

Heritage Citation

Nundah Baby Clinic

Key details

Addresses	At 10 Chapel Street, Nundah, Queensland 4012
Type of place	Clinic
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Bungalow
Lot plan	L535_SL3210
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 November 2012 Date of Citation — November 2010
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber
People/associations	Department of Public Works (Builder)
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (C) Scientific; (D) Representative; (G) Social

Infant mortality had been a serious cause for concern in Brisbane since the nineteenth century. However, it was not until the late 1910s that the Queensland Government established dedicated welfare clinics to help combat this growing problem. The Nundah Baby Clinic was built in 1933 as a response to the local community's increased pressure on the State Government to have an adequate baby clinic established for the Nundah area. The clinic was to provide advice and welfare to mothers and their babies. The Nundah clinic is an intact timber interwar building that was built by the Department of Public Works. During the Second World War a large air-raid shelter was built at the rear of the clinic to accommodate thirty people. The site has potential to yield archaeological information into the design and construction of air raid shelters from this period.

History

The interwar period heralded major population and residential growth in the Nundah district. In 1921 the population in the area had reached 3870 and by 1931 was 15, 831. This can be attributed to the sale and subdivision of many of the remaining farms in the area. With the increase in density the Nundah community were aware of the importance of establishing a baby clinic to provide assistance, both medical and advisory, to mothers and their babies.

National alarm about the declining birth rate that had been identified from the turn of the century was exacerbated in Queensland in the interwar period by the military vulnerability of the State. The northern and western regions had sparse populations and there was a genuine fear of invasion from Australia's northern Asian neighbours, as well as from Germany and the Netherlands, both of which had imperialist ambitions in the Pacific. A healthy, steadily increasing population was believed to be essential to the continued existence of the State and nation.

The Infant Welfare Movement, which aimed to improve conditions for infants and advise mothers about 'correct' child-rearing practices, operated in Australia from 1903. In Queensland, the Lady Chelmsford Milk Institute provided cheap, sterilised milk for young Brisbane children from 1908, complementing the work of Alfred Jefferis Turner, the first resident medical officer of the Hospital for Sick Children. Following the election of a reformist Labor Government in Queensland in 1915, infant welfare, like other forms of social welfare, was seen as a matter for government rather than voluntary organisations.

In 1918, the State Government opened four baby clinics in rented cottages in the Brisbane metropolitan area at Fortitude Valley, Woolloongabba, Spring Hill and West End. From 1920, the government took over the operations of the Golden Casket as a means of financing its operations after London investors imposed an economic blockade of the State's Labor Government, which threatened their interests. Profits from the Casket were diverted to a Maternal and Child Welfare Fund to finance the provision of health and hospital care as a universal right, regardless of income.

One way this was enacted was through the Maternity Act of 1922 that provided for the establishment of maternity wards and cottage hospitals throughout the state. In conjunction with this, baby clinics were to be built in the major provincial centres with smaller towns and settlements served by sub-clinics. A total of 23 baby clinics were built throughout Queensland with many of the early 'extra-metropolitan' clinics being identical. However, there were a number of departures from this standard plan. In Brisbane, the Fortitude Valley Clinic (1924) that was also the State's nurse training clinic, the Woolloongabba Clinic (1928) and the Herschell Street Clinic (1934) were all substantial two-storey brick buildings. The Nundah Baby Clinic (1933) was a more austere design to be constructed from timber.

Prior to the construction of the Chapel Street clinic, an earlier baby clinic was servicing the community out of the Toombul Shire Hall. This clinic was officially opened on Thursday 24 September 1931 with the committee for the establishment of the clinic present as well as Minister for Public Instruction, Mr. King. The majority of the funds and equipment for the newly opened clinic had been donated by the community. At the opening ceremony Dr. McLean, speaking on behalf of the committee, expressed the need for Government assistance in constructing a permanent clinic for the community.

The need for a permanent clinic was recognised by both the Brisbane City Council and the State Government.

Negotiations had taken place between the two governmental bodies several months before the opening of the temporary clinic. The Brisbane City Council had agreed to donate the land on which to build the clinic if the State Government agreed to build the clinic and maintain it. The *Brisbane City Council Minutes* from 1932 record this agreement:

In July of last year [1931] the Council granted an area of 24 perches... to a local committee for the purpose of the erection of a Baby Clinic. Since that time negotiations have been in progress between the Clinic Trustees and the Government for the Institution to be taken over by the Government after its erection by the Trustees.¹

Initially the Brisbane City Council offered a site within Boyd Park and this was approved. However, the State Government objected to this on the grounds that the site at Boyd Park was not appropriate for the purpose. It was believed that baby clinics should be established in areas easily accessible to mothers with small infants. In the Annual Report for 1926-27 the Director of Infant Welfare, Alfred Jefferis Turner, stated that a clinic should be "centrally located, close to...[transport] and the shopping centre, so that mothers may easily visit it during their weekly visits to the shops."²

The Brisbane Courier reported on the 26 February 1932 that a suitable site for the clinic had been agreed upon by the Council and the State Government. The new site was proposed for a portion of Buckland Park. The Lord Mayor (Alderman J. W. Greene) had inspected the site and conceded that granting the land would have little impact on the remainder of the park.

