



**HERITAGE  
COUNCIL**  
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## **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)**

- 6.2 Establishing schools
- 8.6.1 Worship together
- 8.6.3 Founding Australian religious institutions
- 8.6.7 Making places for worship
- 8.13 Living in cities and suburbs

#### **HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)**

- 402 Education and Science
- 406 Religion

#### **11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\***

The Convent (fmr) is significant as a well-proportioned and finely detailed building. The striking contrast of the red brick and render highlight the building's elevations and particularly the street façade. The strong rhythm of the bays is complemented by the window and gable end. The elaborate and decorative chimneys contribute to the building's aesthetic significance. The Convent (fmr) is a fine example of the Federation Free style of architecture. (Criterion 1.2)

The Convent's (fmr) decorative two storey façade contributes to the buildings significant landmark value on Great Northern Highway, a major arterial route out of the metropolitan area. (Criterion 1.3)

Whilst the individual buildings (Church (fmr), Convent (fmr), School (fmr) and Church) within *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* are stylistically different their individual aesthetic values harmonise to form a significant group. (Criterion 1.4)

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\* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from 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.

For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

St Brigid's Church is a good example of the Late Twentieth Century Ecclesiastical style of architecture. (Criterion 1.2)

#### **11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE**

The development of *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* illustrates the growth in importance and population of the town of Midland from the early twentieth century. (Criterion 2.1)

*St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* is indicative of the expansion of the Sisters of Mercy during the mid-nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, when the Sisters spread throughout the State and established a number of branch houses at significant population centres. (Criterion 2.1, 2.2 & 2.3)

St Brigid's Church is associated with the prominent architectural firm Oldham, Boas and Ednie-Brown, who are responsible for a number of significant buildings in the 1920s and 1930s including *Mackay's Aerated Water Factory (fmr)*, and *Cathedral of St Constantine & St Helene* in Perth. (Criterion 2.3)

#### **11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

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#### **11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE**

*St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* has social value to the community as a place of Catholic worship and education, which has functioned continuously in this role since 1902. (Criterion 4.1)

*St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* contributes to the community's sense of place, as a reminder of the growth in importance and population of the town following the decision to locate the Midland Railway terminus and Government railway workshops there. (Criterion 4.2)

The dominant street façade and prominent siting of the Convent (fmr) on Morrison Road is valued by the community as a local landmark. (Criterion 4.2)

#### **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

##### **12. 1. RARITY**

Convent (fmr) is the only identified architectural work of Thomas Hayden Cunningham. (Criterion 5.1)

*St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* is significant as the second branch house to be established by the Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia, and also as one of the longest running Sisters of Mercy establishments in the State. (Criterion 5.2)

##### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* is representative of a Catholic convent school and church complex, constructed during the first decades of the twentieth century to educate the rapidly expanding population (Criterion 6.2)

Convent (fmr) is representative of the type and style of Convents constructed for the Sisters of Mercy in during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12.3 CONDITION**

The condition of the four major buildings that comprise *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* varies.

The Church and recent additions to the School (fmr) are in good condition. The Convent (fmr), Church (fmr) and the original sections of the School (fmr) are in sound condition. Minor cracking, water ingress and considerable deterioration to window and door joinery are issues that have impacted on the condition of these buildings. The Convent (fmr) has structural issues to the chimneys that require attention.

Overall *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* is in sound condition.

### **12.4 INTEGRITY**

*St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* is still used for purposes related to the Catholic community in Midland.

The relocation of the school to another site has impacted on the integrity of the site. The Sisters of Mercy Convent (fmr) is still used as accommodation for another Order. The School (fmr) and Church (fmr) are used for Parish and community activities and Church services continue on the site.

Overall *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* displays a moderate degree of integrity.

### **12.5 AUTHENTICITY**

The extent of intact fabric varies across the four major buildings that comprise *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland*.

The Convent (fmr) and Church retain a high proportion of fabric still intact. Some elements have been altered to these buildings; however, room proportions and volumes are still clearly evident. The Church (fmr) and School (fmr) have retained some original fabric. The majority of the School (fmr) rooms have been divided into separate spaces and some original fabric has been altered or removed.

Overall *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* displays a moderate degree of authenticity.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence and comparative information has been completed by the State Heritage Office in November 2012.

The physical evidence has been compiled by Stephen Carrick Architects, in September 2012.

Amendments and/or additions have been carried out by the Register Committee.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland*, comprises a simple Federation Free Style Church (fmr) (1902), a two storey Federation Free Style Convent (fmr) (1906), a Federation Free Style School (fmr) (1919), and a double volume Late Twentieth Century Ecclesiastical Style Church (1967), and is located adjacent to the major intersection of Morrison Road and Great Northern Highway, Midland.

