

Heritage Citation



Mater Misericordiae Hospital

Key details

Addresses	At 537 Stanley Street, South Brisbane, Queensland 4101
Type of place	Hospital
Period	Federation 1890-1914, Interwar 1919-1939, Postwar 1945-1960, Late 20th Century 1960-1999
Style	Arts and Crafts, Free Style, International, Queenslander, Functionalist
Lot plan	L2_RP185046; L1_RP11630
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — July 2014
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Face brick

People/associations Robert Smith (Robin) Dods (Architect);
Sisters of Mercy (Association)

Criterion for listing (A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social; (H) Historical association

The Mater Misericordiae Hospital was established by the Sisters of Mercy order in 1906 in 'Aubigny', a residence in North Quay. In 1910, they transferred to their new private hospital, designed by Robin Dods of Brisbane architectural firm, Hall and Dods, on the crest of ten acres at College Hill, South Brisbane. The following year, a public hospital building, also designed by Dods, was opened on the site. During subsequent decades, the hospital expanded further with the addition of several extensions including a convent and chapel on the western side of the private hospital (1926) and new buildings such as a chaplain's residence (1924), children's hospital (1931), medical school (1956) and maternity hospital (1960). Since the 1980s, the hospital complex has had major redevelopments and continues to deliver both private and public health services.

History

The Mater Hospital complex at South Brisbane had its beginnings in January 1906 when the Sisters of Mercy, an Irish religious order dedicated to the care of the sick and needy, opened the Mater Misericordiae Private Hospital in North Quay.

The new private hospital was housed in 'Aubigny', an 1860s residence rented by the Sisters until a permanent hospital could be built on their ten acres of land College Hill at South Brisbane, overlooking the river. With Mother Mary Patrick Potter at the helm, the Order purchased the site, which became known as Mater Hill, in 1893. At this time, Brisbane was recovering from the severe flooding which devastated parts of the city and was in a deep economic depression. South Brisbane, once a rival to the town centre on the northern side of the river, was particularly affected by the flooding. It would be another fifteen years before the foundation stone of the new private hospital was laid by Cardinal Moran. Between the investments and fundraising of the Sisters and generous donations from the public, almost £25 000 was raised towards construction costs by the time of the laying of the foundation stone in 1908. There was some initial reluctance among the public and the medical fraternity to embrace a new hospital on the south side of the river as the northern side was more populous and perceived by some as more respectable.

In the early 1900s, the sisters engaged the prestigious Brisbane architectural firm of Hall and Dods to design the new hospital which would include a 50 bed private hospital and a public hospital with 40 beds. Robin Dods had already designed the much admired Lady Lamington Nurses' Home (1896) at the Brisbane Hospital after winning the design competition. The new three storey, brick hospital at Mater Hill shared some design features with the nurses' home at Herston, including the timber detailing on the extensive verandahs and careful planning for Brisbane's humid climate such as cross ventilation and roof vents. The hospital layout was also informed by the latest scientific theories of hygiene and germ control, ensuring a constant flow of fresh air. The contractor for the hospital was Mr Cockburn and it was furnished by Finney's, John Hicks and Trittons.

The Mater Private Hospital was officially opened on 8 August 1910 by the Queensland Governor, Sir William

McGregor, at a ceremony attended by some 12 000 people. The building was of a very high quality, featuring elegant silky oak interiors, leadlight windows with an "MM" motif and decorative plaster ceilings. It also possessed two modern operating theatres behind the eastern end of the main building and the most up to date medical equipment as well as steam heating, gas and electricity. The ground floor contained a doctor's consulting room, Sister-in-Charge's room, single and double patients' rooms, a pantry and kitchen (at the western end. The second floor (reached by three separate staircases) housed more patients' rooms, pantry and store room, as well as a refectory and temporary chapel for the nuns. The third floor was reserved as sleeping quarters for the nuns. Each floor had its own 'sanitary block' connected by a passageway: "In these all that science has deemed necessary for absolutely hygienic conditions has been done". (Brisbane Courier, 17 Aug 1910). The building also contained servants' quarters with a sitting room and balcony and the modern convenience of laundry chutes for soiled linen.