In August 1931 the Supervising Architect and Chief Quantity Surveyor stated in a report entitled "Proposed Baby Clinic at Nundah, Brisbane", that the estimated cost for the construction of the building would be £370. The building would consist of a "waiting room 12' x 12', office 16' x 12', Kitchenette 9' x 8', and Nurses Room 9' x 8', with a latticed front veranda approx. 9'6" x 8'...construction is wood with iron roof".³

In December 1932 official approval for the Nundah Baby Clinic was given by the Under Secretary at the Department of Public Works and stated:

the Minister has approved of the establishment of a Baby Clinic at Nundah...Dr. A. Jefferis Turner, Medical Director of Child Welfare and Baby Clinics, has been asked to call at your Department and furnish particulars with regard to the requirements of the building.⁴

By 1933 a set of plans had been drawn by the Queensland Works Department's architect, N. L. Thomas. The clinic was completed by early 1934 at a cost of £797, well over the initial costing for the building. The Nundah Baby Clinic served the Nundah district until well into the 1990s.

During the Second World War Nundah was seen as a potential target for Japanese bombing raids due to the U.S Army Petroleum Warehouse being situated on Amelia Street, Nundah, approximately 1km southeast of the Nundah railway station. Although Australia had been at war with Germany since 1939, the impact of war increased dramatically after the Japanese entered it in 1941. The Japanese forces swept south through Malaya, the Netherlands East Indies and had reached New Guinea by January, 1942. Northern Australia became a major staging point. General Headquarters South West Pacific Area, under the command of US General Douglas MacArthur, was also moved to Brisbane in July 1942. An unprecedented military build-up followed. The concentration of US troops alone was heaviest in south-east Queensland, reaching a peak of 75 500 in December 1943. Camps, airfields, construction and recreational facilities specifically for the US Army were

erected in Brisbane during the war. The Eagle Farm area saw an intensive military presence. With the increased danger of Japanese air-raids on Brisbane it was seen as imperative for the construction of air-raid shelters for civilians throughout Brisbane.

In 1942 the Department of Public Works constructed a large air-raid shelter at the rear of the Nundah Baby Clinic. The shelter was designed to accommodate 30 people and was to be constructed beneath the ground level as a trench from timber and covered with a thick layer of earth. The shelter was designed by Department of Public Works architect, E. Cooper. In the 1946 aerial photograph the shelter can be identified and its position coincides with the original position specified in the 1942 plans. In recent years a car-park has been built over the shelter. The remnants of the shelter may still remain beneath the ground as an archaeological site and may have the potential to provide historic information.

Description

The building is a simple low-set single storey timber-framed structure with an asymmetric roof form. It has a short ridged pyramidal roof form of corrugated iron with a projecting front gable. The gable features a simple timber pediment and a series of four narrow multi-paned casement windows under a corrugated awning hood. Fenestration consists generally of pairs or multi-casement windows protected by awning hoods. The main entry is via a corner verandah built under an extension of the main roof form. The verandah entry consists of a single skin timber VJ wall with expressed framing. The verandah features paired verandah posts which include a cross brace infill panel at the capitals and a vertical infill batten between the verandah posts. The remainder of the building is clad in weatherboards. The rear of the building is also set under an extension of the main roof form. The building is suspended on a series of concrete stumps with a timber battened surround. A ramp has been added to the side of the building to provide access to the main entry.

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 as its construction reflects the changing attitudes of the Queensland Government towards the welfare of women

and babies in the first half of the twentieth century and the increasing local resident population in the interwar period.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage as the only timber Baby Clinic constructed by the Department of Public Works in Queensland it is uncommon.

Scientific

CRITERION C

The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the city's or local area's history

as a potential archeological site with remnants of a large air-raid shelter built by the Department of Public Works for the protection of the staff and patients at the Nundah Baby Clinic in 1942.

Representative

CRITERION D

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

as an intact interwar timber Baby Clinic built within the design specifications of the Department of Public Works that has served the Nundah community from 1934 to the 1990s.

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 contribution to the health and welfare of many women and children in the Nundah area from the 1930s to the 1990s.

References

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3. Report by The Supervising Architect and Chief Quantity Surveyor, Department of Public Works, 4th August 1931
4. *Letter from The Under Secretary*, Department of Public Works, Brisbane, 22nd December, 1932
5. Annual Reports Maternal and Infant Welfare, *Queensland Parliamentary Papers* 1925 – 1975. [Periodic name changes – post c.1970 in Health & Medical Reports]
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13. John Oxley Library, photographic collection.
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18. Hamilton Town Hall', Department of Environment and Resource Management, Heritage Citation
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22. *The Courier Mail*, Thursday 8 February, 1934, p8
23. *The Brisbane Courier*, Friday 26 February, 1932, p17
24. *The Brisbane Courier*, Friday 1 July, 1932, p19
25. *The Brisbane Courier*, Thursday 24 September, 1931, p17
26. *The Brisbane Courier*, Saturday 25 July, 1931, p14

27. Plans for the Nundah Baby Clinic, Department of Public Works, Queensland, 1931
 28. Plans for the Nundah Baby Clinic, Department of Public Works, Queensland, 1933
 29. *Letter from The Under Secretary*, Department of Public Works, Brisbane, 22nd December, 1932
 30. Report by The Supervising Architect and Chief Quantity Surveyor, Department of Public Works, 4th August 1931
 31. Plans for Nundah Baby Clinic Proposed Air Raid Shelter, Department of Public Works, May 1942
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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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