The townsite of Midland Junction was declared in 1890, after the area was chosen as the southern terminus, and junction point, of the Midland Railway line. The Midland Railway line extended north from Guildford to Dongara, through the largely undeveloped country between Dongara and Gingin known as 'the Midlands'.<sup>1</sup>

As the townsite, and its population, began to grow during the 1890s, the Sisters of Mercy began travelling daily from their convent in Guildford, in order to teach the school aged children living in the Midland Junction district.<sup>2</sup>

The Sisters of Mercy first came to Western Australia in 1846 under the leadership of their superior Ursula Frayne, and were quick to establish themselves as a key teaching order in Western Australia. Prior to the arrival of the Sisters, and the introduction of Catholic education to the State, education had been largely provided by private enterprises for education provided by the colonial government was sporadic and often lacked teachers and facilities.<sup>3</sup>

After they established their first convent school in Victoria Square, Perth in 1846, the Sisters went on to found a number of branch convents, the first being St Francis Xavier's in Fremantle in December 1847 (which lasted for just two years), and the second being St Theresa's in Guildford in August 1855.<sup>4</sup>

When the Guildford branch opened in August 1855, its church school was housed in adjoining residences which were leased from Lieutenant Edmund du Cane, the Superintendent of convict work in the Swan, York and Toodyay districts from 1852

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<sup>1</sup> Bourke, Michael J., *On the Swan: A History of the Swan District, Western Australia* (University of Western Australia Press: 1987), p. 248, 249.

<sup>2</sup> McLay, Anne., *Women Out Of Their Sphere: Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia from 1846* (Vanguard: 1992), p. 192.

<sup>3</sup> Fletcher, Laadan., 'Schooling for Young Colonists', in Neal, W. D., (ed), *Education in Western Australia* (University of Western Australia Press: 1979), p. 9., and Gregory, Jenny., and Smith, Lisa., *A Thematic History of Public Education in Western Australia: prepared for the Building Management Authority*, (Centre of Western Australian History: 1995), p.2.

<sup>4</sup> McLay, *Women Out Of Their Sphere* (1992), p. 17, 89.

to 1855.<sup>5</sup> The new school accommodated 30 children, which was almost twice as many in attendance than Guildford's government school.<sup>6</sup>

In 1871, the *Elementary Education Act* established a dual system education in Western Australia, which divided schools into government schools, which were administered under the Central Board of Education, and vocational or assisted schools, which were usually associated with a religious denomination.<sup>7</sup> The Act triggered the widespread expansion of the State's Catholic school system as Catholic schools were generally preferred to their government counterparts for they were widely recognised as for their superior quality of education.<sup>8</sup>

The Sisters of Mercy in particular were recognised for their quality of teaching, thoroughness, good order and refinement.<sup>9</sup> Enrolment in the Sisters schools grew significantly though the second half of the nineteenth century, and bolstered by the increasing number of Sisters, convent schools were established at York (1871), Bunbury (1883), Geraldton (1883), West Perth (1888) and Toodyay (1889).<sup>10</sup>

The Sisters continued to teach at Guildford from various premises in the town, including a number of rented cottages and the old Convict Depot buildings, until 1896, when a convent building was constructed on the site of St Mary's Catholic Church.<sup>11</sup> The branch convent received independence in government from the original foundation at Victoria Square in 1900, and thereafter operated as an autonomous group.<sup>12</sup>

By 1900, Midland Junction had outgrown its older neighbour, Guildford, boasting a population of 1568 to 1459,<sup>13</sup> and in 1901, the average attendance of the Sisters of Mercy school in Midland (130-140 pupils) was almost double that of the St. Theresa's in Guildford (70-80 pupils).<sup>14</sup> In order to accommodate the increasing enrolment at the Midland school, it was determined, by the Catholic Church in cooperation with the Sisters of Mercy, that a school building, which would also dually function as the Parish Church, was to be erected in Midland Junction.<sup>15</sup>

The church school, named St. Brigid's, was built in 1901-02 just to the north of the railway station and the triangle of public buildings, on a portion of land bounded by Morrison Road and Great Northern Highway. The Church (fmr) cost £1,800 to erect and was constructed with internal partitions, which could screen off the altar

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5 McLay, *Women Out Of Their Sphere* (1992), p. 91.

6 Ibid.

7 Tannock, P. D., 'Catholic Education in Western Australia 1829-1979', in Neal, W. D., (ed), *Education in Western Australia* (1979), p. 134.

8 Ibid., p. 135.

9 Cream, Sister Maureen., *Out Of These Stones: The Mercedes Story, the School at the Square 1946-1996* (Mercedes College: 1999), p. 22.

10 Tannock, 'Catholic Education in Western Australia 1829-1979', (1979) p. 135.

11 McLay, *Women Out Of Their Sphere* (1992), p. 92 & Image titled 'Convent of Mercy, Guildford', in Bourke, Michael J., *On the Swan: A History of the Swan District, Western Australia* (University of Western Australia Press: 1987), p. 185.

12 McLay, *Women Out Of Their Sphere* (1992), p. 127.

13 Stannage, C.T., *The People of Perth: A Social History of Western Australia's Capital City* (Perth City Council: 1979), p. 241.

14 McLay, *Women Out Of Their Sphere* (1992), p. 192.

15 *Conservation Plan for Saint Brigid's Former Convent and School (former classroom and hall block), Morrison Road, Midland*, prepared by Scanena and Associated KTA Partnership (1999), p. 8.

to create classrooms during the week, and be opened at the weekend for service.<sup>16</sup>

The simple Federation Free Style Church (fmr) was opened and blessed by Bishop Gibney on 2 February 1902,<sup>17</sup> and Sisters of Mercy were installed as teachers.

