



**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)

- 3.26 Providing health services
- 5.1 Working in harsh conditions
- 6.2 Establishing schools
- 6.5 Educating people in remote places
- 8.6.2 Maintaining religious traditions and ceremonies
- 8.6.7 Running missions to Australia's indigenous people
- 8.10.4 Designing and building fine buildings

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 103 Racial contact and interaction
- 402 Education and science
- 404 Community services and utilities
- 406 Religion
- 601 Aboriginal people (before and after 1829)
- 701 Contribution of women to the community

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

The Convent Building has aesthetic significance as a fine representative example of North West vernacular bungalow style, particularly emphasising the external framing with its simple and elegant vertical lines. (Criterion 1.1)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome represents the role played by Roman Catholic congregation of nuns, known as the Sisters of St John of God, in nursing, teaching and providing pastoral care to Aboriginal and Asian populations in Broome since 1908. (Criterion 2.1)

* 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Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.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 John of God Convent (fmr), Broome was established at the height of the pearling industry in Broome, where the work of the Sisters was supported by the diverse populations of the town, in particular by the Japanese community, whose hospital the Sisters staffed, during an era of strict racial segregation. (Criterion 2.2)

The Convent Building was constructed by Japanese carpenter and shipbuilder Hori Gorokitchi and bears testimony to the traditional Japanese carpentry method of *Shinkabe* in the exposed framing with its simple vertical lines, and to the attention to detail illustrated by the decorative chamfering to the veranda posts. (Criteria 2.3 & 2.4)

St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome was the home of the first female religious order to serve in the Kimberley region and has continued to provide a venue for their work to the present. (Criterion 2.1 & 2.2)

St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome is closely associated with the work and life of the Sisters of St John of God, and in particular that group of their Order who believed strongly in their mission to the Aboriginal people of the Kimberley region. It also represents the differing views of members of the congregation as to what each saw as its mission. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome is highly valued by the Sisters of St John of God as the centre of their Kimberley mission and their home from 1908 to 1989, demonstrated by ongoing use of the place and its care and maintenance. (Criterion 4.1)

St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome is highly valued by the local and wider community for its historic and religious associations with the Sisters of St John of God and their work with the Aboriginal and Asian communities in Broome; and Japanese carpenter Hori Gorokitchi; and contributes to the Broome community's sense of place. (Criteria 4.1 & 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

The Convent Building is a rare example of North West vernacular architecture showing the external framework and influences of Japanese craftsmanship. (Criterion 5.1)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The Convent Building is representative of a convent in a tropical climate and of a way of life for the Sisters who lived and worked there, and associations with the Catholic Church. (Criterion 6.1)

12.3 CONDITION

The buildings and elements comprising *St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome* are generally in fair to good condition, and for the most part are maintained.

12.4 INTEGRITY

St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome has retained a high degree of integrity. It has continued to be used as a place of work by the Sisters of St John of God, although it no longer has a residential function. Although some of the Convent Building no longer has the original function, it still demonstrates the original intent.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The original structure, form and fabric of the Convent Building of *St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome* are mostly intact. Some alterations are evident, with removal of several rooms and restructure of the veranda at the east end, removal of the original wall of the Chapel and enclosure of the west veranda in that vicinity, and enclosure of the south end veranda. However, *St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome* still demonstrates a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Documentary evidence by Irene Sauman, Historian, physical evidence by Laura Gray, Heritage and Conservation Consultant, with amendments and/or additions by the Register Committee and HCWA Officers.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome comprises the timber and iron Convent Building constructed in 1926 in North West vernacular bungalow style by Japanese carpenter Hori Gorokitchi, the timber lattice Gazebo, archive and office building, and several mature mango trees (*Mangifera indica*).

