floor level, the original space between the housekeeper's quarters and the back of the presbytery has been glassed in to create a television room. Original features have been left intact.

The place has always been used as a presbytery. In the 1950s, the *St. Patrick's Presbytery* was modernised and suspended ceilings and fluorescent lights put in place. These have been removed in the recent renovations. Internal decorative elements include original four panelled doors, with decorative beading, an imposing jarrah staircase, deep skirting boards, moulded architraves, stained glass windows. The ceilings in the place are decorative and the floors of polished timber, covered by carpet.

Recent work on *St. Patrick's Presbytery* has been under the supervision of Michael Broderick, Architect.

### 13.3 REFERENCES

National Trust Assessment Exposition.

Cooper, A. OMI *A Little by Ourselves. Oblates of Mary Immaculate Australia. 1894-1994.* (Mazenod Press, Mulgrave, 1994).