The Sisters of Mercy continued to commute every day to Midland Junction from their convent in Guildford, until 1906, when a purpose built convent was constructed at the St Brigid's site. The two storey red brick and white render Federation Free Style Convent was constructed to the design of local architect Thomas Hayden Cunningham. It was anticipated that a third-storey would be added at a later date, and the walls were built accordingly.<sup>18</sup> The convent included both accommodation for the Sisters and boarding students, as well as a sanctuary, and a number of community rooms which were able to be opened into a large common room.<sup>19</sup>

St Brigid's Convent of Mercy was opened by Bishop Gibney on 25 March 1906, in a large open air ceremony attended by 600-700 people.<sup>20</sup>

Following the completion of the new building, the Sisters of Mercy transferred their Convent from Guildford to Midland Junction, and from then on, commuted daily to Guildford.<sup>21</sup> At this time, Church (fmr) continued to be used as a school and church.

In 1912, the Midland Junction Convent of Mercy re-joined the foundation at Victoria Square in Perth, and became part of the Perth Sisters of Mercy.<sup>22</sup>

A new school building was added to the site in 1919, to the rear of the Convent on Dudley Road. The single storey building was completed to the highest modern standards, containing six large and lofty classrooms, with partitions between each, which were able to be removed allowing for the space to be used for large meetings or for entertainment purposes.<sup>23</sup> From this time, as the *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* now accommodated a purpose-built School building, Church (fmr) was used as a church only.<sup>24</sup>

In 1967, a new double volume Twentieth Century Ecclesiastical Style Church was constructed at the *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* site to the design of the architectural firm Oldham, Boas, and Ednie-Brown.<sup>25</sup> The firm was established in 1923 following the death of Charles Oldham in 1920. Harold Boas was offered Oldham's practice on the condition that it kept his name, and in 1923 Colin Ednie-

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16 McLay, *Women Out Of Their Sphere* (1992), p. 191.

17 'Catholic Church Opening' *Swan Express*, 8 February 1902, p. 3.

18 'Opening of Midland Junction Convent', *Swan Express*, 31 March 1906, p. 4.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 McLay, *Women Out Of Their Sphere* (1992), p. 192.

22 Ibid., p. 195.

23 'Sisters of Mercy, New School at Midland Junction, Opened by Archbishop Clunes', in *Swan Express*, 12 April 1918, p. 3.

24 'Celebrations are in Order: 100 Years Since the Original St Brigid's was Opened in Midland Junction', *The Record*, 31 January 2002, p. 16.

25 Information supplied by Catholic Church Archives, 08.01.2013.

Brown entered the partnership.<sup>26</sup> The firm was responsible for a number of significant buildings in the 1920s and 1930s including *Mackay's Aerated Water Factory (fmr)*, and *Cathedral of St Constantine & St Helene* in Perth.

The new church was erected between the Church (fmr) and the Convent, facing St Brigid's Place and Great Northern Highway. After the new church was built, the Church (fmr) ceased to be the Parish Church and reverted into being used for classrooms for the schools increasing enrolment.<sup>27</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s, although the population of Western Australia as a whole increased due to the post-war baby boom and influx of migrants, the period saw a general decline in Catholic schools. The Catholic Church was unable to provide for the increase in school-aged population, both in terms of school buildings and teachers. In contrast to the government teacher training facilities at Claremont and Graylands, there was no Catholic teachers' college, and as the recruitment of nuns had slowed during the 1960s, there were fewer Catholic teachers available for Catholic schools.<sup>28</sup>

However, despite the general decline in Catholic schools during this period, the enrolment at St Brigid's school in Midland grew during the 1960s and 1970s, with enrolment numbers increasing from 320 to 412 between 1963 and 1974.<sup>29</sup>

In 1970, the school had a staff of seven Sisters and three lay teachers,<sup>30</sup> however just three years later, the Sisters of Mercy left *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland*.<sup>31</sup> The reasons behind the Sister's departure are unclear.

Following the Sisters withdrawal from *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* in 1973, the school no longer provided secondary school education for high school aged girls.<sup>32</sup> However, the following year the nearby La Salle College became a co-educational school and started to accept female students,<sup>33</sup> therefore providing secondary school education for high school aged girls.

During the latter half of the 1970s, alterations occurred to several of the buildings on site to bring them up to modern standards, and three demountable classrooms were added to the site. The Convent underwent some internal work to create five classrooms, two offices, staffrooms and a resource centre. The renovated buildings were officially opened and blessed by Bishop Healy in November 1977.<sup>34</sup>

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26 Palassis Architects, *Armadale District Hall: Conservation Plan* (2001), p. 11., cited in State Register Assessment Documentation for P4669 *Armadale District Hall* (2003), p.4.

27 'Celebrations are in Order: 100 Years Since the Original St Brigid's was Opened in Midland Junction', *The Record*, 31 January 2002, p. 16.

28 Tannock, P. D., 'Catholic Education in Western Australia 1829-1979', in Neal, W. D., (ed), *Education in Western Australia*, p. 159-160.

29 Heritage and Conservation Professionals, *Saint Brigid's Former Convent and School (Former Classroom & Hall Block) Morrison Road, Midland: Heritage Assessment* prepared for the Shire of Swan (1998), p.6.

