

## Heritage Citation



### Greenslopes Private Hospital

#### Key details

<b>Also known as</b>	112th Australian General Hospital, Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital
<b>Addresses</b>	At 83 Nicholson Street, Greenslopes, Queensland 4120
<b>Type of place</b>	Hospital
<b>Period</b>	World War II 1939-1945
<b>Style</b>	International, Functionalist
<b>Lot plan</b>	L1_SP291095
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2003 Date of Citation — November 2001

**People/associations** Stephenson and Turner (Architect);  
Thomas Ramsay Hall and L. B. Phillips (Architect)

**Criterion for listing** (A) Historical; (A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social; (H) Historical association

Greenslopes Private Hospital opened in 1942 as the 112th Australian General Hospital, Queensland's major military hospital during World War II. It still retains several structures that date from the original complex including the main administration block, a chapel, boiler-house, laundry, bus shelter, and two pavilion hospital wards. A number of other buildings have since been demolished. The original complex was designed by Melbourne and Sydney architects, Stephenson and Turner, in association with Brisbane architectural firm, T.R. Hall and L.B. Phillips. In 1947, the complex was renamed the Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital, which provided dedicated care to World War I and II veterans. In 1995, the building was sold and renamed the Greenslopes Private Hospital.

## History

The Greenslopes Private Hospital was built in 1941-42 as the major military hospital in Brisbane during World War II. From 1947, its role was that of a repatriation hospital which catered to the medical needs of Queensland's returned service personnel.

In 1940, the Commonwealth Government decided to establish a major military hospital in Brisbane. This was part of the Government's plan to construct base hospitals in each state to care for the expected wartime casualties. Although small military field hospitals already existed in Brisbane, for example, at Redbank and Enoggera, a large permanent hospital was required to meet the demand for medical care of the many Australian soldiers returning from the battlefields of World War II. Several temporary camp hospitals were also established across Brisbane to cater to the medical needs of troops undergoing training, for example, the 2/1st Australian General Hospital at Chermiside. Rosemount Repatriation Hospital at Windsor (established as a military hospital in World War I) was also still in use. There was also an awareness of the lessons learnt after World War I of the need to provide for postwar rehabilitation and repatriation. The majority of the new hospital buildings at Greenslopes were to be designed and built as permanent structures.

A site of some 19 acres, bordered by Newdegate, Peach, Nicholson and Peach Streets at Greenslopes was selected as the site for the new military hospital. One advantage of the site was the existing sewerage facilities. It was also part of over 48 acres of land purchased by the War Service Homes Commissioner in 1920. Some of this land was sold under the War Service Homes scheme which assisted returned servicemen to build their own homes. The Government called for tenders for excavation of the proposed hospital site in April 1941. Excavations began on 24 May 1941.

It was planned to initially construct a 200 bed hospital for £250,000 which could be extended to contain 800 patients. Pavilion ward blocks and a boiler house (on the corner of Nicholson and Peach Streets) were to be constructed first, followed by quarters for army nurses and medical personnel, a guard house and an administration block. Stephenson and Turner of Melbourne and Sydney were appointed as architects, in association with Brisbane architects, T.R. Hall and L.B. Phillips who supervised the project. Stephenson and

Turner had recently designed the King George V Hospital in Camperdown, NSW (1938-41) - an prize-winning design in the Inter-War Functionalist style. They have been acknowledged as being among the key practitioners of this style and influential in the introduction to Australia of modern hospital design.

T.R. Hall and L.B. Phillips formed their partnership in 1929. Hall had previously been in partnership with G.G. Prentice for 10 years. Hall and Prentice are perhaps best known for designing the Brisbane City Hall in 1920 (opened 1930). They also designed a substantial number of buildings for the Catholic Church in Brisbane, including Our Lady of Victories at Bowen Hills. T.R. Hall's experience in hospital design included a new children's wing at the Mater Hospital in 1931. Lionel Blythewood Phillips served in World War I and studied drawing in London before training as an architect in Sydney. He was employed by Hall and Prentice from 1924, before forming his partnership with Hall. Their professional association lasted until Hall's retirement in 1948.

It was envisaged that the hospital would be completed by August 1942 and would have as its centre an administrative block of four stories with the "most modern equipment in every section".<sup>1</sup> The central building was designed in a modern Interwar Functionalist style influenced by the new International movement. The sleek lines and simple geometric forms of the Post War International Style were well suited to the needs and philosophy of a new state of the art medical facility. According to an article in the Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland, each bed would have its own radio point, light over the bed and bedside table. The engineers for the hospital complex were Gordon Gutteridge, Haskins and Davey of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

By July 1941, work had begun on the site and a tender been accepted for the construction of three ward blocks from Messrs. F. and H. Heaven for £38 600. The contract for a boiler house was won by W. Greene for £7 597. With the exception of the three ward blocks which were constructed of timber, all other buildings were of concrete and brick. The three pavilion wards were arranged end to end at an angle behind the administration block.

