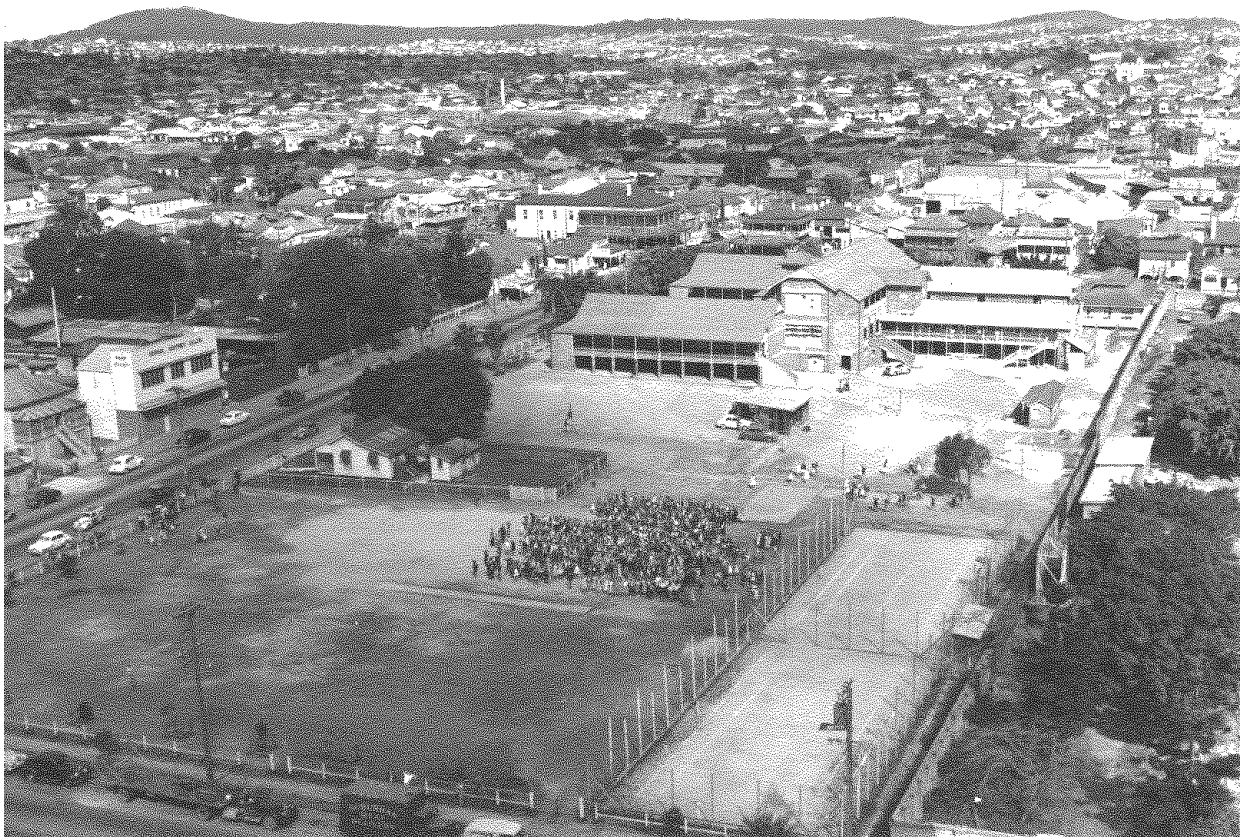


East Brisbane State School Conservation Study

A report prepared for Project Services
on behalf of Education Queensland



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Introduction

This study of the East Brisbane State School was commissioned by Project Services on behalf of Education Queensland. The school is listed in the Queensland Heritage Register, and sits next to the Brisbane Cricket Ground at Woolloongabba. The Cricket Ground Trust is expanding the grandstands and other facilities and, in a deal arranged by the state government, a part of the school property is to be incorporated into the Cricket Ground.

In September 1998 as this study is being completed, the Cricket Ground Trust has already been given the use of a part of the school ground – this consists of an irregular slice of land along the common boundary (to become a permanent part of the cricket ground), plus a construction zone (to be returned to the school ground after the grandstand has been built). Following an application to the Queensland Heritage Council, the school toilet block has been demolished and a number of mature trees in the area have been removed or shifted elsewhere in the school grounds.

This report considers the conservation of the school for the future, taking account of the cricket ground changes, and the practical consequences of the loss of some school buildings and site area.

This report, in draft form, has been available to Project Services since early April 1998 to guide the future development of the school.

The brief

My brief from Project Services was to

- *Review and consolidate the historical information on the school and its context provided by the Principal;*
- *Carry out additional research as deemed necessary;*
- *Inspect and analyse the physical evidence provided by the school;*
- *Define the cultural heritage significance of the place and its setting;*
- *Develop conservation policies to guide the future management and use of the site;*
- *Advise the Department of Public Works and Housing on development options at the school consistent with its cultural significance, and;*

- *Assist the Department of Public Works and Housing to prepare a report for submission to the Queensland Heritage Council in accordance with Section 37 of the Queensland Heritage Act 1992.*

Sources of information

The fabric of the East Brisbane State School has been the primary source of information for this study.