From the late 1880s through the 1890s, Broome developed as one of the principal ports in the North West of Western Australia and the centre of the pearling industry in the State.¹

In 1871, the Order of the Sisters of St John of God was formed in Ireland, by a small group who had left the French Order of the Sisters of Bon Secours. The new Order concentrated on nursing and teaching the poor. In November 1895, eight Sisters arrived in Albany following a request from Bishop Gibney for nursing Sisters for Perth and the Goldfields, where typhoid was claiming many lives.² Over the following decade, convents were established at Subiaco and Kalgoorlie and schools and hospitals built. In 1907, Mother Antonio O'Brien, with two Sisters and six novices, established a convent at Beagle Bay to assist the Pallottine Fathers with the Aboriginal mission there.³

After a year at Beagle Bay, Mother Antonio and Sister Benedict Courtney sailed to Broome. Father Nicolas Emo, a Trappist priest, had been placed in charge of the Broome parish in 1895, and an ironclad, timber-lined church had been built in Weld Street, but at the time of the Sisters arrival there was no resident priest in the town. The land occupied by the church (Lots 130-131) was owned by the Geraldton diocese, which was responsible for the Vicariate of the Kimberley, while Father Emo owned adjoining Lots 127 and 129 fronting Barker Street, and Filipino carpenter Leandro Loredó owned Lot 128, in between.⁴ The Sisters first residence was Leandro's one room iron hut (built c.1900), and there they cooked and had their meals while sleeping at night in the church. Beds and household goods were provided by donations from Chinese and Japanese shopkeepers.⁵

Within days of their arrival the Sisters had collected a small group of children and St Mary's Catholic School was opened on the church veranda. The students were of every culture except Aboriginal, as Aboriginal people were not permitted to live within the town at this time, although they did work there. Those families who could afford it paid two-shillings a week in school fees, while the Sisters

¹ For more on development of Broome see HCWA assessment documentation for 04858 Bourne & Inglis Store (fmr), 15730 Broome Primary School Music Room and 02910 McDaniel Homestead.

² Scally, John, *To Speed on Angels' Wings: The story of the Sisters of St John of God*, Columbia Press, Dublin, 1995, pp. 39-63.

³ Scally, op cit, pp. 66-71.

⁴ Zucker, Margaret, *From Patrons to Partners: A History of the Catholic Church in the Kimberleys, 1884-1984*, University of Notre Dame Australia Press, Fremantle, 2005, pp. 126-27; Land Grants GT 13/681 (Lot 127), 7 Dec 1897; GT14/685 (Lot 129), 17 Mar 1899 & GT 16/786 (Lot 128), 30 June 1900; Certificate of Title, Vol. 179 Fol. 125, (Lots 130 & 131), 14 Oct 1899. Copies of titles courtesy Sister Pat Rhatigan.

⁵ One page of notes from information collected from 'older Kimberley Sisters', 37-1992-16 SJGSA, courtesy Sister Pat Rhatigan.

earned money to keep themselves by teaching English and bookkeeping, and by home nursing for the wealthier Europeans.⁶

In 1909, Mother Antonio acquired title to the southern half of Lot 128, and two years later she acquired the northern half, fronting Barker Street.⁷ Oral histories of the Sisters record that 'Mother Antonio had the first convent built', which appears to have been located immediately west of the Convent Building.⁸ In 1912, the first convent was described as 'two galvanized iron rooms connected by a roof also of iron, and a high iron fence all around to keep out the world'.⁹ Several more Sisters had joined the congregation in the first few years, and in June 1912 another two Sisters and six postulants arrived. The convent was enlarged to accommodate the growing order of sisters, with the addition of two more rooms and a veranda all round. The building was described as 'quite a big place but still unlined, unceiled, and extremely rough and crude'.¹⁰

Due to restrictions on Asian immigration and racial segregation in the town, the Japanese built their own hospital, and the Sisters took charge of the nursing there at the request of the Japanese. Most of the patients were casualties of the pearling industry, but there were also outbreaks of disease. In January 1912, Sister Immaculate Leahy contracted typhoid and died at the age of 25 while nursing at the hospital during an epidemic. The Japanese community erected a marble Celtic cross in the cemetery in her memory.¹¹

The sisters continued to run St Mary's School, which had a schoolroom built in 1911, and to minister to the local Aboriginal and Asian populations, including nursing the sick in the Aboriginal camps on the edge of town. During World War I, restrictions on the movement of Aboriginal people were lifted and families began moving into Broome from the Beagle Bay mission, seeking work. The children attended St Mary's School, and as their numbers increased, the European and Asian children moved to the state school until the enrolment at St Mary's was almost wholly Aboriginal.¹²

By 1916, there were sixteen St John of God Sisters in the Kimberley, working in Broome and at the missions at Beagle Bay and Lombadina. Broome was the mother house and training centre and there was always some movement between the various sites of work, despite the hazards of travel in those remote areas in the early 20th century.