30 Saint Brigid's School, *Back to St Brigid's* (unpublished pamphlet, 1979), p.9-11., cited in Heritage and Conservation Professionals, *Saint Brigid's Former Convent and School* (1998), p.6.

31 *Conservation Plan for Saint Brigid's Former Convent and School (former classroom and hall block), Morrison Road, Midland*, prepared by Scanena and Associated KTA Partnership (1999), p. 10.

32 Ibid.

33 La Salle College, 'Le Salle College: History of La Salle College', sourced from [http://www.lasalle.wa.edu.au/the\\_college/history.html](http://www.lasalle.wa.edu.au/the_college/history.html). Accessed on 04.07.2012.

34 Ibid.

The first lay Principal of *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* was appointed in 1988.<sup>35</sup>

During the late 1980s, enrolment in the St Brigid's Primary School increased to the point where new facilities were required,<sup>36</sup> and in 1991, the school relocated to a new site 2km away in Middle Swan.<sup>37</sup> The Church (fmr) and School (fmr) were thereafter used by the parish.

Some later additions to the *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* site, including demountable classrooms and a toilet block, have been demolished in the past decade.

Since 2001, the Convent (fmr) has been occupied by Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate. The building is now known as the House of the Immaculate 'Stella Maris'.<sup>38</sup>

In 2012/13, *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* continues to operate as a facility for the delivery of Catholic education and faith. The Church (fmr) is used as the Parish Hall, the Convent (fmr) is occupied by the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate, the School (fmr) is used as Parish offices and presbytery, and the Church continues to be used as the parish church.

## 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* is located adjacent to the major intersection of Morrison Road and Great Northern Highway, Midland. The site is at the northern end of the Midland townsite and is opposite the City of Swan Council Offices.

The site has a north-south orientation and is bounded by Dudley Street to the west, Morrison Road to the south, Great Northern Highway and St Brigid's Terrace to the east and residential development to the north.

There are four major buildings on site:

- Church (former) – now used as the Parish Hall.
- Convent (former Convent of Mercy) – now occupied by the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate .
- School (former) – now used for Parish activities, Parish Office and Presbytery.
- Church.

The Convent (fmr), located in the south west corner of the site, is fenced from the site with pedestrian access either from Morrison Road or the adjacent driveway to the east. The northern portion of the site contains the Church, Church (fmr) and School (fmr). These three buildings are directly managed by the St Brigid's Church Parish. The three buildings are located in the centre of *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* in an open setting with bitumen driveways and

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35 Ibid

36 Heritage and Conservation Professionals, *Saint Brigid's Former Convent and School* (1998), p.6.

37 St Brigid's School, Middle Swan 'History', sourced from <http://web.stbrigidsms.wa.edu.au/OurSchool/HistoryofourSchool.aspx>. Accessed on 08.11.2012

38 Information supplied by Sister Mariapacifica, site visit 29 August 2012., and 'House of the Immaculate 'Stella Maris'', sourced from <http://www.ausmaria.com/index.php/contact/sisters/58-franciscan-sisters-of-the-immaculate/7-sisters-midland.html>. Accessed on 18.10.2012

parking areas to the north, west and south of the buildings. The setting to the west, and south west, is a softer landscape presentation with mature trees and shrubs combining with mature street trees to provide an attractive main entrance to the Church.

There are two vehicular access points from St Brigid's Terrace forming a circular drive to the eastern elevations of the Church and Church (fmr). There is a driveway from Morrison Road that leads to a small carpark on the south side of the Church and there is also vehicular access from Dudley Street at the northern end of the site.

Within the informal landscape area adjacent to the Church are a free standing Bell Tower, a statue of Mary and baby Jesus, memorial plaques and Church signage. There is informal parking to the northern unsealed section of the site adjacent to the fenced boundary.

Due to the number of elements located on the site, the physical evidence for *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland*, is described under separate headings that relate to the four major buildings on site.

### **Church (former)**

#### External

The Church (fmr) is located on the eastern side of the site addressing St Brigid's Terrace. The building is single storey with painted and rendered brick walls and a corrugated steel gable roof. The building is simply designed and is a restrained example of the Federation Free Style. The main section of the building is rectangular in plan form and with its long axis orientated in an east-west direction.

The east elevation is the prime elevation of the Church (fmr). The facade is symmetrical with a projecting central section with a hip and gable roof. This central section has three vertical narrow windows with rendered labels and rendered sills with stained glass windows symmetrically located on either side. There are timber double hung windows to the north and south wings, set back from the main facade.

The north elevation has a steel, flat roofed covered area supported on circular steel posts. The covered area has a raised concrete base and there are school-style drinking fountains attached to the northern wall. Timber stairs at the eastern end lead to an entry door to the kitchen. This door is used as the main entry to the building. The gable roof has timber battens to the eaves.

The west elevation is a gable end with three centrally located square top, narrow, rectangular windows with pointed arch windows symmetrically placed either side of the central windows. There is a timber cross to the gable and some cracking is evident to this wall. There are timber bargeboards and fascias to the roof.

The south elevation is in close proximity to the north elevation of the Church. There is a small gable roof over a projecting bay to the western end. There are timber double entry doors.

#### Internal

Internally, the building consists of a rectangular main hall with two rooms, kitchen and meeting room, on the north and south sides of the hall and accessed from the

eastern end of the hall. There are two rooms at the western end of the hall. These are both used as store rooms.

