



## Heritage Citation



### St Laurence's College

#### Key details

Addresses	At 82 Stephens Road, South Brisbane, Queensland 4101
Type of place	College
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Free Classical
Lot plan	L20_SP280750

**Key dates** Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000  
Date of Citation — January 2011

**Construction** Walls: Face brick

**People/associations** Thomas Ramsay Hall - School Building (Architect)

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

The St Laurence's College School Building (1915) and Brother's Residence (1918) have a longstanding connection with the Catholic Church and Catholic education in South Brisbane. The buildings have also a deep and longstanding connection with the generations of students who undertook their schooling there. Executed in the Federation Free style, they make a significant aesthetic contribution to the College grounds.

## History

### The School Building

When St Laurence's School opened on April 11 1915, the new building was claimed as "the most up to date of its kind in the Commonwealth". The building was designed by prominent Brisbane architect T.R. Hall and is positioned on the highest point of the elevated site. It looks down on the river and city on one side and, at the time of its construction, commanded "a glorious view of hills and valleys [and] wide extending panoramas" to the south.

The site had long been associated with the Catholic Church and Catholic education. As early as the 1870s, the large property now encompassing the Mater Hospital site and St Laurence's, was known as College Hill. This took its name from St Killian's College, a Catholic boarding school for boys established in 1873. In 1893 Archbishop Dunne and the Sisters of Mercy purchased the ten acre property adjoining the hilltop area of some thirteen acres on which St Killian's stood, from Miss Florence O'Reilly. The land was purchased for the purpose of establishing the Mater Hospital and St Laurence's Christian Brothers College at some time in the future.

In 1897, the two storey timber-built St Killian's was destroyed by fire and it was to be several years until St Laurence's was established to replace it.

Archbishop Duhig was the driving force behind the eventual establishment of St Laurence's. The Advocate wrote "His Grace Archbishop Duhig has thrown himself into the work of establishing St Laurence's with his accustomed vigour". The college was named by Duhig in honour of St Lawrence O'Toole, the patron of the school where he had taught in Dublin years (before the spelling was later changed to Laurence's).

270 boys were enrolled at the school by opening day, reflecting the fact that by the turn of the century South Brisbane had become a thriving suburb.

The building was extended in 1918 with the opening of a science hall.

Four years after the school's opening it and all the other schools in Brisbane were closed down due to the severe epidemic of pneumonic influenza or 'Spanish Flu'. St Laurence's proximity to the Mater Hospital resulted in its being converted into an isolation ward for the severest cases of the flu and for six months a doctor, priest and ten nurses resided there.

During the Second World War the Australian Army commandeered the college for its Headquarters Unit and the boys were taught from a Church property at Greenslopes.

### **The Brothers' Residence**

The St Laurence's Brothers' residence was dedicated by the Archbishop Duhig on August 18 1918. According to one writer the new residence was "In complete accord with the beauty of the site". The Brothers had hitherto been living in a rented house nearby.

---

## **Description**

### **The School Building**

The school is a two storey brick building with a corrugated asbestos cement roof. Originally the lower level was left unenclosed and the space used as a play area. The building forms broadly a 'C' shape in plan form with flanking wings and a central courtyard. The courtyard was originally enclosed at the front of the building, but this has since been removed. The front gable ends of the two wings are identical, making the overall composition symmetrical.

The parapets on each gable form a squared off pediment surmounted by a crest and then finally a cross. A large window opening is centred on the upper level at each end. These openings are protected by corrugated iron sun hoods supported on sculpted timber brackets.

To the sides of this window on each corner are rendered bands, flush with the masonry that step down the face like oversized quoins. A horizontal band runs continuously above the top of the awning and also at floor level.

Flanking the central sections of the wings are additional spaces with lower parapet heights. A small window is centred in each of these side elements at the upper level and on the lower level below these is a broad arched opening. The parapets of these lower sections have raised corners mimicking the centre piece.

In the courtyard a verandah wraps around three sides. This has brick piers supporting timber verandah posts while a timber railing runs around the upper level.

The main roofs have wind driven rotary vents located at points along the ridgeline.

A modern elevated walkway connects the left side of the building to a modern four level structure that intrudes partway along the face of the original buildings.

### **The Brothers Residence**

This building obviously mimics some of the forms found on the school built nearby three years earlier. Gables identify vertical elements in the façade. Two of these are on the front face, while one is on the left hand side but

has been partly hidden by a modern extension. The building uses brick similar to that on the school but has a terracotta tiled roof. Verandahs run around the perimeter of the building between the vertical gable elements. These feature arched bays on the lower level, with a hood-mould over each arch that connects to an ornamental key stone centred at the top of each arch. The voussoirs at the ends of the curved section of each arch are coloured to match the other coloured banding on the building. The smaller arches are stilted and have a band running at the same level as the larger ones, so that it runs continuously around the lower level.

The upper section of the verandah has a brick balustrade that has expressed piers, the balustrade dips down between these and an ornamental moulding runs around the top of it. Paired timber posts support the eaves above this and timber infill arcs between them. The verandah roofs have a slightly lower pitch than that of the main roof. The banded gable ends are topped by a crest with a cross centred above them. At the base of the pediment to each side is a small rounded finial. Centred in the upper level is an arched opening with a keystone and a band running from the end voussoirs. Below the sill level of this window and above the heads of the lower openings is a rendered panel. A chimney sits above the top most ridge line.

---

## 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 it is a large, two-storey, Federation Free styled school building, pleasingly executed in brick and contrasting render making a strong aesthetic contribution to the school grounds.

---

#### 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 long association with the Catholic Church and Catholic education in Brisbane since 1915.

## 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 long association with the Catholic Church and Catholic education in Brisbane since 1918.

---

## 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 the prominent Brisbane architect T.R. Hall.

---

## 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 it is significant to generations of pupils and parents who have been associated with the school since 1915.

---

## References

1. J. O'Leary, *Catholic Progress: Archdiocese of Brisbane, 1912-1919*, Coorparoo: 1919, p.33
2. H.J. Summers, *They Crossed the Bridge*, St Lucia: U of Q Press, pp.10-13
3. Susan M. Tobin, *Searching for Wisdom: Catholic Secondary Schools*, Brisbane: Queensland Catholic Education Office, 1987, p.26
4. L.R. Maher (Ed), *The First Hundred Years: 1875/1975*, Brisbane: Henry Mullins Publishing, 1975

---

## Copyright Brisbane City Council

**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 September 2020)



*Dedicated to a better Brisbane*