The Sisters in the Kimberley were an isolated group and not part of the approved Congregation of Sisters of St John of God. This meant they were Diocesan Sisters, under the jurisdiction of the diocese, or in the case of the Kimberley, the Vicariate, which was part of the Geraldton diocese. Father Creagh, who was in charge of the Kimberley Vicariate from 1916 to 1923, considered the Sisters of St

6 Sister Mary Ignatius Murnane, *My Life as a Sister of St John of God*, the author, 1973, p. 9.

7 Certificates of Title, Vol. 196 Fol. 48, 19 July 1909; Vol. 285 Fol. 34, 14 Dec 1909, courtesy Sr Pat Rhatigan.

8 From a mud map of the site, courtesy Pearl Hamaguchi and Broome Museum, and information provided by Sister Pat Rhatigan.

9 Sister Alphonsus Daly, 'Reminiscences and anecdotes: Sisters of St John of God Kimberley Mission, 1912-1972', 8 pages, in Joyce Dunphy collection, Battye Library Private Archives, MN2305, ACC 6140A/41, p.1.

10 One page of notes from information collected from 'older Kimberley Sisters', 37-1992-16 SJGSA, courtesy Sister Pat Rhatigan.

11 Sister Mary Ignatius Murnane, op cit, p. 12.

12 Zucker, op. cit., pp. 54-55.

John of God to be the greatest asset the Vicariate possessed in the working of the Kimberley missions, and did his best to make their lives more comfortable. He was responsible for the Sisters relinquishing some of the more oppressive elements of their habit, such as the flannel petticoat, starched guimpe and train, which were unsuitable for the climate. He obtained regular salaries for the Sisters at the Japanese Hospital and had the Sisters put on the staff of the District Hospital where they undertook night duty. Father Creagh also built a beach house for the Sisters at Broome, located a few miles from town where there was a good water supply. A vegetable garden was planted and goats and poultry were kept, tended by a family from Lombadina. This small farm enterprise helped to supply the convent with fresh produce.¹³

Sister Bernadine Greene was elected Superior at Broome in 1918. Mother Antonio remained at the convent, but her health was poor and she died there in 1923. In the early 1920s, before leaving Broome, Father Creagh authorised the Sisters to launch an appeal to purchase more land and build a new convent. An appeal was launched in the eastern states for funds and in 1924, Lot 129 and the northern half of Lot 127 were acquired.¹⁴

[T]wo cottages were purchased on either side of the convent, giving us more land and breathing space. The cottages were used, as they stood, one as a hostel for native girls working in the town, the other as a kindergarten - the first in Broome. Both old houses have been replaced by modern buildings.¹⁵

Funds for construction of the new convent were also provided from local sources. The Japanese community contributed £134 to the building fund, the money being presented by Messrs Murakami and Sakamoto and described as 'a spontaneous offering'.¹⁶ This was in keeping with the general and ongoing assistance given to the Sisters by Broome's Japanese community.

Japanese carpenter, Hori Gorokitchi, undertook the construction of the Convent Building. Gorokitchi had arrived in Western Australia in May 1891 at the age of 23. He worked as a builder and contractor in Broome, employing Japanese carpenters and constructing many buildings, including the residences of pearl masters Daniel McDaniel and Captain Ancel Gregory, and St Mary's school hall (not extant). Gorokitchi also worked for Gregory as a shipbuilder.¹⁷

The Japanese word for carpenter is *daiku* and is synonymous with builder or contractor in English.

Japanese carpenters are involved in many types of woodworking, but the core daiku job focuses on timber frame homes and the joinery used to create them...

Whereas the heart of a Western timber frame home is its sturdy and prominent frame, the Japanese home is essentially a large piece of Japanese furniture, with a modest, understated frame and myriad smaller members that come together into a unified whole... The finish quality of the woodworking and the wood joinery itself are refined and considerably complex... It is as if a cabinetmaker built an entire house by hand...

13 Sister Mary Ignatius Murnane, op cit, pp. 20-22.

14 Certificates of Title, Vol. 213 Fol. 74, 12 Dec 1924 & Vol. 122 Fol. 37, 8 Dec 1924.

15 One page of notes, op cit, 37-1992-16 SJGSA.

16 *Nor-West Echo*, 14 Feb 1925, courtesy Broome Museum.

