

Heritage



Addison House No. 1

Key details

Addresses	At 233 Taringa Parade, Taringa, Queensland 4068
Type of place	House
Period	Late 20th Century 1960-1999
Style	Queenslander
Lot plan	L2_RP126096
Key dates	Date of Citation — June 2025
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (F) Technical; (H) Historical association

Designed and built as the family home of noted Brisbane-based architect Rex Addison, Addison House No. 1 (1974-1975) is an early seminal example of a late-20th Century subtropical Queenslander. The house is influenced by late-20th Century design ideas later associated with Critical Regionalism that informed various approaches to architecture and was an architectural movement characterised by a reaction against the formality, uniformity, and impersonality of the dominant International and Modernist styles. Having formed the basis of much of his later work, and widely acknowledged by Addison's peers as influential, the house demonstrates the design changes that occurred in Brisbane's domestic architecture in the late-20th Century.

History

A history of Taringa

Taringa is a residential suburb located around five kilometres from central Brisbane. Development of the area began in the 1860s when Taringa was a large landholding owned by a 'settler named McGrath.' Other land in the area was initially owned by notable pioneers such as Thomas Lodge Murray Prior, James Henderson, Richard Gailey, and Robert Cribb.

The construction of the railway line linking Brisbane and Ipswich stimulated the development of Taringa. Work on the railway started in 1873, with the Railway Commissioner acquiring parts of Louis Stamp's property at Indooroopilly. Taringa railway station was initially closer to the Indooroopilly railway station and opened in 1875. Early rail services to Ipswich included a ferry ride across the river until the first railway bridge was completed in 1876. Until the train station opened, the area now known as Taringa was referred to as West Milton.

As a result of the railway's coming, increased development around Taringa railway station occurred. New houses, shops and facilities appeared as the area was subdivided and settled. The efficient public transport into the city meant that many businesspeople and professionals began to call Taringa home, and throughout the district, large, architect-designed homes were built. Early residents of note included Thomas Morrow, who established the Morrows Biscuit Factory and George Marchant, a temperance champion and philanthropist. At the end of the 1870s, with the passing of the Divisional Board Act in 1879, Taringa formed part of the Toowong Division. Divisional Boards were established to provide local government for portions of Queensland that lay outside the boundaries of municipalities, such as Brisbane.

Further development continued in the 1880s. In 1880, Taringa became part of the Indooroopilly Division when the latter split from the Toowong Division. In 1884, the South Toowong Estate was created with 173 new subdivisions in Taringa. The South Toowong Estate was marketed at the wealthy and professional. One of the main selling points for the estate was the proximity to the railway station, which ensured ease of transport into and out of the city centre. This appealed to professionals that worked in Brisbane. Other key developments in the City View Estate in 1888.

In 1890, the Indooroopilly Division was split in two with the creation of the Taringa Division, which in 1903 became the Shire of Taringa. In 1900, Taringa State School opened. By 1911, Taringa's population stood at 1,774, and by 1921, it was 2,231. In 1925, the Shire of Taringa amalgamated with 19 other local government authorities to form part of the newly created Greater Brisbane City Council. By the 1930s, Taringa was recognised as one of Brisbane's more desirable suburbs. In 1931, *The Brisbane Courier* described the area, alongside surrounding suburbs, such as Indooroopilly, as 'a sylvan gem of Brisbane [that] has lost none of its charm by the advance of settlement. Certainly the bush has undergone a thinning out to make way for suburban cottages and semi-rural mansions and villas.'

After the Second World War, Taringa continued to develop as a residential suburb, and by 1991 its population stood at 5,764. The opening of an extension of the Western Freeway in 1979 from Taringa Parade to Mt Coot-tha Road helped relieve congestion through Taringa. This was later extended further to connect with the Centenary Motorway.

The modern suburb of Taringa was initially named and bounded in 1975. Subsequently, Taringa's boundaries were modified in 2009 and in 2018.

From the vernacular Queensland to Critical Regionalism

While now widely recognised as ‘valued character housing’ and an inherent part of Queensland’s cultural identity, the traditional vernacular Queenslander style bungalow originally emerged in the late-19th Century and evolved during the early 20th Century to take account of changing requirements. A range of styles of Queenslanders emerged during this period though they all shared ‘common characteristics’ such as being high-set, ‘lightly framed’ houses typically of timber construction. Other common characteristics included ‘tin’ roofs and verandahs. Several of these common characteristics emerged in response to Queensland’s environmental context. For example, the high-set character of many Queenslanders was a response to the State’s climate and the need to ‘fever-proof’ houses and place them ‘beyond the reach of disease-inducing miasmas.’