The hall has a raised stage (600mm) at the eastern end with timber steps at either end of the stage. The flooring is 80mm timber tongue and groove boards with a 50mm bullnose timber skirting. The rendered and painted walls have engaged masonry piers. The piers are stop chamfered. The walls have a simple profiled 70mm rendered dado line at 1500mm high. Below the dado line there is evidence that the walls were ruled to resemble blockwork and are flush finished above.

The windows to the main hall are timber framed with two sashes. The upper sash is a casement window with obscure glass and the lower sash is an awning window with the majority of sashes having obscure glass. A cross symbol is etched into the upper sash on some windows. The four windows to the west wall have fixed coloured glazing. The double doors to the stores are constructed of timber boards. Other internal timber doors are four panelled with timber architraves. At the western end of the hall are concertina doors with a track mounted under the roof trusses. Some original door and window hardware is still extant.

There are eight king post timber roof trusses that are located on the engaged piers with timber corbels. The ceiling is lined with timber boards. There is fluorescent lighting and ceiling fans throughout. The meeting room has stylistic features from the inter war period with roughcast render to the walls, a decorative plaster cornice and a central recessed fluorescent light fitting.

There is cracking evident to the western wall of the main hall and some of the associated window frames are in poor condition. There is also cracking to the kitchen walls. In September 2012 the Church (fmr) is being used by the Parish. It is in fair physical condition and retains evidence of its former use.

### **Convent (former)**

#### External

The two storey Convent (fmr) addresses Morrison Road and its west elevation is built in close proximity to Dudley Street. The front yard has a central concrete pathway leading to the entrance. On one side of the path is an open grass section with established roses and on the other side is a vegetable garden with a chicken enclosure adjacent to the western boundary. To the north of the property is a secure yard used for car parking. There are mature trees adjacent to the western elevation and boundary.

The Convent (fmr) is a face brick symmetrical building with a steeply pitched pre-painted corrugated steel gable roof. The building is designed in the Federation Free Style.

Features to the main southern facade are:

- Three projecting bays with gable roofs
- Decorative and elaborate concrete chimneys
- Concrete crosses to the gables
- English bond tuckpointed brickwork

- Paired timber windows with two sashes to each window. Upper sash is an awning style and the lower sash is a casement style. There are three fixed glazing panes above the windows.
- Rendered label moulds above the windows
- Rendered sills and string course located at window sill and window head height on the ground and first floor levels
- Brick voussoirs forming a pointed arch
- Central entry with a stepped pointed arch with decorative stucco render above with the words 'AVE MARIA'. There is a statue of Mary above the front entry door
- Timber entry door with stained glass side and highlights

The two storey section to the north elevation features dominant gable ends with rendered copings to the gable parapets and rendered corbels to the base of the gables. The first floor balcony and ground floor verandah are both infilled with a later textured brick. There is a steel exit stair at the eastern end of the elevation. A flat roofed steel framed verandah has been added to the ground floor. A single storey gable roofed wing extends to the north at the western end.

#### Internal: Ground Floor

The ground floor is an 'L' shaped plan. A central entry lobby has two formal rooms either side and leads to a hallway that provides access to the larger rooms at the eastern and western ends of the building. A return timber stair to the first floor is centrally located. The stair has decorative timber balusters and newel posts. The ground floor extends north at the western end as a single storey structure that contains a kitchen, store and toilets.

Generally, the construction and finishes are 100mm timber floor boards, plastered and painted walls, pressed tin decorative ceilings, 300mm timber skirtings and 140mm timber moulded architraves. The windows are timber double hung with timber sills. There are rendered label moulds above the windows to the east room and some windows have coloured glass. The doors are four panelled timber with glazed highlights and some original hardware is still evident. The fireplaces are modified with some retaining their decorative timber surrounds. The Chapel to the western end of the building has a raised altar and leadlight glazing to timber double doors to the hallway.

The north and west verandahs have been infilled and there are some modifications to the hallway and the front formal room through the introduction of dry wall partitions. Lighting throughout is fluorescent fittings. The ceiling to the north verandah is the underside of steel decking that has been used to support the floor above. The east verandah has a tiled floor on concrete and the walls are textured brick with glass louvre windows. The ceiling is flat plasterboard.

#### Internal: First Floor

The first floor plan has a landing at the top of the stairs that leads to a central hall that links the east and west wings. The rooms to the first floor include bedrooms, a small chapel, library, office, store and bathrooms.

Generally, the construction and finishes are plastered and painted masonry walls, 150mm timber floor boards that have been sanded, 230mm timber skirtings and pointed arches to openings. The ceilings are lath and plaster with reeded plaster cornices. The floor to ceiling height is 4000mm.

The rooms to the south west corner of the building are at a higher floor level with three steps up from the hall and library. At the higher level there are three bedrooms of dry wall construction, and the details and materials are from a later period of construction.

The dividing walls to the bedrooms that face the south are constructed of compressed fibre cement and extend to partition height. Each room has a separate window and a single pendant light fitting.

The face brick wall of the north elevation is still evident, even though the north balcony has been enclosed. The east room is divided into a passage way with four half height partitions to the eastern wall. There is evidence of modifications to the room with changes evident to the floor and plaster cornice.