17 Atkinson, Anne, *Asian Immigrants to Western Australia 1829-1901*, Vol. 5, Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians, UWA Press, 1979; Shaw, Carol, *The History of Broome's Street Names*, Broome, 2001; Sister Mary Ignatius Murnane, p. 10.

Such well developed timber joinery is the result of a Japanese carpentry tradition that is more than 1,000 years old.¹⁸

Traditional Japanese carpentry evolved from the 6th century AD at a time when metals were scarce. To overcome this, intricate timber joints were devised, fastened with hardwood keys, wedges and pins to provide strength and stability. The joints had to be perfectly finished and tight and the holes or slots for the fasteners made so that, when inserted, the fasteners pulled the timber pieces together tightly. The choice of joint for a particular task was decided by the load it would bear. There were over a hundred most commonly used joints. As metals became more readily available various types of fasteners were designed, one being a metal strip, which was bolted across major structural joints.¹⁹

Each piece of timber served a dual purpose: a structural member and a finished decorative piece. The beauty of the wood was considered as important as its structural strength. Over the centuries, different schools of carpentry developed different methods, and master carpenters within the same school developed different methods. Changes in the style of periods brought further alterations, and then there were regional differences. In Broome, an obvious and distinguishing feature of Japanese built structures is the external framing. This particular framing method is known as *Shinkabe*.²⁰

Features of the external framing are uprights at about 450mm apart, instead of the 600mm usual in western-built house frames, and the small number of noggins, or horizontal members. The noggin extends the full width of the wall, jointed at each stud and then notched into the corner upright, where it is fastened with a timber wedge. It is the continuous length of noggin, rather than short pieces nailed between studs, and the fineness of the joints that give the structure its great strength and stability without diagonal bracing, and reduces the amount of timber required along the horizontal. This in turn emphasises the simple and elegant vertical line of the framing.

Japanese carpentry is distinguished by the use of a different set of tools and techniques to European carpentry. Notable tools are the saw that cuts on the pull, and the plane and chisel whose blades are based on the same principle as the Japanese sword, with an extremely hard metal attached to a softer piece. A skilful carpenter had about 179 individual tools in his standard set, consisting of 49 chisels, 40 planes, 26 gimlets and 14 types of tools for marking and ruling. In low-budget constructions the total was only 72 pieces, with fewer finishing tools. The use of electric power tools has, since 1955, brought about a decline in the use of traditional carpentry tools.²¹

The timber for the Convent Building was milled according to Gorokitchi's instructions, and other items, such as roof plates, were designed by him to resist cyclones. His buildings were so solidly constructed it was with great difficulty one

18 Articles on Japanese Carpentry and Joinery from the *Japanese Garden Journal* website, www.rotheien.com.

19 Nakahara, Yasuo, *Japanese Joinery: A handbook for joiners and carpenters*, Hartley & Marks, Washinton, c.1983.

20 Nakahara, op cit, pp. 65-66.

21 Takenaka Carpentry Tools Museum, Kobe, 'Carpentry tools from the modernization period to the present', <http://dougukan.jp/eng/B25e>. For more information see S. Azby Brown, *The genius of Japanese carpentry: an account of a temple's construction*, Tokyo, Kodansha International, 1989.

of his buildings, St Mary's School hall, was eventually demolished to make way for another construction.²²

The Convent Building was officially opened on 10 August 1926, on the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. Rev Bishop Coppo of the Salesian Order, who had replaced Father Creagh in charge of the Vicariate, officiated:

The cordial invitation of the Committee was availed of by many persons. The grounds were nicely decorated with flags and ample seating accommodation provided...

A much enjoyed vocal program was provided. The School children opened the programme with a song of welcome. Mrs Ward recited one of her much appreciated recitations. Mrs Ogilvie same 'Ave Maria', and Mrs Gregory sang 'My Rosary', both items being appropriate and much appreciated by all.

