

Heritage Referral DA 2020-020

St. Mary's Catholic College Proposed educational building.



May 2020

Prepared by
Clarence Heritage
for Richmond Valley Council

1. Background

A pre DA meeting was held in May 2019 with the applicant and architect to discuss replacement of three 1967 classroom buildings and associated structures with a new building. The existing buildings partially fall within the mapped lot curtilage of St Mary's Church and Presbytery, however they are not considered to be contributory to the setting and the proposed demolition was not raised as an issue of concern.

The main issue identified was the potential impact of any new building on the setting of St Mary's Church and the adjoining Presbytery. The other connected heritage item is the former Convent building which is visually separated from this site by a new building, but forms part of the Catholic educational and ecclesiastical precinct.



2. Heritage Status

The Church and Presbytery are listed as items of environmental heritage in the Richmond Valley LEP 2012. These buildings have a strong relationship and are set close to the Canterbury St frontage and are imposing landmark buildings.

The history and assessed heritage significance of the buildings is outlined in the State Heritage Inventory Database; Items SHI2850069 (Church) and SHI 2850305 (Presbytery).

The Church built in 1940 is assessed for its historical, social and aesthetic significance.

This building has landmark qualities because of its massive style, fine face brickwork, dominant tower and location adjacent to the main road into Casino. Architecturally it is representative of the inter-war Romanesque style which had a strong emphasis “on the wall as a load bearing envelope”. The church is historically significant for its association with the Catholic faith in Casino and district. The building, and associated school complex, is socially significant to the Catholic and wider Casino community.

The Presbytery (1906) is assessed for its historical, aesthetic and rarity significance.

St Mary's Presbytery is historically significant for its association with the growth of the Catholic church in Casino at the turn of the century. The size and architectural quality of this building bears witness to both a strong Catholic community and the increasing importance of the town. It is a rare example of an early two storey brick residential building.

The DA proposal must address heritage provisions in Richmond Valley Local Environmental Plan 2012 Cl 5.10 and DCP 2015, in particular the heritage chapter, and the ICOMOS Burra Charter, under which a precautionary approach is recommended to maintain the significance and setting of heritage items. These provisions have been fully addressed through the submitted SEE and SOHI.

3. Observations

St Marys church and its prominent steeple is a significant landmark building in Casino, which is prominent from many views and vistas as far back as entering the town on the approach over the Richmond River. Here, viewed from intersection of Centre Street and Simpson Parade it is an imposing landmark.



View from south east corner of intersection of Centre Street and Canterbury Street showing the visual relationship between the Presbytery and church building on the corner.



A mature Poinciana tree sits on the road reserve outside the church and a small tree is situated further back on the site. There is a general open grassed area separating the two heritage items.

A small element of the existing two storey brick classroom is visible to the rear of the space.

The new building will have some impact upon this view.



Eastern side of Church facing Centre Street.



Rear of Church facing the southern side of the car park and entry area of proposed new building



Western side of St Mary's Church and grassed landscaped area and single Cypress tree.



View from Centre Street of site where the main façade will have prominence.



Westernmost brick two storey building proposed for demolition.



Westernmost two storey brick classroom and grassed space to rear of church, viewed from south.



Courtyard area of space surrounding existing brick classrooms.



4. Review of Proposal

A Statement of Heritage Impact dated March 2020 has been prepared to accompany the application by Everick Heritage which provides historical context and a detailed assessment of the proposal. This report acknowledges that the proposed development will introduce a contemporary building of considerable scale with a skillion roof form, large areas of glazing and modern materials into the setting of the two existing heritage items.

This could potentially raise conflicts with the setting and context of existing built form, however it is mitigated by the fact that the proposed building is located in the centre of the site, set back from the major road frontages, and does not intrude on the immediate spatial setting between the two items. Roof heights have been kept below that of the church and the raised element adds interest to the elevation.

The contrasting form of the new building will be visible from Canterbury Street through the space between the two heritage items, and it is considered that addition of landscaping would

filter and soften the impact of the façade whilst still retaining an open spatial setting around the two heritage items.

The material palette is also important to provide a successful infill. Red brick elements are included to pay reference to the existing buildings in combination with a lighter and lightweight palette which references the small rendered areas and cream interior of the church.

The proposed façade to Centre Street, provides an attractive entry to the building and I support the request for a height variation for the proposed design which creates interest to the elevation and a more appealing façade.

5. Summary

I concur that the proposed development is not likely to affect the significance or setting of the two heritage items, and endorse the proposed conservation policies outlined in the SOHI, on page 35;

Avoid any works in immediate vicinity of the heritage items

Long term management to ensure that the curtilage of the St Marys Church and the Presbytery are conserved free of any additional buildings, structures, fences or fixtures, seating and thoroughfares. Provision of sympathetic landscaping appropriate to the setting of the heritage items, including some plantings to soften the impact of the new building to the rear of the heritage items.

Removal of non-contributory infill buildings in future stages.

Ongoing management of pedestrian flows to ensure that the grounds surrounding the church and Presbytery do not become main thoroughfares or used as overflow seating areas.

Condition

1. A final schedule and samples of external finishes and colours sympathetic to the setting of the adjacent heritage items, and in accordance with the provisions of Richmond Valley LEP 2012 and DCP 2015, are to be submitted to, and approved by Council, prior to approval of the Construction Certificate

2. A landscaping plan is submitted which defines the curtilage and pathways around St Marys Church and Presbytery and appropriate plantings within the setting of the heritage items which will filter and soften the impact of the new building to the rear of the heritage items.

Advice

1. A Conservation Management Plan and Building Maintenance Plan are appropriate for these significant buildings and can be prepared as resources permit. Further advice is available through the heritage advisory service.

7. References

1. *Australia ICOMOS The Burra Charter - Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance 2013*
2. Richmond Valley Local Environmental Plan 2012
3. Richmond Valley Development Control Plan 2015
4. <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=2850069>

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