

PROPOSED LOCAL HERITAGE PLACE

St Pius X Catholic Church, 73 Golda Avenue, Salisbury (part of LOT PLAN: 1_RP123210)



SUMMARY

Built in 1969, St Pius X Catholic Church at Salisbury was designed by Cecil Hargraves, a partner in the prominent Brisbane architectural practice of Frank L. Cullen, Fagg, Hargraves and Moody. The building, a striking and highly intact example of a mid-Century Modernist church consists of three elements – a porte-cochere, the church entry, and the church itself. Designed in response to liturgical changes that emerged from the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, the church demonstrates the principal characteristics of Modernist ecclesiastical architecture that sought to encourage a sense of involvement and connection of the congregation to the running of services.

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For public consultation – Qualified State Interest Amendment – Local heritage



HISTORY

A History of Salisbury

Salisbury was a rural, sparsely populated farming district until the South Coast Railway Line opened in 1885. Like elsewhere in Brisbane, the railway's arrival spurred on development in the areas immediately surrounding it. After the opening of the railway line, several residential estates developed between Rocklea and Coopers Plains, including the Salisbury Station Estate (1886), Salisbury Park Estate (1888), and Salisbury Court Estate (1890). While the population of Salisbury stood at only 84 in 1911, growth picked up in the area after the First World War. Between 1920 and 1930, the number of residents listed in the *Post Office Directory* almost doubled, from 102 to 194. The years after the Second World War saw a rapid increase in settlement in the suburb.

By 1950, several places of worship had been established in Salisbury to serve the growing population, including Congregational, Anglican, and Baptist churches. In 1875, a small Catholic church, St Patrick's, was built at Coopers Plains on the property of James Freney. However, Mass was only performed several times a year by the parish priest from Beaudesert. Alternatively, worshippers travelled to one of the Catholic churches in central Brisbane until the Mary Immaculate Catholic Church at Annerley was opened in 1914. In 1919, St Brendan's Catholic Church at Moorooka was constructed, and many Salisbury residents attended this church until the construction of a new Catholic church in Salisbury in the 1950s.

The construction of a new Catholic church in Salisbury

In June and November of 1952, the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane acquired two adjacent subdivisions of land on the southern side of Golda Avenue at Salisbury. This land measured just over four acres in total. The choice of land was strategic, being at the high point of the street. This continued the Catholic tradition of building churches on elevated sites in the landscape. Labourer Frederick Quarrie had purchased this land in 1931, but by the time of the sale to the Catholic Church, it had been split into two lots. Frederick's widow, Rubina, owned one holding containing most of the land. A much smaller 80 perch block was owned by the Quarries' married daughter, Sylvia Marsh.

The first Mass was held on the property by Father Ferdinand Parer for approximately 20 locals in the Quarrie's former small timber house. In January 1954, permission was granted by Brisbane City Council for the relocation of two ex-Army huts to the site on Golda Avenue. These were converted into a church and school. These were officially blessed by Archbishop James Duhig on 9 February 1957 and the church was dedicated to Pope Pius X.¹ He had been canonised only three years earlier, in 1954. Father Francis Costello, who led the Moorooka parish, celebrated the first Mass in the St Pius X Catholic Church at this time. When the St Pius X Parish, Salisbury, was established in November 1961, Father Costello was appointed as the first Parish priest. To accommodate Father Costello, a house was moved to the church grounds from Moorooka in July 1959 to become a presbytery. The neighbouring property to the west, measuring just over an acre, was also purchased in April 1960 to provide additional clergy members accommodation.

Permission to construct a new primary school on the site was granted by Brisbane City Council on 24 June 1963. The following year, St Pius X Convent School was opened on the land behind the existing church and school by the Sisters of St Joseph. The construction of a new church followed the new school. In March 1969, the Corporation of the Trustees of the Roman Archdiocese of Brisbane applied to the Brisbane City Council to build a new church. Construction began shortly after by contractors, Nema Constructions Pty. Ltd. Archbishop P. M. O'Donnell officially opened the

¹ Anon, *A Closer Look at Salisbury and Nathan Heights* (Brisbane, QLD: Coopers Plains Local History Group, 2000).



new church at 3 pm on 23 November 1969. The first Mass was held the same day at 5.30 pm. The final cost was \$97,626, part of which was provided through the fundraising efforts of Salisbury parishioners.²

The former church and school buildings were retained and altered for use as a Parish Hall, a function that continues today. The Presbytery and convent buildings were also retained. However, the convent was relocated to the Presbytery's rear to make room for the new church. Both buildings underwent alterations.