After the Second World War, however, with improvements in construction materials and changing tastes and styles, the traditional Queenslander became increasingly unpopular as a form of housing. As well as changes in tastes and styles, Queenslanders were also criticised for being unsuitable due to their physical and mental effect on their occupiers due to the impact of climate. For example, an unpublished 1943 ‘Report on Tropical Housing’ by the Queensland Government influenced a widely read 1944 article by Professor Douglas H.K. Lee, the Chair of Physiology at The University of Queensland, on the ‘Physiological Principles for Tropical Housing with Especial Reference to Queensland.’ In particular, Lee, who had worked on the 1943 report, argued in his 1944 article that fatigue was a significant issue of concern. Lee’s article drew on research by Sir Raphael Cilento, who, in 1925, had argued that climate was a significant concern for those living in tropical and sub-tropical climates. As Queensland Government’s Director-General of Health, Cilento also worked on the 1943 report.

Noted Austrian born architect Karl Langer, who moved to Brisbane in 1939, made similar arguments in his seminal 1944 book, *Subtropical Housing*, drawing on Lee and Cilento’s ideas. Langer’s book marked an essential step towards the popularisation of mid-century Modernism in Queensland. Langer’s designs, which influenced a generation of Queensland architects, rejected the traditional Queenslander’s ‘reliance on the veranda’ and likened that house style to a cave. Instead, Langer advocated a climate-based response to design based on the ‘employment of the modern architectural idiom,’ especially the increased use of glass, new construction techniques, and open plan living based on scientifically derived methods.

While International and mid-century Modernist designs in Australia, such as Langer’s, were an attempt to respond scientifically to Queensland’s subtropical climate, by the 1960s, some architects became critical of their formality, uniformity, and impersonality, and began to experiment with other styles. These architects sought to develop architectural styles that expressed ‘regional’ influences. New schools of theory and design emerged in response, including, for example, the ‘Sydney School,’ an informal collective of Sydney based architects who were influenced by the qualities of the building site, preferring sloping, rocky, well-treed sites with distant views of natural features.

Many of these architects experimented with what became known in the 1980s as Critical Regionalism, an idea initially espoused by Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis in 1981. Critical Regionalism as an approach to architecture has been defined as the critical use of regional design elements to confront the ‘universal order’ of Modernist architecture. However, the idea of Critical Regionalism remains more of an idiom rather than a distinct movement though it has influenced several approaches to architecture globally. For example, in 1983, Kenneth Frampton, who is most closely identified with the idea, admitted that in codifying Critical Regionalism further, he identified ‘those recent regional “schools” whose aim has been to represent and serve, in a critical sense, the limited constituencies in which they are grounded.’ For Frampton, the idea of Critical Regionalism was influenced by an ‘anti-centrist sentiment’ against dominant cultural, economic and political ideas that sought independence to realise a strong regional identity. Architecturally, this was underpinned by recognising the importance of local light conditions, topography, regional climate, and tectonics, or the way the place was built, in the design of buildings. However, Frampton also argued that it was essential to differentiate between Critical Regionalism and

examples of popular regionalism, where the latter sought to reproduce the forms used in the past. Conversely, Critical Regionalism is often about the idea of *place* rather than *space* and the production of ‘felt familiarity’ rather than a simple reproduction of the past.

In Queensland, as well as being a critique of Modernism, Critical Regionalism was an outgrowth of a counterculture that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. This anti-centrist counterculture was a reaction to the conservative political ideology of the time both within the architecture profession and within Queensland’s political sphere more broadly. Architecturally, the idea of Critical Regionalism in Queensland has often been associated with those who sought to redefine the traditional Queenslander house. However, in redefining the form of the Queenslander, these architects sought not to reproduce these older dwellings but to create a sense of ‘felt familiarity’ through the forms and elements used in the design of these buildings, creating a sense of regional identity. Architects identified with the idea of Critical Regionalism in Queensland include Gabriel Poole, Russell Hall, Rex Addison, Graham Davis and Helen Josephson, Brit Andresen and Peter O’Gorman, and Lindsay and Kerry Clare.