The Convent (fmr) was occupied in September 2012 by the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate. The external form and internal layout of the Convent (fmr) is still clearly evident. There are some modifications, such as the infill of the verandah and balcony and partitions internally. Whilst there are structural issues to the concrete chimneys and some minor cracking to walls and ceilings the overall physical condition of the building is assessed as good.

### **School (former)**

#### External

The School (fmr) is located adjacent to the western boundary fronting Dudley Street and encloses the space between the western elevations of the Church and Church (fmr). The building is orientated in a north-south direction and consists of two distinct sections.

The detailing of the northern section of the building is consistent with an earlier building (former school rooms) and the southern section details are consistent with more recent additions to accommodate the Parish Office and Presbytery.

The northern and southern sections are visually linked by a corrugated steel gable roof and a timber verandah supported on square section timber posts. The building is single storey with painted stretcher bond brick walls. The floor is timber framed with either a carpet or vinyl finish. The timber framed awning windows have arched window heads with two sashes per window with eight panes to each sash. Each room is accessed by timber French doors with glazing to the top panel and an eight pane awning window above.

The southern section (Parish Office and Presbytery) is constructed of a concrete slab, painted brick walls and window and sill details similar to the northern section.

#### Internal

The four masonry walled school rooms, that form the northern section of the School (fmr), have been subdivided into ten separate rooms, which are:

Room 1: Parish Meeting Room

Room 2 and 3: Children's Activity Rooms  
Room 4: Storage  
Room 5: St Vincent de Paul Society Storage  
Room 6: Male WC's  
Room 7: Universal Access WC  
Room 8: Female WC'S  
Room 9: Storage  
Room 10: Chapel

Room 1, at the northern end of the building, is constructed on two levels with concertina folding doors used to separate the spaces. The timber windows comprise one sash with eight panes. The windows have a high sill height, approximately 2000mm above floor level. The lower section has a modified window to the north with a large pane of glass and a series of awning windows with c1960 hardware.

The subdivided spaces have timber framed full height partition walls. Some of the spaces retain elements of earlier finishes with walls having smooth render to window sill height and ruled markings in courses to resemble blockwork above. Generally, the flooring is timber with a carpet finish, internal doors are flush hollow core and some of the spaces have mineral fibre ceiling panels.

The building is in sound physical condition with some cracking to masonry walls and all spaces appear to be in use in September 2012. Externally, the building retains detailing from its original use and internally, whilst there is a loss of the form and proportions of the original rooms, there is sufficient evidence to interpret the former spaces.

The Parish Office and Presbytery at the southern end of the School (fmr) have tile and carpet floor finishes throughout. The Parish Office contains three offices with glazed commercial style partitioning. The Presbytery is accessed through the Parish Office and there is vehicular and pedestrian access from Dudley Street. The driveway and east courtyard are brick paved. The Presbytery has three bedrooms, two bathrooms, lounge, dining, kitchen and a double garage. The Presbytery building consists of plasterboard ceilings, aluminium sliding doors and windows, hollow core timber doors with no architraves.

The Parish Office and Presbytery are in good condition and are occupied in September 2012.

## **Church**

### External

The Church is located in the centre of *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* site. The formal entrance to the Church is from St Brigid's Terrace to the east. There are entry doors to the Church on the east, as well as the north and south. The Church has an irregular plan form and a distinctive architectural style through its dominant roof form and material selection. The Church's architectural style is Twentieth Century Ecclesiastical.

The building has a large single pitch roof that extends over the nave and incorporates a rectangular glazed clerestory facing south. There are lower gable

roofs to the south, east and west elevations as well as a butterfly roof to the east elevation. The roof is clad with a 'Swiss' style terracotta tile.

The walls are constructed of an off white rectangular concrete block with a coarse aggregate finish. The windows and doors are anodised aluminium framed with red coloured obscure glass at mid rail height.

#### Internal

The large internal volume is formed by six exposed structural steel frames using 'I' columns and beams. The walls are face rectangular blocks with rock faced concrete blocks to the narthex (lobby) and baptistery. There are two confessionals to the northern side of the Church and one to the southern side. The confessionals are distinguished through a design feature of protruding open blocks in a staggered pattern to the section of wall adjacent to the confessional. The flooring to the nave is 300mm square polished concrete slabs and the altar flooring is 350mm square marble slabs. There are timber doors to the confessionals and timber partitioning screening to the sacristy.

The nave is square in plan form and features a low gradient sloping floor for sight lines and there is a central aisle and two side aisles that are gently ramped. The ceiling is a modern linear strip aluminium box section that is fixed to the underside of the roofline. There is evidence of an earlier mineral fibre panel ceiling to the sacristy. There are six large light fittings that are suspended from the steel frames in the nave. Audio and projection equipment is fitted to the ceiling adjacent to the altar.

The Church is in good physical condition, retains its original architectural features and is in use in September 2012.

### 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

#### The Sisters of Mercy

The Sisters of Mercy became a key teaching order in Western Australia within months of their arrival to the State in January 1846. As the Sisters started to grow in number they became responsible for the foundation of a significant number of convents and schools across the state.