In 2007, the separate Catholic parishes of Salisbury and Moorooka were amalgamated. However, both congregations retain their separate identities and places of worship. St Pius X Catholic Church maintains a strong connection with Salisbury's Catholic community. St Pius X Catholic Church remains a notable landmark in the area.

The design of the new St Pius X Catholic Church

The new St Pius X church's construction came at a crucial period in ecclesiastic architectural design for the Catholic Church. The Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, better known as The Second Vatican Council, was a series of assemblies held at the Vatican in Rome, from October 1962 until December 1965. The Second Vatican Council included an international gathering of senior members of the Roman Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council was a response to the ever-growing disenchantment of many Catholics concerning the views and position of the Catholic Church in a post-war and modern world. The Catholic Church was increasingly seen to be insular and out of touch with a rapidly changing world. The Second Vatican Council's outcome was a complete revolution of the liturgy, rites, and traditions of the Catholic Church.

One of the main changes implemented was an attempt to bring the liturgy and ceremonies closer to the congregation. These changes included delivering Mass in the vernacular language rather than in Latin so that the Catholic Church's teachings could be shared more broadly with the congregation rather than remaining within the clergy's exclusive purview. Traditionally, the priest said Mass with his back to the congregation. After the changes introduced by the Second Vatican Council, the priest faced the congregation. The altar and other liturgical furniture's positioning were also shifted to accommodate the liturgy's new philosophy of transparency and greater connection with the laity.

Several Catholic churches constructed in Brisbane in the 1960s and the 1970s integrated this new philosophy into their designs, including St Pius X in Salisbury. Their designs included an altar positioned in the centre of the church with the pews surrounding it. This was a move away from the traditional cruciform layout of a Catholic church. These changes encouraged a sense of involvement and connection from the congregation in the running of church services. Despite some modifications to St Pius X's interior, the Second Vatican Council's design principles remain evident in the church.³

Changes within the Catholic Church also coincided with the height of the Modernist movement in architecture. This saw the abandonment of traditional and long-enduring, highly ornamental, Gothic-style churches in favour of much simpler, minimalist designs. It also saw the introduction of new and innovative materials and construction methods. There were over 120 new churches constructed in the 1960s in Brisbane, including 35 built for the Catholic Church, several of these incorporated Modernist ecclesiastical architectural elements.⁴

² St Pius Church, Salisbury, Enrich Architecture Website: - <https://enricharchitecture.com/history/>.

³ Lisa Daunt, 'Brisbane Church Architecture of the 1960s: Creating Modern, Climatic and Regional Responses to Liturgical Change,' *Queensland Review* 23, no. 2 (2016), p.239.

⁴ Daunt, 'Brisbane Church Architecture,' p. 228, 238.



The Catholic Church commissioned the architecture practice of Frank L. Cullen, Fagg, Hargraves and Mooney to design several of their new post-war churches. Hargraves was Archbishop James Duhig's nephew. This connection proved fortunate for the practice as eventually designed around 20 out of the 35 new Catholic churches built in Brisbane in the 1960s.⁵ These included Our Lady of Dolours, Mitchelton (1964), Memorial Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Coorparoo (1965), and the former Holy Cross, Woolloowin (1968).

St Pius X at Salisbury was designed by Cecil Hargraves, a partner in Frank L. Cullen, Fagg, Hargraves and Mooney. When reflecting on his work in an interview in 2000, Hargraves stated that he regarded St Pius X Catholic Church as his 'most successful [of all his church designs] built response to the liturgical brief.'⁶ In addition to the changes resulting from the Second Vatican Council and the underpinning tenets of the Modernist movement, St Pius X also demonstrates how Hargraves incorporated considerations of the south-east Queensland climate into his design. This included maximising ventilation using large bays of louvre windows on either side of the church.