Rex Addison and the design and construction of Addison House No. 1

Born in 1947, Addison was raised in Brisbane and studied architecture at The University of Queensland between 1965 and 1970. Addison attended The University of Queensland during a period of change in the course structure. The Bachelor of Architecture degree originally consisted of three full-time years and three part-time years, during which time students undertook professional practice placement. By the 1960s, while the total length of the course remained six years, the degree became a five-year course with a year out after year three to undertake professional practice. Those who taught Addison at the University of Queensland included William Hamilton Carr, Ian Sinnamon, Pat Moroney, Hamish Murison, and Robert Cummings. However, Sinnamon, an advocate for the conservation of the built environment and an architectural historian, had the most influence on Addison. While at the University of Queensland, Addison worked for noted Brisbane architect James Birrell.

After graduating, Addison travelled by car to the United Kingdom. Flying to Singapore, Addison, his wife Susan, Donald Watson, and Sinnamon bought a ‘Kombi Van’ to drive to the United Kingdom. While in London, Addison attended the Architectural Association School of Architecture, where he gained a postgraduate diploma. The Architectural Association School of Architecture, the oldest independent architectural school in the United Kingdom, is a highly prestigious institution. However, Addison himself recalled that his attendance was more of an accident of circumstance and that he would have preferred to attend an American architecture school for his postgraduate studies.

On his return to Australia, Addison worked for Goodsir Baker Wilde. In 1973, Addison and Susan purchased lot 2 of RP126096 in Taringa and mortgaged the site in 1975. It was on this site that Addison designed and built Addison House No. 1. In designing the house, Addison sought to redefine the traditional Queenslander using ‘complex plans which generate unusual spaces and geometrically diverse roof forms.’ While admitting that Frank Lloyd Wright had influenced him while at university, in designing Addison House No. 1, Addison was influenced by the work of Robert Venturi and his unbuilt 1959 beach house.

While Addison House No. 1 predates the codification of the idea of Critical Regionalism by Frampton, the house is often identified as an early example of the approach in Queensland. Other descriptions applied to the house have included it being a contemporary Southeast Queensland style house or even as ‘anti-modern.’ Moreover, Addison’s later residential work has been categorised as ‘post modern timber and tin designs.’ Despite varying descriptions, Addison House No. 1 is a late-20th Century subtropical Queenslander influenced by the ideas of what became known as Critical Regionalism. This fits with Addison’s architectural philosophy where, in 1995, he wrote that:

I prefer building with the 'grain', with a legible fabric that adds to the narrative of the building. Its parts are seen, as well as the whole, and the way the parts fit together is part of the story. The intention, ultimately, is to create a building that is an understandable entity, not one that stands off occupying the ground of architectural inaccessibility.

Addison House No. 1 was designed and built in two stages. In designing the house, Addison created a sense of felt familiarity for the traditional Queenslander by amplifying, upscaling, and recycling features of that vernacular design for different uses. The first stage of the house began in 1975 when Addison constructed an open plan, high-set timber-framed dwelling with a mezzanine. Sitting on a platform, the house's main focus was its roof design, a half pyramid-shaped structure that created an 'internal space' that filled the building. For Addison, the roof was important because it allowed him to 'respond to the forces of a difficult site.' By cutting the house into sections, Addison brought the dark centre of a traditional Queenslander to the edge to bring light into the building. The house also responded to light and climate through its aspect, facing Taringa Parade to the southwest. Openings on this aspect of the house were purposely large to respond to Queensland climate and to allow in light and create cross ventilation through the dwelling. The house also used shade over the garden deck to provide the sense of living in a treehouse. This shade was provided by plants such as banana plants and a Chinese Elm.

After working in Papua New Guinea (1978-1982), where he worked on numerous commercial, government and residential projects, Addison returned to Brisbane. Between 1982 and 1983, Addison designed and built the second stage of the house, an extension to Addison House No. 1 that sought to provide separate bedrooms for their children. In designing this extension to Addison House No. 1, which included a further reinterpretation of a traditional Queenslander roof with simply shaped barge board, decorative battening, and a truncated hip roof, Addison sought to tell a 'story of two buildings stages combin[ed] to make one place.' This was achieved by a 'link roof' that 'weld[ed] the two' buildings. The continued use of weatherboards was also used to bring both buildings together. During stage two, a greater use of colour was used with the stump base painted black and red oxide for boards. Green was used on the slats. Addison reasoned that the green was used 'in the older house vocabulary for things associated with the garden and water.' As a result, the design of the building was 'more whimsical than the original.' At this time, Addison added a battened screen to the street elevation of the first stage of Addison House No. 1 to increase privacy.