Work at the site was ongoing with the substantial, two storey, brick public hospital opening in February 1911. This building boasted a modern operating theatre and French doors leading onto the ward verandahs allowing beds to be pushed out into the fresh air. The single and double rooms of patients in the private hospital were replaced by four wards of ten beds each with the traditional 'Nightingale' layout of a row of beds along opposite walls. Verandahs and windows ensured a constant flow of fresh air which was thought to be of great benefit to the patients. A terraced area between the two wings provided an additional outdoor area for recuperating patients. Public donations continued to assist with the costs of the developing hospital. An unknown donor furnished the female wards and the men's wards were furnished by Brisbane's jockeys and horse trainers. As the hospital became more popular with Brisbane's medical fraternity and the public, both wings were extended in 1914 to provide additional accommodation for patients. Today, the building houses administration functions and is named the Whitty Building in honour of Mother Mary Vincent Whitty, the first Mother Superior of the Mercy nuns in Brisbane in 1861.

In 1914, the first 14 lay nursing probationers commenced at the hospital's training school and St Mary's Nurses' Home and a kitchen were constructed. Both the public hospital and the nurses' home building were also designed by Robin Dods. Together, the three buildings formed the largest hospital project designed by Hall and Dods. The nurses' home was demolished in 1980 and its site is now marked by a statue of "Mary, Mother of God" that was unveiled by Sister Alphonsus Mary on 8 November 1981. The statue rests on a plinth made of bricks from the original carriage entrance from Raymond Terrace.

Another edition to the growing hospital was a timber public outpatient's department which faced Annerley Road and opened in 1912. This was demolished in the 1970s when a new wing was added on the southern end of the children's hospital.

Despite the initial misgivings of the medical fraternity, the Mater Private and Public Hospitals soon proved to be a valuable addition to the health services of the city. This was particularly the case during World War I, when the hospital treated a constant stream of returned servicemen and in the influenza epidemic of 1918-19 when the Mater played an important role in coping with this health emergency. The hospital shared nursing staff with the Brisbane General Hospital and nursed influenza patients in tents in the grounds and at the neighbouring St Laurence's College as well as within the hospital.

Further developments took place in the hospital complex during the 1920s. Planning for a permanent chapel began during World War I but the chapel and new convent were not added to the western side of the Private Hospital until 1926. The convent, which adjoins the private hospital, was built in a similar architectural style to the earlier building. The chapel is a striking, two storey brick building which is perpendicular to the front of the convent. Although Robin Dods had moved to Sydney, he was consulted on this development.

Another addition during the 1920s was a timber residence for the hospital chaplain. This building, named 'Loyola' was constructed on the slope between the two hospitals in 1924 but moved to its current site to the east of the former private hospital in 1926. The public hospital was extended again in 1920 with the construction of a new wing to the south. Numerous additional changes have been made to the building which in 1987 became the hospital's administration centre.

A new entrance to the hospital was constructed on the front façade of the private hospital building circa 1920. This entrance completed Dods' original plan for the building which included a vestibule in this position. The new entrance which includes a porch and waiting hall, extended the original entrance hall of the 1910 building. It is built in a polychromatic brick design which is sympathetic to the main building. Numerous other extensions have been added to the building notably the 1937 Atkinson and Prentice wing to the east and during the 1980s at the rear. The 1937 wing necessitated the demolition of the old operating theatres at the rear of the original hospital building and new theatres were constructed.

The depression of the 1930s may have slowed planned expansion of the hospital but changes continued to be achieved. By the late 1930s, the Mater was Brisbane's largest private hospital. A major milestone in the history of the hospital precinct occurred in 1931 with the opening of an 80 bed, brick children's hospital by the Governor, Sir John Goodwin. The original two-storeyed building faced Annerley Road and consisted of a central gabled entrance with a wing on the northern side. It was designed by the architectural firm of Hall and Prentice, the remaining partners in Robin Dods' practice. A southern wing was planned but did not eventuate. Major additions were made to the building during the 1970s, when a second wing was finally added, doubling the size of the building. The children's hospital was initially named the Potter Memorial Building in honour of Mother Patrick Potter, who became the Mother Superior after the death of Mother Mary Vincent in 1893. The building was renamed the Community Services Building in 2001 commensurate with a change in use but is currently known as the Potter Building.

The hospital continued to expand in the 1940s. In 1941, another wing, designed by Hall and Phillips, was added between the original 'butterfly' wings of the public hospital, compromising its original design. During World War II, the Mater once again played a significant role in coping with a national emergency. While managing serious 'manpower' shortages which greatly reduced medical and nursing staff, the hospital prepared for emergency influxes of wounded, managed a pioneering blood transfusion service which sent blood to the troops in Papua New Guinea and, at the close of the war, nursed repatriated prisoners of war from Japan. The Sisters and Archbishop Duhig also began planning for a maternity hospital to cope with the demands of the post-war baby boom.