Hargraves was employed at the architectural practice of Frank L. Cullen and Partners in 1957. He became a partner three years later, and the practice was renamed Frank L. Cullen, Hargraves & Mooney. Hargraves was involved in many commercial and government buildings. However, his true passion was designing churches. He remained a partner in the various incarnations of the practice until 1997. Hargraves was a Director of Hargraves Briggs Jacuzzi until his retirement in 2004. Despite several changes in personnel, the practice still exists in 2021 as Enrich Architecture. Hargraves became a Life Fellow of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in 2016 and was commended as 'a man of great character, integrity and humility. His strong faith, sense of values and his architectural abilities are of the highest order.'⁷ He died in 2019, aged 88.

⁵ Daunt, 'Brisbane Church Architecture,' p. 238.

⁶ Daunt, 'Brisbane Church Architecture' p. 241.

⁷ Extract from Cecil Hargraves Australian Institute of Architect Life Fellowship Citation, 2016, Digital Archive of Queensland Architecture website, <https://qldarch.net/architect/summary?architectId=56>.



DESCRIPTION

St Pius X Catholic Church is located within the grounds of St Pius X Convent School and is a prominent landmark along Golda Avenue. The single-storey church, with its multiple skillion roofs, contrasting rectilinear and oblique geometry, limited material palette, and view screening is a striking example of post-war Modernist ecclesiastical architecture. Despite its setback from Golda Avenue, the church is highly visible from the streetscape.

General description

St Pius X Catholic Church is a single-storey building constructed of unpainted expressed masonry topped with soldier course brick details. It has multiple skillion roofs of Marseille tile and sheet metal.

St Pius' plan comprises three main elements: the porte-cochere, the church entry, and the church itself. The church and entry areas are splayed in plan, resulting in perimeter blade walls concealing extensive glazing and external courtyards on the building's east and west sides. In elevation, the combination of screen walls and different built forms creates a layered effect as the building height increases from the landscaped front setback to the roof ridgeline.

The porte-cochere consists of a rectilinear screen wall, a pair of angled blade walls incorporating a brick plinth, and a canopy. The screen wall extends parallel with the driveway and the blade walls perpendicularly. These distinct wall elements frame a large opening through which a soldier-course brick path connects the church's front door and the street. The separation between the blade walls frames a masonry planter.

Supported by the screen wall, the sheet metal fascia of the overhead canopy extends behind the dual blade walls, returning to the church entry's front elevation. This creates a covered pedestrian walkway and vehicle entry. The canopy's soffit, comprising darkly painted expressed beams and white painted recessed panels, accentuates the pedestrian link and the visual connection between the entry doors and the street. A bluestone foundation stone located at the base of the screen wall is inscribed in gold lettering:

This stone commemorates the blessing and opening of

St Pius X War Memorial Church

by

The Most Rev. P.M. O'Donnell, D.D.,

Archbishop of Brisbane.

23rd November 1969.

Rev. F. Costello, P.P.

The façade of the church entry comprises a painted, fibre-cement weatherboard wall bookended by angled brick screen walls. The screen walls are angled toward the ground and conceal internal courtyards behind, which serve to visually connect the church's interior to the external landscape. Most windows are concealed from view by a rectilinear screen wall, at the right of the front doors to the church, which is visually detached from the weatherboard section as it extends overhead, providing the illusion that the weatherboard wall is suspended between the angled walls at either end of the façade.

The brick screen wall incorporates three decorative masonry elements. Either side of the painted timber and glazed entry doors, louvred and fixed glazing, are purposefully positioned to admit

natural light and airflow to the church interior. Beyond the entry doors, a foyer leads through to the church proper. A floor-to-ceiling timber screen door and adjacent fixed glazing provide a visual and physical connection with the east courtyard. Behind the brick and weatherboard façade, the skillion roof of this part of the building extends to a central gully, from which the tiled roof of the church ascends to the apex of the gable ends.

The church presents as a large skillion roof-built form to the street. However, a secondary roof beyond the ridgeline descends to a series of low built forms and walled external spaces at the rear. No external glazing is visible from the street; however, the splayed external walls conceal large floor-to-ceiling glazing also at the rear. Glazing on the northern elevation is concentrated to the external courtyards beneath low eaves, thus concealing them from view.

Externally, the building remains unaltered and retains the integrity of its original design intent. Wall-mounted and free-standing signage represent later additions and are not part of the original building.