Addison House No. 1 has been widely recognised for its significance and influence as a seminal design both by Addison himself and his peers, even though it has never received any awards. Since its construction, the house has appeared in numerous publications, highlighting its significance. Significantly, Addison House No. 1 was featured in a 1984 edition of the International Union of Architects (UIA) *International Architect* journal entitled 'Detailing, National Identity, and a sense of Place in Australian Architecture.' This edition was published just after the 1984 Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) Conference that was held in Brisbane and to which Addison himself contributed. Edited by Haig Beck, then editor of *International Architect*, 'Detailing, National Identity, and a sense of Place in Australian Architecture' sought to illustrate the status of Queensland architecture in the mid-1980s. The inclusion of Addison House No. 1 marked a critical 'development in generalist historical accounts of Australian architecture.'

As well as being significant as an early example in Brisbane of a redefined Queenslander, the design of the house influenced Addison's later designs. Writing in 1990, Addison recalled how the design of his first home laid the foundation for many of his subsequent designs:

I tried to establish a vocabulary which I have subsequently extended on many of my domestic projects.

Moreover, Addison House No. 1 influenced Addison House No. 2, designed and built in the late 1990s and awarded the Robin Dods Award by the Queensland Chapter of the RAIA in 2000. Addison House No. 2 has been described as a 'mature distillation of years of study, practice and reflection' dating to Addison House No. 1. Similarly, in 2010, Addison House No. 1 was highlighted by the Australian Institute of Architects as a nationally significant example of 20th Century architecture because:

It pioneered a movement inspired by the 19th century Queensland house geometry re-interpreted by other architects including O'Gorman and Andresen, Russell Hall and Donald Watson and one redefined in Addison's later work in Brisbane and Papua New Guinea.

Finally, in 2015, Addison House No. 1 was included in *Hot Modernism*, an edited publication that was one outcome of an Australian Research Council Linkage project on 'Architectural Practice in Postwar Queensland (1945-1975): Building and Interpreting an Oral History Archive.' The University of Queensland ran this project between 2011 and 2014. In *Hot Modernism*, Addison House No. 1 was described as a 'watershed moment' for those 'impatient with the hubris of International Modernism.'

Since the mid-1980s, Addison has continued to work on various residential, commercial and government projects both in Brisbane and notably in Canberra. These projects have continued to build on the ideas present in Addison House No. 1. Notable examples of Addison's work have included the Burrundulla Gardens in Canberra (1987), the Bingham-Hall House in Balmain, Sydney (2002), and *Homegame* in Brookfield, Brisbane (2004).

Description

Addison House No. 1 is a late-20th Century house located at 233 Taringa Parade, Taringa, positioned on a steeply sloping, heavily vegetated suburban block. As a modern interpretation of a traditional vernacular Queensland, the house is constructed of timber and galvanised iron, with a form responding to the unique topography of the site and Brisbane's climate. The topography of the locality and the site and mature vegetation partially obscure views to the house.

General description

Addison House No.1 is an example of late-20th Century domestic architecture that re-established and interpreted the more climatically responsive design elements of the traditional Queenslander. As a result, the house displays elements that reference traditional Queenslander materials, responsiveness to the site, and dominant roof form. This approach is reflected in the considered use of materials, such as raw or oxide coloured timber and galvanised iron.

Built over two stages, Addison House No. 1 includes the original open-plan, high-set timber-framed dwelling with a mezzanine (1975). The 1982 and 1983 additions include a new level under the main house. A hallway on the ground floor connects the main house to the bungalow-style addition.

The main house has a dominant, traditional roof, though cut through to create gables and folded configurations, with a high set pyramid form cut in half to form a large gable to the street front. A timber-framed bridge, with diagonal bracing off extended joists, forms the pedestrian entry into the house over a retaining wall that provides a perched grassed courtyard. The roof, rainwater goods and externally projecting curved recesses are unpainted galvanised iron. By contrast, the roof of the bungalow addition is an interpretation of the Queenslander bungalow roof with simply shaped bargeboards, decorative battening, and a truncated hip roof.

The structures are hardwood framed and weatherboard-clad, with cross-braced timber framing, square timber posts and beams, and large openings allowing cross-ventilation. The bungalow addition has a weatherboard base to mid-wall height, with painted, bagged stucco on fibre-cement sheet cladding above.

Timber framed glazed doors and windows of various forms are used throughout the house, including solid timber batten doors with diagonal bracing and tongue-and-groove sheathing (some with glass inserts), timber-framed hopper and casement windows with glazed panels, and timber shutters.

The setting includes informal subtropical plantings, including large native trees along the perimeter, monstera vines, ferns and groundcovers. A roofed dining area is provided at an intermediate level between the main house and the later extension, with paved and deck areas below. Open grassy courtyard areas are at the front entry-level and the rear of the site beyond structures. An unsealed and retained area at footpath level is provided for car accommodation. Semi-formal plantings along the entry steps lead to the entry bridge and grassy courtyard in front of the house.

Significant features

Features of cultural heritage significance include:

- Views to and from the house
- The original location, set back and orientation of the house, including the 1982-83 extensions
- The original landscape setting, including original plantings and pedestrian paths
- Relationship of the building, including roof and floor levels, with the topography
- Entry bridge to the front door and associated retaining wall
- Weatherboard external wall cladding
- Galvanised iron external cladding and recesses
- Rendered/bagged fibre-cement cladding to 1983 additions
- Roof form and scale of the original house and bungalow additions
- Corrugated metal roof sheeting and metal roof water goods and rainwater goods
- Original galvanised stove pipes and hoods
- Location, size, materials and arrangement of original door and window openings
- Timber battened awnings, screens, and fascia to all elevations, including the rear deck, and c. 1983 battened screening to front elevation and bungalow addition
- Curved glass window seat with galvanised iron external cladding and side batten doors
- Original plantings and trees on the site

Non-significant features

Non-significant features include:

- Rear outdoor pergola, associated retaining wall and paved area
- Off-street informal parking area and associated formalised garden

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

Designed and built in the mid-1970s, Addison House No. 1, a seminal example of a late-20th Century subtropical Queenslander associated with the ideas that became known as Critical Regionalism, is important in demonstrating changes in domestic architecture in Brisbane in the late-20th Century. This period saw significant changes in residential architectural styles in Brisbane as architects reacted against the formality, uniformity, and impersonality of the dominant International and Modernist styles that had become popular in the mid-20th Century.

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

As an early seminal example of late-20th Century subtropical Queenslander, Addison House No. 1 demonstrates the principal design ideas, features, construction techniques and materials associated with Rex Addison's work as he sought to redefine the traditional Queenslander. As expressed in the citation's description, Addison House No. 1's architectural elements include the use of a dominant redefined bungalow roof form to draw the dark centre of a traditional Queenslander to the building's edge by drawing in light, the relationship between the topography of the site and the house, and the use of colour to define distinct parts of Addison House No. 1.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

As an excellent example of a late-20th Century subtropical Queenslander designed to respond to Queensland's climate, Addison House No. 1 has aesthetic importance for its architectural qualities. In contrast to the more traditional mid-20th Century designed houses surrounding it, Addison House No. 1, set within a purpose-designed garden setting that provides shade to the house, is characterised by the arrangement of key elements associated with the redefined late-20th Century subtropical Queenslander, including its dominant roof form, its relationship with light, and the house's connection to the surrounding topography. As expressed in the citation's description, notable design details include the use of glazing and openings to provide views through the house and the use of traditional construction materials, such as weatherboard cladding.

Technical

CRITERION F

The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technological achievement at a particular period

In its form, materials, and details, Addison House No. 1 demonstrates a high degree of architectural innovation as an early seminal example of a late-20th Century subtropical Queenslander in Brisbane associated with the ideas that became known as Critical Regionalism. The house is significant for its aesthetic importance, recognised high level of craft and creative detail, and the use of a redefined roof designed to draw light into the house. As expressed in the citation's history, Addison's peers have acknowledged the house as influential for its creative and technical achievements through extensive professional and academic publications coverage. It is also widely recognised that Addison House No. 1 provided much of the foundation for Addison's later residential work.

Historical association

CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

Addison House No. 1 has a special association with noted Brisbane-based architect Rex Addison as his first residential design and as one that laid the foundation for much of his later works. Commencing private practice in 1978 in Papua New Guinea, Addison is recognised as being one of Brisbane's most innovative architects of the late 20th and early 21st Centuries. A proponent of late-20th Century subtropical Queenslanders, Addison has been widely recognised for his contribution to the architectural profession, including being awarded the Robin Dods Award by the Queensland Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in 2000.

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Note: This information has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes

available. The purpose of this information is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised September 2025)



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