The traditional pavilion design of hospital wards dated from the 19th century when the "miasmatic" theory of disease argued that disease was spread by noxious vapours. These long, narrow wards allowed a row of beds along each ward so that all patients were near a window. In the twentieth century, "germ" theory came to the fore, and wards became more integrated. However, the traditional pavilion ward continued to be used. Two of these wards have survived to the present. The ward closest to Newdegate Street is now the Florence Syer Unit. The Florence Syer Unit, a facility for patients awaiting placement in nursing homes, was named several years ago after Mrs Flo Syer, a former AANS nursing sister who survived several years captivity in a Japanese Prisoner of War camp. Both of the surviving original wards have been subject to alterations, however the layout of a long, narrow ward flanked by open verandahs is still discernible and some of the triple hung windows have survived.

While the hospital was under construction, the 112th Australian General Hospital unit was assembled and began working elsewhere – initially in the Exhibition Grounds and then at Yungaba, Kangaroo Point. On the 3 February 1942, the Courier Mail reported that the first 40 patients, accompanied by staff, had arrived at the new Greenslopes Military Hospital. They were followed immediately by another 60 or so patients. The newspaper article described the new wards as "modern" and "hygienic":

In a survey of the first ward to be opened, with its cream-painted walls and beds, stained woodwork, pale green ceilings and floor coverings, the occupants agreed with one of their number that "Home was never like this". Tiled bathrooms with shower cabinets and a well-equipped kitchen and service hatch with a refrigerator and heated food trolleys are among

features that make for the comfort of patients”.<sup>2</sup>

Construction of the hospital complex continued during 1942. In February, Hall and Phillips called for tenders for the construction of an additional three temporary pavilion wards. The tender of Suburban Constructions was accepted in April.

The new hospital was staffed by the Australian Army Medical Corps (AAMC), the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) and Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs), who were volunteers trained by the Red Cross in assisting with nursing and domestic duties. The VADs later became the Australian Army Medical Women's Service and after 1942, were trained at the newly established 2 Women's Hospital at Yeronga. Several hundred VADs were stationed at Greenslopes during World War II. Vera Bradshaw, a former AANS nursing sister recalls conditions at the new military hospital at Greenslopes:

For the first few months, conditions were fairly rough. All the staff including the sisters, were housed in sheds or pavilions and I recall that our chapel was a tent. But before long, more comfortable quarters were built for the doctors and sisters and we had, if not all the comforts of home, then at least some of them.<sup>3</sup>

With the entry of Japan and the United States into the war after the bombing of Pearl Harbour in December 1941, the need for adequate medical facilities became even more pressing. By early 1942, base hospitals had been constructed in the capital cities of Australia and large 600 bed field hospitals were also being established. In April, the Army Minister, Mr Forde, announced that the Australian Army had given an undertaking to provide medical care for American wounded for three months. Allied soldiers from the northern theatres of war, including Americans from the Philippines and Australians from the Middle East, Java and Darwin, were being treated in Australian Military Hospitals.

In addition to the 2nd AIF, patients at the 112th AGH, Greenslopes, included men from the Australian Voluntary Defence Corps, Air Force and Merchant Service. Some Indonesian merchant sailors were treated there after the Battle of the Coral Sea. Large numbers of American military personnel were also cared for at Greenslopes, accompanied by their own medical staff. The 112th AGH at Greenslopes became the largest military hospital in Queensland during World War II. By November 1945, it had 1 120 patients and 900 staff. The services of the hospital were complemented by the establishment of a Red Cross Centre across Newdegate Street circa 1945 whose volunteers provided recreational facilities such as concerts, films and a library for the patients and their visitors. Today, the Red Cross Centre continues to provide valuable services to the hospital patients, their families and the community.

Another large hospital for American and Australian troops was established at Logan Road, Holland Park, on the Glindemann family's. Known as the Holland Park Military hospital, this temporary facility provided 1 000 beds and catered for surgical, medical and mentally disturbed patients.