While the interior of St Pius Church has not been inspected, those parts of the original internal layout, materials, fixtures and finishes are considered significant.

St Pius' setback from Golda Street is of similar depth as adjacent residential properties and is landscaped. A bitumen driveway extends beneath the building's built form by way of a porte-cochere. A secondary bitumen driveway, providing access to St Pius X Catholic Primary School at the rear, loops around the building, creating a visual boundary between the church and its grounds.

A large, prominent, free-standing steel crucifix is located at the north-east corner of the building. It is highly visible within the streetscape and indicates the building's function.

An open landscape consisting of low-level garden beds and shrubbery surround the church allowing for unimpeded views to and from the building.

Unimpeded views to the place from Golda Street and between St Pius X Catholic Primary School at the rear of St Pius are significant.

Significant features

Features of cultural heritage significance include:

- Original built form and composition, including:
 - Multi-skillion and gable-built form
 - Marseille tile roof and concealed sheet metal roofs
 - Unpainted expressed brick wall surfaces and associated masonry decorative elements (e.g., masonry overflow details to screen wall of church entry, etc.)
 - East and west courtyards within building
 - Porte-cochere/walkway and all associated external claddings, soffit linings and finishes.
- Exterior design details, including:
 - Splayed and angled unpainted expressed brick walls
 - Deep window reveals
 - External courtyards

- Foundation stone
- Steel crucifix; and
- All original windows and doors and associated joinery and fittings.
- Interior design details, including:
 - Layout
 - Materials
 - Fixtures
 - Finishes
- Landscaping
 - Masonry planters and garden bed locations; and
 - Original hard and soft landscaping elements to east and west courtyards.
- Views and Vistas
 - Unimpeded views to and from the building across adjacent open grassed areas of neighbouring properties and from Golda Street.

Non-significant features

Non-significant features include:

- Non-fixed garden furniture where this exists
- External wall mounted and free-standing signage; and
- All non-original floor linings, fittings, and fixtures

CURTILAGE

The curtilage captures all significant or original elements of the place as described and consists part of Lot 1 RP123210.



Source: Brisbane City Plan Online Mapping

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STATEMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Criterion A Historical The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history.	N/A
Criterion B Rarity The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage.	N/A
Criterion C Scientific The place has the potential to provide information that will contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the city's or local area's history.	N/A
Criterion D Representative The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places.	St Pius X Catholic Church is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of mid-Century Modernist ecclesiastical architecture. Designed in response to the liturgical changes that emerged from the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, features of the church's design and layout promote greater involvement and connection of the congregation to the running of services. Key features include the positioning of the altar at the centre of the church and the layout of pews.
Criterion E Aesthetic The place is important because of its aesthetic significance	St Pius X Catholic Church is a striking, highly-intact example of mid-Century Modernist ecclesiastical architecture. The single-storey form and composition comprise three main elements: the porte-cochere, the church entry, and the church itself. The church design features contrasting rectilinear and oblique geometric forms, multiple sheet metal skillion roofs, and a limited material palette of dark-coloured expressed brick. At the front of the church, brick walls are carefully arranged to demarcate pedestrian and vehicle accessways and screen views into the church from the street. The building is set

	back from Golda Avenue, yet is highly visible from the street, due to the low grass and planting in the gardens.
Criterion F Technical The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technological achievement at a particular period.	N/A
Criterion G Social The place has a strong or special association with the life or work of a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.	N/A
Criterion H Historical Association The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organisation of importance in the city's or local area's history	St Pius X Catholic Church has a special association with the Brisbane-based architect Cecil Hargraves who was a partner in the architectural practice of Frank L. Cullen, Fagg, Hargraves & Mooney. The practice is noted for its work with the Catholic Church in the 1960s when it designed the majority of 35 new Catholic churches in this period.

REFERENCES

Secondary sources

Books

Anon, *A Closer Look at Salisbury and Nathan Heights* (Brisbane, QLD: Coopers Plains Local History Group, 2000).

Articles and chapters

Daunt, Lisa, 'Brisbane Church Architecture of the 1960s: Creating Modern, Climatic and Regional Responses to Liturgical Change,' *Queensland Review* 23, no. 2 (2016).