The foundation stone of the new maternity hospital was laid and blessed in 1948, by Cardinal Spellman from New York and Archbishop Duhig. The Mater Mothers' as it became known, would not be completed until 1960 due to the building shortages of the post-war period. The hospital was an imposing, brick, multi-storey hospital block built to a modern International design by the architectural firm of Hall, Phillips and Wilson.

In 1949, the Mater was recognised as a teaching hospital for doctors and medical students and became part of the University of Queensland's Faculty of Medicine. A purpose built Medical School building was constructed behind the public hospital building in 1956. The building, currently named the Kelly Building, is brick with four storeys and balconies on each level. The horizontal lines and curved brick balustrades are reminiscent of the Functionalist architectural style of the 1930s and '40s and the interior, which features silky oak doors and joinery, parquet floors and original terrazzo floors in the bathrooms, is substantially intact. It was designed by Hall, Phillips and Wilson.

The brick Quarters for nursing staff is another, four storey brick building in a more prosaic style. It was built in 1956 and is no longer in use as staff accommodation. The former Quarters has some cultural significance but has not been included in the heritage curtilage.

Since the 1960s, extensive additions and redevelopments have occurred on the Mater site, for example the construction of the southern wing of the former Children's hospital. For more detail of the many changes to the built fabric since this period, consult the Mater Health Services Brisbane Complex CMP prepared by Riddel Architecture in 2007.

The heritage significance of the hospital precinct is enhanced by the remnants of early landscaping, planting and roadways. Of particular note is the staircase which leads from the former private hospital on the higher part of the site down the slope to the former public hospital on the corner of Stanley Street and Annerley Road. The stone wall along Annerley Road in front of the former children's hospital with its grand stair case also makes an important contribution to the aesthetic and historic value of the precinct as do the enormous, mature fig trees in front of the former private hospital and several very tall palms around the Chapel also enhance the site. Much of the early gardens and landscaping, including the planting of palms, were created by Sister Mary Chanel and Mary de Chantal James. Remnants of the early roadways and paths such as the entrance from Raymond Terrace where the imposing entrance gates once stood are an important reminder of the early days of the hospital in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Description

Mater Private Hospital building (now Aubigny Place)

The original 1910 Federation style, three storey, brick building is highly significant. It has several classical elements including a symmetrical façade, central entrances and projecting bays. The original entrance was extended in 1920 with a sympathetic polychromatic brick porch and waiting room and is also highly significant. The interiors are also highly significant, for example, silky oak panelling and other joinery, original 1910 lift, plaster ceiling with Sisters of Mercy emblems, some original double hung windows and French doors leading on to the verandahs.

The 1937 wing on the eastern end (perpendicular to the main building) has been compromised by later changes. However, the northern end of the extension is sympathetic to the front façade of the building and thus is highly significant.

The 1910 early roofs, ventilators and chimneys are highly significant.

Former Mater Public Hospital building (now the Whitty Building)

The former public hospital constructed in 1911 was a two-storey, brick building with a rare 'butterfly' design of two wings joined by a central smaller wing. Its design reflects the influence of the English Arts and Crafts style.

The ends of the two wings which contained the wards were extended in 1914, providing new wards linked to the old by archways and doubling the number of available beds. A new wing joined to the existing building was built to the south in 1920. The 1941 wing built between the two original wings detracted from the original butterfly

design Annerley Road elevation and is not considered to be of heritage significance.

The original 1911 building, the 1914 extensions to both wings and the 1920 wing and extensions are highly significant as are the early roofs, including ventilators and chimneys.

‘Loyola’ (former Chaplain’s residence)

This timber residence has a corrugated iron roof. Constructed in 1924, it was moved to its present site in 1926 and is of considerable significance. Original internal elements such as original casement windows with figured glass and French doors are of considerable significance.

Convent and Chapel

The polychromatic brick 1926 chapel with stained glass windows and a highly intact interior is highly significant. The surrounding gardens, landscaping and mature planting of palms are also highly significant.

The 1926 brick convent extension to the west of the former Mater Private Hospital building is highly significant. It is of three storeys with verandahs and is similar in style to the original building. Original elements of its interior including the original silky oak and leadlight door and decorative plaster work on walls and vault ceilings, are also highly significant.

The brick three level 1941 wing at the rear of the convent has been altered internally but is of considerable significance.

Children’s Hospital (later the Mater Community Services Building, now the Potter Building)

The original three storey, brick, 1931 building, particularly the gabled front section, is of high significance, but the enclosure of the verandahs facing Annerley Road and other changes have lessened the aesthetic significance of the northern section of the original building. Some of the 1931 open ward spaces with their ventilating French doors have been retained and are significant.