His Reverence Bishop Coppo addressed the guests, and, on behalf of the Sisters, thanked all who had assisted them in the erection of the convent... Afternoon tea was then provided by the Sisters and afterwards the guests were shown through the New Convent.²³

The Convent Building comprised the Chapel, accommodation rooms, kitchen, refectory, storerooms and office. The 1912 iron-clad convent, or at least part of it, was retained for extra accommodation and was linked by a ramp to the veranda on the west side of the Chapel.²⁴

During this period of development at Broome, the Subiaco Congregation of St John of God offered to 'take back' the Kimberley Sisters if they would give up their mission. However, they would not. Bishop Coppo, deploring the Sisters' poverty and insecurity, attempted to merge them with the Salesian Congregation of Our Lady Help of Christians. The Broome congregation also opposed this, but in January 1926 four Sisters went to the seminary at Springwood, NSW, to assume the work of that Order caring for students, and in 1928, another four went to the seminary at Manly. Two of these Sisters, one of whom was Ignatius Murnane, returned to Broome many years later.²⁵

In 1937, the Sisters took charge of the Derby leprosarium when the Health Department had difficulty attracting other nursing staff for the place.²⁶ They continued to teach the children at St Mary's School, the kindergarten in Broome, and at the missions, while also nursing at the Japanese hospital and the District Hospital and providing pastoral and practical care for families and people in need. In 1941, they established the Holy Child Orphanage on a site near by the convent, with 23 Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal children in residence. In February 1942, these children and four Sisters were evacuated to Beagle Bay for the duration of the War, and the convent and orphanage were requisitioned by the defence forces for use as temporary accommodation and offices. During this time, the nuns were distressed that they were not being provided with financial and practical assistance for the care of the evacuated children.²⁷ Broome was off limits to the Sisters during this period but occasionally one would come back to

22 Sister Mary Ignatius Murnane, op cit, p. 25.

23 *Nor-West Echo*, 28 August 1926, p. 11.

24 Information provided by Sister Pat Rhatigan, who has been resident at Broome since 1958.

25 Zucker, op cit, pp. 151-52; Sister Alphonsus Daly, op cit; Sister Mary Ignatius Murnane, op cit, pp. 26-30.

26 Scally, op cit, pp. 78-79.

27 Choo, Christine, *Mission Girls: Aboriginal women on Catholic missions in the Kimberley, Western Australia 1900-1950* (Nedlands: UWA Press, 2001), p. 255.

check on the buildings. They were more concerned about termites than bombs, but the buildings survived the war without damage of any kind.²⁸

The Japanese community at Broome had been interned during the war years and their hospital closed. It did not reopen after the War. In 1952, the Sisters took responsibility for an Aboriginal general hospital in Broome. In 1954, they opened a school in Derby with an enrolment of 21 and a convent was built there in the mid-1950s. In 1956, the Sisters opened a feeding centre and hospital at the Balgo mission in the East Kimberley.²⁹ Title to the southern half of Lot 127 was acquired in 1958, giving the Sisters the entire three lots on the Barker Street frontage.³⁰

The Holy Child Orphanage closed in 1961, but the Sisters opened the first permanent infant health centre in Broome that year. By the late 1960s, St Mary's School reflected the town's cultural diversity. The largest group of children were of Aboriginal descent, and these were joined by those of Japanese, Filipino, Chinese, Malay, Timorese and Afghan ancestry.³¹

In 1967, there were major changes to *St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome*. A wing at the eastern end, comprising the refectory, kitchen and storage areas, was removed and a two-storey dormitory building with a new kitchen and refectory and accommodation area was built a little distance from the north-west corner. This building was linked to the Convent Building by a walkway that connected at the corner of the veranda. The Sisters occupied the new building, while the Chapel in the Convent Building continued to be used for its original purpose and other rooms were used as offices by the Sisters and by community organisations. The remaining section of the 1912 iron-clad convent building was removed at this time, as was the house on the north-east corner of the site, which had first housed novitiates, until they were moved to the Derby convent, and then Aboriginal girls. An old garage and laundry were also removed.³²

The number of St John of God Sisters available for postings decreased with the aging of the original convent and few new recruits. In 1972, the Sisters were unable to provide teachers at Broome and Beagle Bay. The Loreto Sisters took over teaching duties at St Mary's School. The Nulungu Colleges for secondary students, opened in the early 1970s, were also staffed by other orders, with Sister Pat Rhatigan of St John of God providing advice and support until 1984. The Sisters continued to work at Balgo and Bidyadanga (La Grange) missions in the 1980s, with the trend in modern pastoral work being to develop leadership from among the people, with the Sisters providing support and facilitation.³³

Two Sisters spent over 60 years in the Kimberley: Sisters Alphonsus Daly and Ignatius Murnane celebrated their Diamond Jubilee at Broome in 1975. For their work in the North West they received the Queen's honours of MBE (Alphonsus, 1958, for nursing) and BEM (Ignatius, 1976, for teaching and the community).³⁴