An important event in the wartime history of the military hospital at Greenslopes occurred after the sinking of the Australian hospital ship, the Centaur, in May 1943. Extra staff were called on duty and mobile patients moved to canvas chairs in preparation for the long line of ambulances which ferried the survivors of the disaster to Greenslopes. These patients included many with severe burns and Sister Nell Savage, the sole surviving army nurse. The immediate post-war period was an extremely busy time for the 112th AGH as large numbers of returning POWs required urgent medical care. Greenslopes also provided medical examinations for the thousands of returning service personnel.

An aerial photograph taken in 1946 shows a large hospital complex taking up most of the present site. A large number of pavilion type wards are visible. These have since been demolished with the exception of two of the original timber wards. The original brick 'L' shaped nurses' quarters faced a similar building built as the quarters for medical personnel. The medical quarters have since been demolished. The nurses' quarters were demolished in September 2001. The original guardhouse near the Newdegate Street entrance has also been demolished, however, the bus shelter has survived and is still in use. The boiler house, which supplied all the steam and hot water for the hospital can be seen in the south west corner of the site with the laundry building a short distance to the east. The main administration building with its rear corridor leading to the pavilion wards is also clearly visible. This corridor has since been rebuilt. The present brick chapel is the building shown in the same location in the 1946 photo.

The chapel is an unusual design, having been built to cater to the multidenominational needs of a military hospital. It featured a Roman Catholic altar and confessional at the northern end of the building and a Protestant altar at the southern end. Timber pews with moveable backs allow flexibility for the seating arrangements in the chapel which is still in use. The Australian and British flags are displayed prominently near one of the altars.

The nurses' quarters building at Greenslopes Hospital was among the few surviving examples of purpose built nurses' accommodation in Brisbane. Redevelopment in major Brisbane hospitals such as the Royal Women's Hospital, Mater Misericordiae Hospital and Princess Alexandra Hospital has resulted in the demolition of such buildings which provide evidence of the changing trends in nursing over the past century. Until at least the 1950s, it was compulsory for nurses to "live in" at the hospital at which they were employed. Student nurses continued to be encouraged to live in hospital quarters for at least part of the training until the 1980s when general nursing education moved to the university system.

On 1 April 1947, the hospital at Greenslopes was taken over by the Commonwealth Repatriation Commission and renamed the Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital. In the tradition established in World War I, the federal government provided ongoing medical care to returned service personnel. By the outbreak of World War II, the repatriation system of war pensions, medical services and provision of artificial limbs was well in place and engrained in the national psyche. The authorities were well aware during World War II of the need for the nations' future commitment to the repatriation of a new generation of wartime veterans.

Over the ensuing decades, the Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital provided medical, surgical and psychiatric care for military personnel from both World Wars and subsequent conflicts, including Vietnam veterans, who, after the major health controversy surrounding Agent Orange, were given free access to emergency care in repatriation hospitals. War widows of Australian servicemen have also been provided with medical care at the Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital.

The 1960s saw extensive changes to the hospital complex. These included extensions to the administration block, a new pathology building, physiotherapy department, and an additional operating theatre. In 1968, an 8-bed intensive therapy unit was built (this has since been demolished) and a \$200 000 paramedical building

opened, the first of its kind in an Australian repatriation hospital.

In 1970, the hospital entered a new phase when it became a teaching hospital with the University of Queensland. Over the next two decades the hospital continued to upgrade its medical facilities, developing the site as required. A major redevelopment took place in the mid-1980s. At this time the ambulance arrival bay, guardhouse and assorted timber buildings were demolished and a 24-hour casualty department was established.

In January 1995, the Commonwealth Government sold the site to Ramsay Health Care and the hospital was renamed the Greenslopes Private Hospital. It continues to provide health care to veterans and war widows as well as the general community. Since World War II, the presence of the hospital has been an important part of the life of the suburb, particularly as the area around the hospital site has other links to services associated with repatriation such as the war service homes built in the area during the interwar years and the 1940s and the presence of the Red Cross Centre in Newdegate Street. The hospital has particularly strong value for the veteran community of Brisbane (and Queensland) and their families.

An assessment of the hospital site indicates that the cultural significance of the site resides chiefly in those buildings which date from the construction of the wartime hospital during the mid-1940s. These include the administration block, the chapel, the two remaining wards (one now the Florence Syer unit), bus shelter, boiler house and laundry building. However, due to the decreased historical and physical context caused by the loss of significant buildings such as the medical and nurses quarters and substantial alterations to some of the buildings including the remaining World War II wards and the laundry, the heritage significance of some of these original buildings has been compromised. Development of the site which now contains several modern buildings has detracted from the integrity of the original design of the World War II complex. However, several significant buildings on the site are significant for the evidence they provide of the history of this major Brisbane hospital, built during an important period of Brisbane's history.