The Sisters established their first convent school in 1846 at Victoria Square in Perth, adjacent to the State's first Catholic Church – P2130 *St Johns Pro-Cathedral* (1843). The convent school complex, which continues to function for its original intended purpose, is known as P4327 Mercedes College Group. Mercedes College Group is currently under assessment by the State Heritage Office.

From 1847 the Sisters started to establish branch houses outside Perth and into the country, the first being St Francis Xavier's in Fremantle (established December 1847 and closed in 1849).<sup>39</sup> St Francis Xavier Convent was housed in a rented property and has not been included in the State Heritage Office database. It is unknown if this place is extant.

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<sup>39</sup> McLay, *Women Out Of Their Sphere* (1992), p.17, 89-90

The second branch house to be founded was St Theresa's in Guildford in August 1855. This branch was responsible for the founding of *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* and relocated to the Midland site in 1906.

Other branch convents to be established as part of this period of expansion were:

- P2879 *Convent of Mercy and School (fmr)*, York – Sisters arrived in the district in 1872 and construction began in 1873.
- P2231 *Catherine McAuley Centre*, Subiaco – Established as a Benedictine Monastery in 1859, the Sisters of Mercy assumed control of the institution in 1876.<sup>40</sup>
- Geraldton. Possibly P13438 Roman Catholic Church – site of (St Francis Xavier's Church). Sisters arrived in Geraldton in 1883, and tenders were called for new buildings in 1886.<sup>41</sup> It is unclear whether these were constructed. This place has never been reviewed by the Register Committee.
- P379 *Convent of Mercy Group (fmr)*, Bunbury - Sisters of Mercy arrived in Bunbury in 1883, Convent constructed in 1897, followed by a Chapel in 1923 and school (now demolished) in 1929.
- P4125 Roman Catholic Church Group, Toodyay – Established in 1860s as a residence, the Sisters of Mercy arrived in the district in 1884, and took over the Roman Catholic Church Group site in 1902.<sup>42</sup> This place is currently under assessment by State Heritage Office.
- P2030 *St Brigid's Group, Perth*, North Perth – Established from 1896.

In addition to the above eight branch houses, four of which are entered on to the State Register, there are fourteen other places associated with the Sisters of Mercy entered into the State Heritage Office database. This includes:

- P259 *St Brigid's Roman Catholic Church, Convent & School*, Bridgetown (1904-). This place was entered on to the HCWA Assessment Program in 2003.
- *Convent of Mercy, Dardanup* (c.1922), part of P684 *Catholic Precinct Dardanup*. This precinct was entered on to the HCWA Assessment Program in 2004.
- P573 *St Anthony's Convent of Mercy (fmr)* (1903) and P574 *Convent School (fmr)* (1895), Coolgardie. State Heritage Office is currently proposing to expand permanent registration of *St Anthony's Convent of Mercy (fmr)* to include St Mary's Catholic Church.
- P2383 *St Columba's Church Group & St Joseph's Convent, South Perth* (1908).
- P8709 *Aranmore Catholic College Group, Leederville* (1923-).
- P16819 *Lesmurdie Group, Kalamunda* (1909-).

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<sup>40</sup> State Register Documentation for P2331 *Catherine McAuley Centre* (2012), p.5-7.

<sup>41</sup> McLay, *Women Out Of Their Sphere* (1992), p. 110-113.

<sup>42</sup> State Register Draft Assessment Documentation for P4125 Roman Catholic Church Group, Toodyay (2012), p.2-4., and McLay, *Women Out Of Their Sphere* (1992), p.107-108.

- P17712 Saint Maria College, Attadale (1938). This place was entered on to the HCWA Assessment Program in 2008.

Additionally, there are a number of other places known to have been associated with the Sister of Mercy, but which have not been entered into the State Heritage Office database. Some of these were located at Menzies (1903), Norseman (1909), Greenbushes (1915), Belmont (1915), Queen's Park (1915), Kalgoorlie (1918), Osborne Park (1920), Leonora (1926), Esperance (1927), Harvey (1934), Gwelup (1937).<sup>43</sup>

The branch house associated with *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland*, which was originally located in Guildford, was the second branch house to be established in Western Australia. After relocating to Midland, this branch continued until 1973, making it the third longest running Sisters of Mercy Convent School (at 118 years) in the State (outlasted by P4327 Mercedes College Group: 1846-present (166 years) and P2231 *Catherine McAuley Centre*: 1876-2002 (126 years)).

Research shows there to be a great number of places associated with the Sisters of Mercy in the State of Western Australia. There are already a number entered on to the State Register of Heritage Places and the HCWA Assessment Program, including the Sisters original foundation at Victoria Square.

Although *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* reflects the growth and expansion of the Sisters of Mercy, so does a number of those Sister of Mercy places, and particularly branch houses, already entered on to the State Register.

### **Midland Junction**

The decision not to base the southern terminus, and junction point, of the Midland Railway line in Guildford, but to locate it to the east of Guildford impacted significantly on the area which was later to become known as Midland Junction, for it increased dramatically in importance and population. Following some initial growth after the declaration of the Midland Junction townsite in 1890, the Government decided to relocate its railway workshops from Fremantle to Midland Junction, and development increased significantly.