I have also drawn from the Queensland Schools Heritage Conservation Study¹, which was the principal source of comparative historical information. The second main source of documentary information was the material gathered in the files of the Department of Public Works and Housing – the agency responsible for the design of the school over almost a hundred years.

Particular sources of information are recorded in the notes, starting on page 20.

Acknowledgments

I am pleased to acknowledge the help given by these people during the study and in the preparation of this report:

- Stephen Murray of the Heritage Buildings Section, Built Environment Research Unit, Department of Public Works and Housing.
- Ron Tadic, Nick Coblens and Michael Robinson of Project Services.
- John Enchelmaier, Acting Principal at East Brisbane State School.

Conservation terms

The terms *place, conservation, cultural significance, fabric, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, adaptation and compatible use* are used in this report with the specific meanings defined in the *Australia ICOMOS charter for the conservation of places of cultural significance (the Burra Charter)*. These definitions are included in the Appendix, under *definition of terms*, page 19. The term *cultural heritage significance* is used in the sense defined in the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992*: “cultural heritage significance, of a place or object, includes its aesthetic, architectural, historical, scientific, social or technological significance to the present generation or past or future generations.”

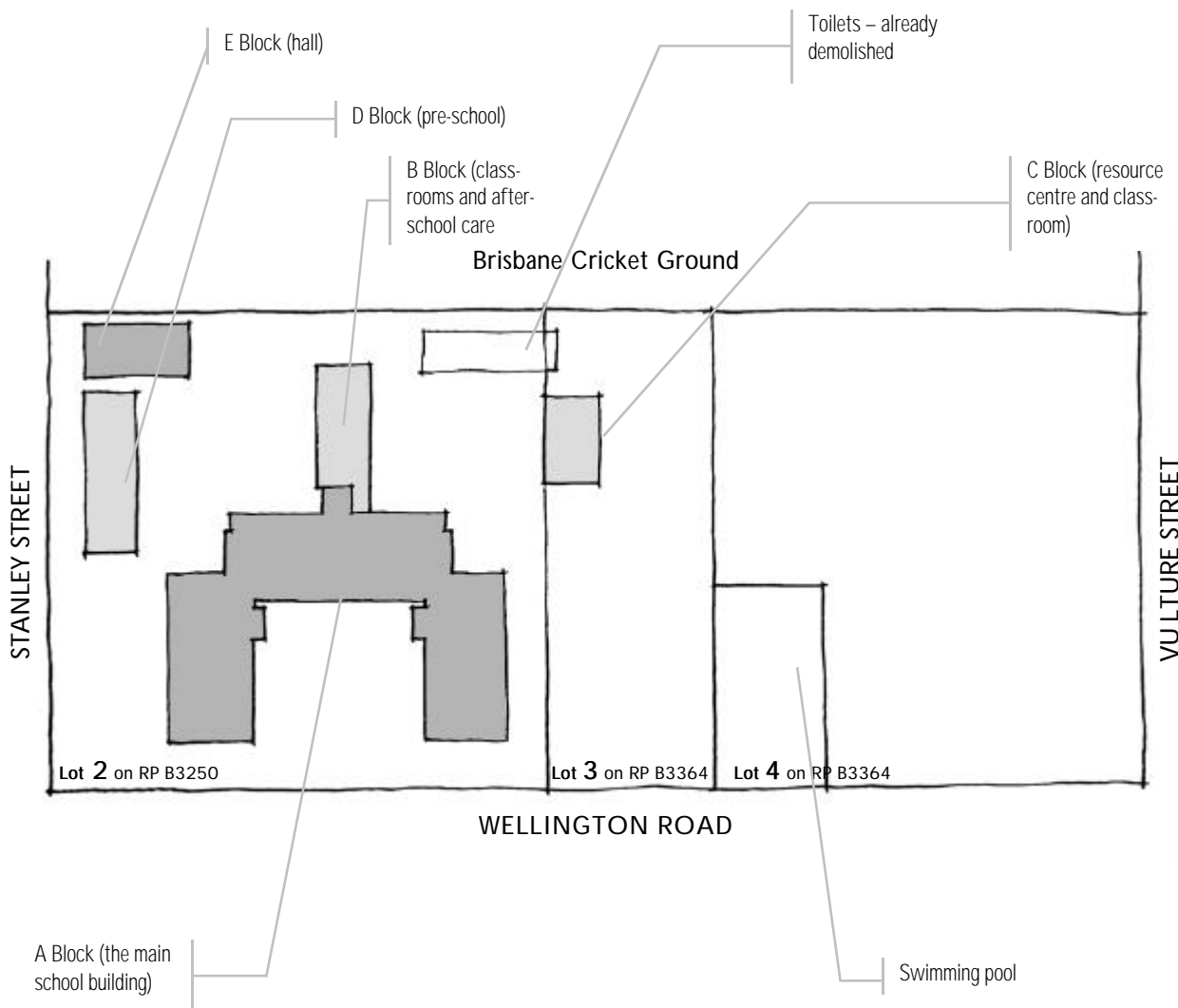
Findings of this study

In brief, this study confirmed that the main block of classrooms (A Block), built in stages around 1900 and in the late 1930s, has a high level of cultural heritage significance – see the discussion starting on page 7. The other highly significant building on the site is E Block, originally built as a play shed – see page 9.