In 1989, the Sisters had two houses built in Taiji Road, Broome for their own occupation and they moved out of the Convent Building. Some of the older

28 Zucker, op cit, pp. 92-94.

29 Scally, op cit, pp. 79-80; Zucker, op cit, pp. 126-29, 157.

30 Certificate of Title Vol. 213 Fol. 73, 31 January 1958.

31 Scally, op cit, pp. 79-80; Zucker, op cit, pp. 126-29, 157.

32 Information provided by Sister Pat Rhatigan, op cit.

33 Zucker, op cit, p. 152.

34 Scally, op cit, p. 80; www.womenaustralia.info/exhibit/honours.

Sisters retired to Subiaco, the differing opinions between congregations having resolved some years earlier. The two-storey dormitory building (1967) was removed, being considered badly planned and inappropriate with so much second-storey space.³⁵

St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome reverted wholly to use as offices and meeting place, used by the Sisters and community groups. In the 1980s, two of the occupants were the Catholic Education Kimberley Regional Office and Broome Regional Aboriginal Medical Service. The Kimberley Bookshop was run from the place by the Sisters from 1982. The Bookshop had been established in the early 1970s by a minister for the Uniting Church, who ran it from a room in his home in Anne Street. The Sisters took it over when the minister was transferred. In 1990, the business was sold and eventually moved to Napier Terrace where it continues to operate. Other occupants of *St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome* have been the St John of God Spirituality Centre; the St John of God Centre, which became Centacare; and, Broome Domestic Violence.³⁶ A plaque was installed commemorating the opening of the Centacare office on 30 April 1997.

A building (c.1990) on the Barker Street frontage near the site of the 1967 two-storey building is also used as offices. It has been partly occupied by the Pinakarra Aboriginal Counselling Service for a number of years, and the Sisters have more recently established an archive centre in the building as they approach their centenary in the Kimberley. The alterations and enlargement of the Chapel were undertaken c.1995.³⁷

In 1996, *St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome* was entered on the Shire of Broome Municipal Heritage Inventory with recommended category A for possible inclusion on the State Register.³⁸ In 1997, Lots 128 and 129 were re-subdivided. This created Lot 301 as the site of *St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome* with an area of 2,673 sqm made up of Lot 128 and a narrow strip of Lot 129, and three lots of 730 sqm each fronting Weld Street on the corner of Barker Street, from the remaining part of Lot 129. These three lots form the main part of the grounds on the east side.³⁹

A Grotto, featuring statues to the Virgin Mary, has been installed in the grounds sometime after 1967, and a Gazebo has been erected marking the site and size of the original iron hut (built c.1900) that Mother Antonio and Sister Benedict occupied on their arrival in Broome in 1908. The foundation stone of the former Holy Child Orphanage has also been placed in the Gazebo. It is not known when the large underground rainwater tank was installed, but it was possibly c.1912, when the congregation was considerably enlarged and work was done on the old convent. Oral histories refer to the Sisters later throwing their black serge habits into the unused tank when they changed to wearing white habits, but the exact date for this event has not been established.⁴⁰

35 Information provided by Sister Pat Rhatigan, op cit.

36 Information provided by Sister Pat Rhatigan, op cit; *Kimberley Bookshop Catalogue*, 1997, cited in Heritage Council assessment documentation for 14007 Napier Terrace Cottages.

37 Information provided during the site visit; Information provided by Sister Pat Rhatigan, op cit.

38 Hocking Planning & Architecture, *Shire of Broome Municipal Heritage Inventory*, 1995.

39 Survey diagram 87740 & Certificate of Title Vol. 2119 Fol. 696, 24 November 1997.

40 Sister Alphonsus Daly, op cit; Sister Mary Ignatius Murnane, op cit, pp. 36-37; information provided during the site visit.

In 2005, the Convent Building was re-roofed, new electrical wiring installed and the place painted throughout.⁴¹

In 2008, *St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome* continues to provide offices for the Sisters of St John of God and related community organisations.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome comprises the timber and iron Convent Building (1926), the timber lattice Gazebo representing the site and size of the original convent, archive and office building, and several mature mango trees (*Mangifera indica*) in a grassed parkland setting. The archive and office building is of no significance and visually intrusive.