There are a number of places entered on to the State Register of Heritage Places which already represent this period of growth and development in the Midland Junction area. Examples include:

- P2505 *Old Midland Junction School* (1896-)
- P2529 *Western Australian Bank (fmr)* (1904)
- P3273 *Midland Railway Workshops* (1904)
- P2509 *Midland Town Hall* (1906)
- P2511 *Midland Courthouse (fmr)* (1907)
- P2513 *Midland Post Office* (1913)

Like the above registered places, *St Brigid's Catholic Church Group, Midland* represents the growth and expansion of the Midland Junction in the late

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<sup>43</sup> McLay, *Women Out Of Their Sphere* (1992), p. 155-156, 162-163, 177, 188, 226-236, 248-249.

1890s/early 1900s following the decision to locate the Midland Railway terminus and Government railway workshops there.

### **Thomas Hayden Cunningham**

No other places entered in to the HCWA database are associated with the architect Thomas Hayden Cunningham. Research has been unable to uncover any other place designed by this architect.

In 1905, Cunningham was listed in practice in Midland Junction.<sup>44</sup> It is likely he was chosen to design the Sisters of Mercy Convent as he was a locally practicing architect.

### **Oldham, Boas and Ednie-Brown**

There are thirty five places associated with the architectural firm Oldham, Boas and Ednie-Brown entered in the State Heritage Office database. Of these thirty five, eighteen are entered on the State Register of Heritage Places, however the majority are places where the firm's role was to carry out renovations or design a later addition to an existing building.

Places on the State Register which were constructed to the design of Oldham, Boas and Ednie-Brown are:

- P16548 Barker Building (1925), part of P16743 *William and Wellington Street Precinct, Perth*
- P6101 ANZ Bank (fmr), Perth (1928)
- P8728 Mackay's Aerated Water Factory (fmr), Perth (1928)
- P4641 Cathedral of St Constantine & St Helene, Perth (1935)
- P4669 Armadale District Hall (1936)

Other places designed by the partnership are:

- P3649 Matilda Bay Brewing Company Building, North Fremantle (1930). Added to the HCWA Assessment Program in 2004.
- P14095 Bindoon Inn (1946). Never been reviewed by the Register Committee.
- P3405 Carmichael Hall, Peppermint Grove (1953). Never been reviewed by the Register Committee.
- P10159 Church of Christ, Morawa (1958). Never been reviewed by the Register Committee.
- P9499 Wanneroo Shire Offices (fmr) (1960). Never been reviewed by the Register Committee.
- P4846 Cable Beach Club, Broome (1985). Never been reviewed by the Register Committee.

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<sup>44</sup> Kelly, Ian Phillip., *Western Australian Architectural Biography, 1890-1915: A Brief Biographical List of Architects who practiced in Western Australia in the Years 1890 to 1915, prepared as an appendix to the Masters of Architecture Thesis – The Development of Housing in Perth (1890-15)* (1991), p. 20, and *The Western Australian Post Office Directory [Wise's]* (1905), p. 753.

The above suggests that while the firm of Oldham, Boas and Ednie-Brown are associated with a number of significant buildings, their 1967 double volume Twentieth Century Ecclesiastical Style Church at Midland is one of the latest examples of their work.

### **Mercy Convents**

The two storey Federation Free style Convent (fmr) shares aesthetic similarities with a number of the State's other Mercy Convents, particularly those located at Coolgardie - P573 *St Anthony's Convent of Mercy (fmr)*, Coolgardie (1903) – and West Perth - P1976 *St Brigid's Convent (fmr)*, Northbridge (1881).

It is likely, as Thomas Hayden Cunningham does not appear to be a well-known architect, that the design of Convent (fmr) and the decisions of colour, shape, massing and plan, were based upon the earlier examples of Mercy Convents in Western Australia.

There is a possibility that the Sisters at Midland played a role in instructing Cunningham on what they wished the building to look like, and how it should be designed. Studies of Mercy Convents in England have recognised that Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, played a significant role in determining the design and layout of Convents, working with A.W.N Pugin for the design of St Mary's Convent in Handsworth, England.<sup>45</sup> It is also believed that other Sisters of Mercy in England had participated in drawing plans for convent buildings and commissioned architects to implement their designs.<sup>46</sup>

Although no evidence has been found to support the theory that the Sisters of Mercy in Midland played a role in the design of the Midland Convent, the English precedent presents an interesting alternative to the assumption that the architect worked independently of the Sisters.

## **13.4 KEY REFERENCES**

### **13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

Research may reveal further information regarding the architect Thomas Hayden Cunningham, including additional places constructed to his design.

Further research may determine the role, if any, the Sister of Mercy played in the design of the Convent (fmr) in Midland, and whether this occurred elsewhere in the State.

Further research may uncover the reason why the Sisters of Mercy left *St Brigid's Catholic Group, Midland* in 1973.

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<sup>45</sup> Brittain-Catlin, Timothy, 'A.W.N. Pugin's English Convent Plan', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 65, No. 3 (Sept., 2006), p. 368-369., and English Heritage, 'Nuns and Convent Building', sourced from <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/discover/people-and-places/womens-history/nuns-and-convent-building/>. Accessed on 8.11.2012.

<sup>46</sup> English Heritage, 'Nuns and Convent Building', sourced from <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/discover/people-and-places/womens-history/nuns-and-convent-building/>. Accessed on 8 November 2012.