

Heritage Citation



St Finbarr's Catholic Church

Key details

Addresses	At 202 Waterworks Road, Ashgrove, Queensland 4060
Type of place	Church
Period	Postwar 1945-1960
Style	Ecclesiastical
Lot plan	L2_RP230260
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — February 1997
Construction	Roof: Terracotta tile; Walls: Face brick
People/associations	Francis (Frank) Leo Cullen (Architect)

Designed by prominent Brisbane architect Frank L. Cullen, this substantial Romanesque style church was opened on 17 March 1957 by Archbishop Duhig and was the second Catholic church to be constructed on the site. This church was one of a number constructed as part of Archbishop Duhig's extensive building program from 1918 to the 1950s and has continued to provide Catholic education and worship to the local community for more than fifty years.

History

This Romanesque brick church designed by Brisbane architect Frank Cullen was opened on the 17 March 1957. It is the second Catholic church to be built on this site.

Frank Cullen was a Brisbane architect who was responsible for many of Brisbane's Catholic churches built during the post-war period, for example, St. Thomas', Camp Hill (1958) and St. John the Baptist, Enoggera (1961). An earlier Catholic church designed by Cullen was St. Luke's, Buranda, built in 1937 when Cullen was in partnership with D. Egan. Cullen was later a partner in the firm Cullen, Fagg, Hargreaves and Mooney. He died on the 2 November 1991.

The parish of St. Finbarr's at Ashgrove was created in 1921. It had its beginnings in 1918 when Archbishop Duhig purchased 23 acres of land, including the former home of chemist, Mr W.J. Trouton, Beth-Eden, for \$2750. Duhig renovated the house and dedicated one of the largest rooms as a temporary chapel. Beth-Eden was used as a chapel for two years. It was later sold and has since been moved from Ashgrove.

On 24 April 1921, Duhig laid the foundation stone of a wooden church on the site of the present church of St. Finbarr's. The new church-school was dedicated on the 14 August 1921. In 1925, the Sisters of Mercy arrived and commenced the St. Finbarr Primary School in the nearby former residence of John Stewart, Grantully, which they had purchased for use as a convent. The primary school moved to a new location under the raised timber St. Finbarr's Church in 1927.

The foundation stone of the new church was laid by Archbishop Duhig on 25 September 1955. The full name of the church was the Church of St. Finbarr of Cork, Eire. The name was chosen by the Superior General with reference to Sister M. Finbarr Sullivan, the first Sister of Charity to be buried in Queensland. At this time, a third of the \$38,000 required to build the church had been subscribed by the parishioners. The church was one of many substantial brick buildings built to replace wooden church-schools in Brisbane during Duhig's drive to provide Brisbane's Catholic population with substantial religious buildings.

Duhig officially blessed and opened the church on St. Patrick's Day, 17 March 1957. It was the sixtieth church he had dedicated in the Greater Brisbane area since becoming Archbishop in 1917. More than a thousand people attended the ceremony.

Despite a collection of nearly \$6,000 on the day, a debt of \$20,000 remained on the church. Statuary and fittings for the church's interior were worth \$10,000. The stained glass windows overlooking Waterworks Road were made in Ireland and were copied from windows in Cork Cathedral depicting the life of St. Finbarr, a 7th century

Irish bishop. The builder contracted for the erection of the church was Mr Brian Flynn.

St. Finbarr's church continued to progress and expand during the next forty years. In 1992 it was reported that around 1,350 people from a local Catholic population of some 2,000 usually attended Sunday morning mass, a higher proportion than most Brisbane Catholic Churches. After a presence of almost 80 years, St. Finbarr's church continues to provide a focus for Catholic worship and education at Ashgrove.

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:

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a good example of a modest brick Romanesque style church built in the 1950s.

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 the evidence it provides of the importance of Catholic worship to several generations of Catholics in the area since the first St. Finbarr's was built in 1921.

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

as an example of the work of Brisbane architect Frank L. Cullen, and for its association with Archbishop Duhig who instigated an extensive program of building substantial brick churches in Brisbane from 1918 to the 1950s.

References

1. Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Australia. Brief History of St. Finbarr's, Ashgrove. typed manuscript. Potts Point, nd.
 2. *Catholic Leader*, 29 September 1955; 21 March 1957; 12 August 1992
 3. *Courier-Mail*, 14 March 1957
 4. *Leader*, 25 October 1970; 21 August 1977
 5. O'Leary, Rev J. 1919, *Catholic Progress: Archdiocese of Brisbane 1912-1919*, J. O'Leary, St James' Presbytery, Coorparoo
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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.

Citation prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised June 2022)



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