The site, located on the south-west intersection of Barker and Weld streets in Broome, is an expansive level grassed area, with the Convent Building set back from both street frontages. Close to the main entry of the Convent Building is a large rock with a memorial plaque commemorating the opening of Centacare on the site in 1997. It reads:

Centacare Kimberley
opened by
Mr Paul Fogarty
Chairperson Centacare Australia
Blessed by
Bishop Christopher Saunders
on 30th April 1997
'Caring for the people of the Kimberley.
Building our future together'.

A number of mature mango trees are evident; all other plantings are post 1995 (according to Sister Leona). A small timber-framed lattice Gazebo is located on the west boundary, and informs of the site and size of the original convent with an in situ stump and plaque, foundation stone, statues and other items. Located on the west end of the main north frontage in Barker Street is a more recent archive and office building. A 0.9m high pipe frame mesh link fence surrounds the property, and there is gate access at a number of points including on the south boundary through to the Catholic Church on the adjoining site. Although outside the curtilage, a stone Grotto with lattice roof is located central on the setback space on the east side (Weld Street), which the Sisters propose to move to Lot 301 at some point.

The entire area is grassed and concrete slab paths connect from the Barker Street front entry to the Convent Building, the Convent Building to the Church gate, and the Convent Building to the rear of the archive and office building, where the toilet facilities are located. The pathways to the north and north-west from the Convent Building have a dip approximately halfway along the distance, reportedly where the infill of the original underground water tank has subsided.

St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome shows influences of North West vernacular architecture in the basic bungalow design of the Interwar period that does not correspond to any specific style guides. The Convent Building is distinctive in the emphasis of the external framing that illustrates influences of Japanese craftsmanship. The Convent Building is a single-storey structure in the form of an 'L', except for the east end, where some demolition and restructure has taken place. The building has verandas on all sides, although the furthest

⁴¹ Physical evidence and information provided during the site visit.

section on the south side and half of the west side has been enclosed. The timber-framed building is raised off the ground on round off-form concrete stumps. The expansive hipped roof extends over the verandas, and the west wing shows the original form with vented gablets. The roof is clad with full-length sheets of Colorbond custom orb cladding. The main frontage facing Barker Street is a rectangular form with a single veranda opening delineating the entry. There are also veranda entries on the west, south and east sides. However there are numerous entries off the veranda into the Convent Building on all sides. Square timber posts support the verandas. The dado is a timber framed lattice enclosed element, and some areas have the same lattice detail between the dado and the roof. The rafters are exposed under the veranda roof, revealing a ventilation space between the top of the exterior walls and the roof structure. The veranda floors have 0.135 metre jarrah board. The east facing, south and enclosed west verandas all have flat metal lined timber framed awning shutters in place. The veranda entries are delineated on the veranda edge by flanking small panels of lattice and posts detailed with decorative angled chamfering. The open tread timber stairs have simple pipe rail supports.

The distinctive Convent Building has timber framework exposed on the exterior walls. The windows and doors finish flush with both the exterior of the framework and the cladding that forms the interior wall in a single skin. There are several sets of timber panelled double door entries and single doors in similar design with sectional squares of four obscure glazed panels above two vertical panels. The windows are double hung sashes with four panes per sash. Louvred windows are evident in the Sisters' offices, and also in the veranda enclosure wall on the west side. Those louvres are metal to dado height and glazed above. Most windows have aluminium security screens fitted, and the single doors have exterior security flywire doors.

The interior layout is partially interconnected, except the east end of the north wing where the Sisters' offices are located. The main entry is immediately adjacent to the offices, on the north frontage. The offices are accessed off the south and north verandas and are connected on the interior. The main entry is a short hallway through to the south veranda, with two rooms on the west: Office 3, and Tearoom. Office 3 is connected through to Office 2, which also has an entry off the north veranda and connects to the Tearoom. At the west end of the Tearoom, the access is through to Office 1. Office 1 has two sets of double entry doors into the large space of the former Chapel, although the double entry doors on the north wall show evidence in the framework and battening that it was likely the position of a window at an earlier time. On the south wall, a sliding door opens through to the former Chapel. This expansive area shows evidence of the original layout by means of two timber posts along the position of the removed exterior wall. The western wall is now a louvred wall on the western edge of the veranda. Doors and windows from the original west wall of the chapel have been reused on the north wall of the extension, which opens onto the west veranda.

