

## Heritage Citation



**St Sebastian's Church School (former)**

### Key details

<b>Addresses</b>	At 141 Kadumba Street, Yeronga, Queensland 4104
<b>Type of place</b>	Church, School, Private school
<b>Period</b>	Interwar 1919-1939
<b>Style</b>	Romanesque
<b>Lot plan</b>	L2_RP41503
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — July 2003
<b>Construction</b>	Roof: Tile; Walls: Face brick

**People/associations** Francis (Frank) Leo Cullen (Architect)

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

St Sebastian's Church and School, which opened in 1937, is significant as the first purpose-built building to meet the religious and educational needs of Catholic parishioners in Yeronga. It was especially designed with a dual purpose as a church and school and has operated continuously as such to the present day.

## History

Archbishop James Duhig laid the foundation stone for St Sebastian's Roman Catholic Church-School on Sunday, 11 October 1936 and opened and blessed the new building on Sunday 7 February 1937. He was assisted at the opening ceremony by Rev Owen Steel (the Yeronga parish's first priest) and Rev Timothy O'Connor.

The church-school was named after the soldier-saint, Sebastian. It was built on the corner of Kadumba and Rome Streets in the grounds of the presbytery (Kadumba House).

Built in the post depression years, the year 1937 was said to have marked a new beginning for this small church school when past achievements intertwined with future visions. Funding to pay the debt on the building, as with other Catholic Churches, was heavily dependent on the financial goodwill of the parishioners.

The two-storey brick building was designed to serve the dual purpose of church and school. It was described in some detail in the Catholic Leader, which reported on the opening ceremony. The building was designed by Frank L Cullen, architect and erected by K D Morris of Holland Park. The ground floor embraced a spacious schoolroom divided into three classrooms by sliding partitions. A verandah ran the full length of the northern side of the building to provide additional classroom space when needed. The church (which could accommodate 200) was located on the upper storey that could be accessed by a 'handsome double flight of stairs'. The interior of the church was described as 'particularly handsome', have a low-vaulted ceiling, ample lighting conveniences' and confessionals.

The contract price for the building was £2,300. With the addition of a septic system, furnishings, tiled roof, 'fine ornamental fence' and architect's fees the total price was £3,100.

Archbishop Duhig said at the opening ceremony that the impetus for building the church-school had been to meet an urgent parish need for a Catholic place of worship and education in the area. He said that the Sisters of St Joseph would run the school and had started teaching two weeks ago and now had between 60 and 70 pupils. The Golden Jubilee publication for the Church School published in 1987 stated that Sister Pancratius and Sister Catherine had enrolled 38 pupils, ranging from 4 to 13 years of age on 27 January 1937.

Archbishop Duhig said the church-school met an urgent parish need, which he described as the "finest building in Yeronga" in its elevated position with views to the Brisbane River.

He said the Catholic Church was most active on Brisbane's southside at the time with the construction of church

buildings at the Mater Hospital, Buranda, Holland Park, Darra and Graceville.

Prior to this date the temporary church of St Sebastian was originally located in Kadumba House. The Catholic Church had purchased Kadumba House in May 1925 for just over £3000 from the four spinster daughters of William Douglas Grimes, (who was the original owner of the house). The women subsequently moved next door to 131 Kadumba Street where they had a smaller house built for them on the subdivided half-acre block.

Kadumba House became the presbytery for Father Steele and was opened and blessed on 19 April 1925 by Archbishop Duhig who was assisted by Rev. Fr. Owen Steele and Rev. Fr. Maloney.

This was a boom period of growth and construction for the Catholic Church in Brisbane. When Archbishop Duhig arrived in 1912 there were 36 catholic schools educating 6,700 children. By 1928 there were 100 Catholic schools educating 19,000 children.

Kadumba House was used as a presbytery until 1937 when it took on a new role as convent for the Sisters of St Joseph. Lay teachers were employed from 1955 onwards and in 1976 the first lay principal was appointed.

An Infants School was opened on the site in 1967 and a classroom complex was opened in 1985. This complex includes three classrooms, central hall/community area with kitchen facilities. Covered walkways look out to the central grassed area where Kadumba House once stood. Kadumba House was demolished in 1985 to make way for more playground space and these new facilities.

The ground floor of the brick church-school building is now used as an assembly hall and the upper floor as a church for St Sebastian's School

The sanctuary was redesigned in 1987. This included creating two new vertical windows which were built in stained glass and located on either side of the altar. Other changes included redesigning the altar and repositioning the Tabernacle.

A large complex of classrooms on the site facing Kadumba Street is being constructed.

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## Description

The church building is fairly large and unusual in that it is two storeys with a church on the upper level and a school assembly area (originally the primary school) on the ground floor. It is a simple face brick structure with a moderately low pitch, tiled gabled roof and front parapet with ornamental corbelling.

The rectangular-shaped building is constructed of a mix of red and dark grey bricks.

Entry to the former church is via a symmetrical set of brick stairs occupying the full width of its eastern elevation. Detailing features, which enhance the prominence of the stairs, are the rounded capping in darker bricks to the top of the balustrading and the ornamental corbelling under the balustrade at the front.

Another entry to the ground-level is via a porch on the northern elevation of the building.

On the Kadumba Street side of the building there is a row of large windows on the ground floor and a row of smaller windows on the upper level. On the internal side of a row of the same smaller windows open at the upper level while the ground level has a fairly large porch with an entry to the building.

The interiors of the church, simple but elegant, appear remarkably intact and seem to retain most of the original fittings and furnishings.

The church, located in an elevated position on the corner of Kadumba and Rome Streets, is a local landmark.

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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 first Catholic church to be built in Yeronga.

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#### Representative

##### CRITERION D

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

as a building designed to operate as both a church and school.

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#### Aesthetic

##### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a substantial architect-designed Romanesque style interwar brick building located prominently in a ridge-top

location on a corner site.

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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

as a centre of religious education and observance for the local Catholic community as well as a symbol of Archbishop Duhig's conscious effort to provide a Catholic presence in the area.

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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

as a church building designed by prominent Brisbane architect Frank L. Cullen.

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## References

1. Brisbane City Council Properties on the Web
2. Brisbane City Council Water Supply and Sewerage Board, Detail Plan No 1614, 3 April 1952
3. Brisbane City Council 1938 and 1946 aerial photographs
4. *Courier Mail*, Monday 8 February 1937
5. Yeronga cutting file, John Oxley Library
6. *Catholic Advocate*, 23 April 1925
7. *Catholic Leader*, 15 October, 1936
8. *Catholic Leader*, 11 February 1937, p 14.
9. *Catholic Leader*, 20-26 April 1975
10. *Golden Jubilee: St Sebastian's Church School Yeronga 1937-1987*
11. Cooper, B, *Community in Context: St Sebastian's Yeronga and Catholic Queensland 1925-1937*, University of Queensland, 1997
12. Letter from B F Canniffe, conveyancer at law, to Archbishop Duhig, 26 February 1925

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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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