Medical School (now Kelly Building)

This 1956 four storey, brick building with balconies on each level has elements of Functionalist design and is very intact. The original interiors include silky oak doors and joinery, parquet floors, terrazzo floors and some fittings in bathrooms, original stained double hung windows and the main stairway with a curved timber balustrade. The building is highly significant.

Mater Mothers’ Hospital

This seven storey, brick building with two angled wings opened in 1960, twenty years after the laying of the foundation stone. The Mater Mothers’ has been designed in the post-war International style featuring a strong cubiform shapes with repeating square and rectangular windows and smooth exterior walls. It is a good example of a substantial, multi-storey, hospital building from this period. Apart from a 1990 extension at the rear, the front exterior has had few changes. Internally, there have been changes but some original fabric has been retained for example, stained timber, triple hung windows and skirting, and original stairs with steel balustrade and terrazzo lining. The building has considerable significance.

Landscaping and Planting

The grounds of the Mater Hospital precinct provide an important setting for the buildings and reflect both practical concerns such as providing pedestrian and vehicular access on a hilly site and the aesthetic and spiritual concerns of the Mercy Sisters who created the early gardens to bring a sense of comfort and peace to those on the site.

Highly significant elements are the staircase between the old private and public hospital, early roads and pathways, mature planting including palms and fig trees in front of the former private hospital, (now Aubigny

Place) and landscaping in front of the former Children's Hospital (now the Potter Building).

Of considerable significance are the steps and wall to Annerley Road in front of the former Children's hospital building, the convent gardens and the porphyry stone wall in the Convent courtyard.

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

for the significant role the Mater hospital precinct has played in the development of South Brisbane since the devastating floods of 1893 and for the evidence it provides of the changes in the provision of health care in Brisbane since the early twentieth century. The 1956 former Medical School building demonstrates the importance of the role played by the Mater Hospital in medical education in Brisbane. 'Loyola' is significant as it demonstrates the role of the hospital chaplain in ministering to the spiritual needs of the hospital's staff, patients and families.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage

as the 1910 former Private Hospital and 1911 former Public Hospital buildings are rare examples of substantial, Federation style hospital buildings in Brisbane. The former Children's Hospital is a rare example of a large, non-governmental children's hospital built in the twentieth century.

Representative

CRITERION D

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

as a precinct which contains good examples of substantial hospital buildings from the Federation, Interwar and Post-war periods which demonstrate characteristics such as traditional “Nightingale” ward layouts, verandahs, extensive ventilation and private patient rooms. It also contains a fine example of a brick, interwar private chapel. The former Mater Mothers’ building is a good example of a multi-storey, hospital building from the post-war period which was designed using the principles of modern health practices. The former Private Hospital is an excellent example of Federation Style architecture. The original 1911 Public Hospital building is a fine example of the influence of Arts and Crafts design in Brisbane.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as the precinct contains buildings of varying architectural styles, many of which are brick with fine detailing. In conjunction with the landscaping elements such as mature figs and palms, and masonry walls and staircases, this creates many aesthetic views of the hospital, particularly the area in front of the former private hospital and convent and the chapel.

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 significance to many generations of Brisbane residents who have received health care or been employed by the Mater Hospital since it opened in 1910.

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 strong connection with the Sisters of Mercy who planned the hospital in the late nineteenth century and continued to play an important role in its nursing services and administration until well into the late twentieth century. The former Private and Public hospitals are significant as excellent examples of the architectural work of prominent Brisbane architect, Robin Dods.

References

1. Brisbane City Council (BCC) aerial photographs.
2. Register of the National Estate. Entry for Mater Misericordiae Private and Former Public Hospitals, Raymond Tce, South Brisbane
3. Helen Gregory. *Expressions of Mercy: Brisbane Mater Hospitals 1906-2006*. U of Q Press, 2006
4. Robert Riddell Architecture. Mater Health Services Complex Brisbane Conservation Management Plan. April 2007
5. Blake, Thom and Michael Kennedy. Appendix E Heritage Assessment Report. Mater Misericordiae Health Services Brisbane Hospital – Supporting Report for Centre Concept Plan. March 1996. (In BCC site file, CA&HT)
6. Phone conversations with Jackie Chamberlin, Archives Manager, Mater Archives and Heritage Centre. 27 Jun 2014. 4 Jul 2014
7. Mater website. www.mater.org.au/Home/About/History. Viewed 27 Jun 2014
8. Digitised newspapers and other records. <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper>

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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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