



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 8.5.3.2 Founding Australian religious institutions
- 8.10 Pursuing excellence in the arts and sciences

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 406 Religion

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

The complex of convent and chapel buildings is a picturesque assemblage of structures that are individually of sedate but enlivened design, enfolding, inviting, welcoming and sheltering external spaces and containing expansive, lively interiors. It is one of the prized places of the City. (Criterion 1.1)

The complex exhibits excellence of design in the harmony of forms and materials, in the restful and confident proportions, and in the spatial continuity, despite apparent staged development, of the structures as a human environment. (Criterion 1.2)

The picturesque quality of the complex is an essential component of the townscape of central Bunbury. The complex forms a well defined edge to the urban form of the City and is an imposing landmark in the context of the more domestic scaled surrounding streets. (Criterion 1.3)

The stylistic qualities and morphology of masonry walls, in part punctured and punctuated with precisely formed openings, and in part clothed with lightweight verandah screens, contributes to the collective, significant townscape of the historic central Bunbury precinct of turn of century to mid-twentieth century architecture. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The place represents the role played by the Roman Catholic nuns and in particular the role of the Sisters of the Convent of Mercy in both pastoral care and education in the Australind-Bunbury region of the State from the arrival of Mother Placida and two other nuns in 1883 until the closure of the convent circa 1979. (Criterion 2.1)

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

The place has associations with the principal historic phases of the South-west region's economic and community development; i.e. post-convictism consolidation, gold-mining boom expansion, and between World Wars agricultural expansion. (Criterion 2.2)

The extant convent building was designed by Michael Francis Cavanagh, eminent architect of the period who carried out numerous commissions for the Roman Catholic Church, including St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Perth. (Criterion 2.3)

The place has associations with architect of the school (demolished 1982) Frederick Walter Steere and builder of the chapel Joseph George Hough, who were prominent and significant people in the history of the architecture of the State. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

As the ground appears not to have been disturbed, parts of the site have the potential to provide information through archaeological excavation of the former first Catholic Church in Bunbury and St. Joseph's Convent School. (Criterion 3.2)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

The place is an important landmark in the faith and educational heritage of the Catholic community and an important resource for the wider community in its social, artistic and educational aspirations, both aspects of value applying from local through State to Australia-wide communities given the universality of the heritage and aspirations. (Criterion 4.1)

There is special interest in the place as a consequence of its richness of cultural heritage and its pro-active role in the community's cultural life, both in its former religious and teaching role (especially with respect to music) and more recent role as an arts centre. (Criterion 4.1)

The place is prized by the present community as evidenced by the adaptation of the place to an arts complex in the 1980s by prominent architect Ian Molyneux and the ongoing conservation, use and management. (Criterion 4.2)

12 DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The convent and two-storeyed convent chapel are notable representative examples of the Federation Gothic style of architecture typical of religious and educational institutions of the period

The place is representative of the role played by the Roman Catholic nuns in the establishment of life that is largely no longer practised but which has provided a substantial legacy to the Catholic community in the State. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The *Convent of Mercy Group (fmr)* is in good condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

As the original function of a convent and chapel has been replaced by art galleries, the integrity of the place is low, but the original intent can be deduced from its form.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The place has a moderate degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Attached are key sections of the supporting evidence prepared by Ian Molyneux and Associates, Architects, 'Regional Art Galleries Conservation Plan' for the City of Bunbury in November 1996.

Attached are key sections of the supporting evidence prepared by Considine & Griffiths Architects, 'Bunbury Regional Art Galleries Conservation Plan', for Bunbury Regional Art Galleries, March 2000.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the Documentary Evidence refer to 'Regional Art Galleries Conservation Plan' prepared by Ian Molyneux and Associates, Architects, for the City of Bunbury in November 1996.

For a discussion of the Documentary Evidence refer to 'Bunbury Regional Art Galleries Conservation Plan', prepared by Considine & Griffiths Architects, for Bunbury Regional Art Galleries, March 2000.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

For a discussion of the Physical Evidence refer to 'Regional Art Galleries Conservation Plan' prepared by Ian Molyneux and Associates, Architects, for the City of Bunbury in November 1996.

For a discussion of the Physical Evidence refer to 'Bunbury Regional Art Galleries Conservation Plan', prepared by Considine & Griffiths Architects, for Bunbury Regional Art Galleries, March 2000.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

For comparative information refer to 'Regional Art Galleries Conservation Plan' prepared by Ian Molyneux and Associates, Architects, for the City of Bunbury in November 1996.

For comparative information refer to 'Bunbury Regional Art Galleries Conservation Plan', prepared by Considine & Griffiths Architects, for Bunbury Regional Art Galleries, March 2000.

13.4 REFERENCES

'Regional Art Galleries Conservation Plan' prepared by Ian Molyneux and Associates, Architects, for the City of Bunbury in November 1996.

'Bunbury Regional Art Galleries Conservation Plan', prepared by Considine & Griffiths Architects, for Bunbury Regional Art Galleries, March 2000.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH