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## Description

This large site has been developed as a hospital at subsequent times starting from the early 1940s with the main administration building facing Denman Road dating from 1942.

Although the site's complex of buildings is the result of the growth in time of the hospital, the prominent administration building with its face brick external walls and simple volumes achieves an imposing balanced architectural form visible from the nearby streets.

### **Administration building**

The much lower extensions to the original building at its east and west elevations have had only a limited impact on its original form. The original structure, with its simple asymmetric shapes with long horizontal ribbons, created by projecting weather protection to the windows and contrasting narrow vertical element comprising three continuous narrow vertical glass strips is still very clearly identifiable.

The building sculptural form and its plain smooth face brick wall surfaces, contrasted by the regular punctuation of the window openings, provide an impression of cleanliness and efficiency.

The building with its Functionalist elements is a good example of a transitional design into the International style

architecture. A radical and progressive style of building conveying an image of the hospital as a dynamic, forward looking, administration.

The building maintains its original external appearance and basic integrity, also in its interiors, which appear to also retain some of the original fixtures and finishes.

### **Hospital Chapel**

The hospital chapel is constructed of bricks with a steep tiled gabled roof with the timber truss roof structure exposed internally. Long narrow windows let light inside the chapel, which houses a double altar. The interior is simply furnished and has a minimum of adornment.

### **The wards**

Further closer assessment has shown how, particularly the portion of the ward to the south-west of the administration building retains its original architectural elements and cultural significance. This weatherboard clad section of the ward (highlighted in the site plan) has ample floor to ceiling triple hung windows and open verandah on either side to maximise cross ventilation, one of the main design concerns of the day for hospital wards. Its materials, details and human scale, still tell us a very unique story.

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## **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:

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#### **Historical**

##### CRITERION A

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

as the major military hospital built in the state's capital city in response to World War II, which demonstrates the commitment of the Commonwealth Government to providing high quality medical care and repatriation services to military personnel in both wartime and peace.

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#### **Historical**

##### CRITERION A

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

as it contains remnants of the original World War II ward which demonstrates the changes in health care

provision over a period of some 50 years.

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## Aesthetic

### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as the 1941-42 administration block with its mixture of Functionalist and Post-war International elements is a good example of a transitional design into the International style of architecture.

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## Social

### CRITERION G

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

for its special association with Brisbane's war veteran community, past and present hospital staff and the Red Cross workers and volunteers. The chapel has spiritual significance for the service it has provided to patients, staff and families for over 50 years.

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## 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

for its special association with the work of the Australian Red Cross, Australian Army Nursing Service, the Australian Army Medical Women's Service and the Australian Army Medical Corps (particularly the 112th Australian General Hospital unit) during World War II.

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## References

1. "Excavations for new army hospital" in *Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland (ABJ of Q)*, April 1941
2. "New war hospital", *Courier Mail*, 3 February 1942, p.5
3. Bradshaw, Vera. "The 112th Australian General Hospital – recollections half a century on". Unknown



source. Copy held at Greenslopes Red Cross Centre

4. Allom Lovell Marquis-Kyle Architects. 1 Military Hospital Yeronga – Heritage Strategy: A report for the Department of Defence on cultural heritage conservation issues. 1995
  5. Allom Lovell Architects. Former Repatriation Hospital, Greenslopes. A Heritage Study for John Holland Pty Ltd. October 2001
  6. Richard Apperly (et al), *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian architecture* Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1989
  7. *Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland*. 1941-1943
  8. Brisbane City Council Building Registers, BCA 0069, 1941-45
  9. Brisbane City Council, 1946 aerial photographs.
  10. Clem, Lloyd. *The Last Shilling: A History of Repatriation in Australia*. Melbourne: MUP, 1994
  11. *Courier Mail*, Jan – Feb 1942, 17 August 1968, 31 October 1985
  12. Goodman, Rupert. *Voluntary Aid Detachments in Peace and War*. Bowen Hills, Qld.: Boolarong, 1991
  13. Greenslopes Private Hospital website. [www.gph.ramsayhealth.com.au](http://www.gph.ramsayhealth.com.au). 2 August 2001
  14. John Oxley Library photographs & clippings files
  15. National Trust of Queensland. Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital file, BNE 1/654
  16. Syer, Florence. Telephone conversation, 4 August 2001
  17. Watson, Donald and Judith McKay. *A Directory of Queensland Architects to 1940*. (St. Lucia: U of Q Press, 1984)
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**Note:** This citation 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 citation 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.

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