The original two sets of double doors remain in situ on the east wall of the former Chapel, and the original wings at the south end are still evident, as well as the windows on the south wall, now enclosed within the south veranda extension. The original in situ Chapel window on the east wall has three panels of glazing within the vertical window format, each with a different coloured glass. The south veranda is predominantly an aluminium framed glass enclosure, with a sliding glass entry on the west end, and a walled section (per the original building) on the small section adjoining the veranda.

The interior cladding is entirely tongue and groove dado wall to a low height (approximately 0.75m), with battened asbestos panelling above. The ceilings are similarly battened. The floors are timber throughout. There are louvered windows in the Sisters' offices on the interior wall between the rooms. There are ceiling fans installed throughout, and various air conditioner installations in window openings. There is a basic c.1970s kitchen fit out in the Tearoom.

The Gazebo is a small timber framed gable roofed structure at ground level, clad with lattice walls and openings central on the east and west sides. In the south-east corner of the gazebo there is a concrete stump reportedly the remains of the iron hut that served as the original convent. There is also a foundation stone, memorial plaque and statue located within the Gazebo.

The memorial plaque is brass set into a rock on a concrete base, and reads: 'This is the site and size of the first home in Broome of the Sisters of St John of God'.

The Foundation tablet is a concrete memorial, with some lettering obscured by the deterioration of the face. It reads:

Holy Child
Orphanage
This foundation stone
was laid by
The Most Rev Dr Raible PSM
11 October 1945

East of the Convent Building, surrounded by a grassed area, is the stone Grotto, facing south-west and covered by a lattice roof supported on bush poles.

The archives and office building, on the Barker Street frontage is of no heritage significance. It is a concrete block structure with custom orb pre-painted corrugated galvanized steel cladding on the exterior. The low-pitched roof is clad with high profile metal roof sheeting. The windows are aluminium framed sliding glass with aluminium security grilles. The interior, on a concrete floor, is painted face block work and the steel roof trusses are exposed. The facility provides offices and a purpose adapted archive facility, in addition to toilet facilities for the site, and a double carport attached at the road frontage.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

There are two registered places associated with Sisters of St John of God: *Bungarun (Leprosarium), Derby and Hill 60, Belmont*. The buildings at the Derby Leprosarium are similar North West vernacular style and there is a Sisters' residence as part of the complex, but no details are known for this building.⁴²

There are three houses in the same style and similar form located in Broome and entered on the State Register: *McDaniel Homestead (1902), Maurice Lyon's House (1903) and House, 57 Dampier Terrace (1900)*. These residences are comparable to *St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome* despite being constructed in the Federation period, as date of construction is not relevant to buildings in the North West vernacular bungalow style, as they owe their style to the climate and not the period.

The North West vernacular bungalow style features narrow linear planning to aid cross ventilation, extensive shady outdoor spaces surrounded by dense planting, ventilating ridges to release hot air from the roof, roofs generously extended to

⁴² HCWA assessment documentation for 02980 *Bungarun, Derby* and 04490 *Hill 60, Belmont*.

shelter verandas and breezeways, adjustable louvres for maximum cross-ventilation, and buildings raised to permit maximum airflow. Most of these features are present in *St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome* and the three registered buildings.

Of registered places, *McDaniel Homestead* is also credited with having been built by Hori Gorokitchi. Another Broome residence, *Captain Gregory's House*, was also built by Gorokitchi, and is undergoing assessment. Captain Gregory's House has been relocated and is occupied as the Monsoon Gallery, while the three registered places all continue to function as residences. None of the assessed buildings feature the external timber framing evident in *St John of God Convent (fmr)* and this feature has not been documented in any other Broome building.

There are ten Catholic convent buildings on the State Register, but none are associated with the St John of God Sisters and none are located in the North West of the State. There are several St John of God convent buildings at the Kimberley missions, including the 1913 convent at Lombadina, which has been superseded by a later building, and a convent at Beagle Bay. The buildings are in the North West vernacular bungalow style and in fair to good condition. The convent at Balgo is a c.1956 steel-framed pre-fabricated building.⁴³

St John of God Convent (fmr), Broome is a fine and rare example of the style in Broome.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

No key references.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

⁴³ HCWA database; John Taylor Architect, *Conservation Plan for Balgo Mission*, 2004, & *Conservation Plan for Kalumburu Mission*, 2004.