It is recommended that the site and buildings should continue to be used as a state primary school. The use, adaptation and conservation of the site are discussed in the chapter *Conservation*, starting on page 14.

Key plan of the site

This sketch shows the locations of the various structures discussed in this report.



History and significance of the school

East Brisbane State School was established just as the great depression of the 1890s ended and the Australian colonies prepared for Federation. The Woolloongabba–East Brisbane area developed quickly around the turn of the century. People moved in to the area, newly served by tramways and railways, and settled in new houses. This was also a time to put up public buildings – schools and churches, post offices and pubs. A hundred years later, the school buildings and grounds still demonstrate something about those times. The historical importance of the school has prompted its inclusion in both the Register of the National Estate and the Queensland Heritage Register.

This chapter examines the development of the school buildings, and the cultural significance of the school as it now stands.

The original construction of the school is nicely described in the *Entry in the Heritage Register*: “The Department of Public Instruction, when recognising in 1897 the need for the establishment of a primary school in East Brisbane, underestimated the rate of population growth in the area and potential school enrolment. When the first school contract was let in 1899, it was for a brick building to cost £1,800 and to accommodate 350 pupils; the school opened on 10 July 1899 with approximately 800 students, and by the end of the year 1,008 children were enrolled. By mid 1901, the school had been extended with the addition of two classrooms and a central entrance with bell turret, at a cost of £2,323. The school could then accommodate officially 730 pupils in four large and three small classrooms.”²

Census figures show the population of East Brisbane was expanding rapidly when the school was built.

1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1933	1947	1954	1961	1966
867	3,293	6,701	7,559	8,956	11,019	12,528	12,437	11,230	10,958	10,780

As more houses were built the East Brisbane population continued to grow, and so did the number of pupils at the school. In the late 1930s the original building was extended again in two stages, which cost £4,370 and £6,860.³ As the census figures show, these extensions were made at a time when the general East Brisbane population was at

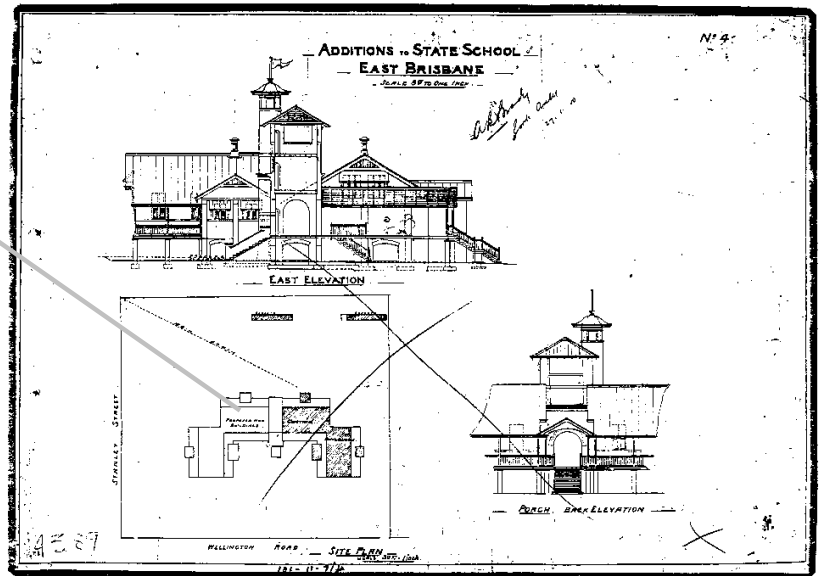
a peak.⁴ After the Second World War student demand continued to expand, and the school facilities were developed further.

In the following paragraphs I will discuss each of the buildings that still stand, with a short account of its history and the reasons it contributes to the cultural significance of the school as a whole. Please see also the Chronology of development (in the Appendix, starting on page 18).

A Block (the main school building)

This building, which was the first school building constructed on the site, remains the centrepiece of the school. As first constructed in 1899 the building consisted of two wings forming an L in plan. The first extension soon afterwards added the central vestibule, offset bell tower and a mirror image of the first stage.

The second stage, added in 1900, more than doubled the size of the building, adding a prominent belvedere with an offset bell tower.



A Block is the main element of the school that demonstrates the rapid development of East Brisbane in the two generations around the turn of the century, the buoyant economic conditions in Queensland around the time of Federation, and the government policy of labour intensive public infrastructure development during the 1930s depression. These historical developments are expressed by the location and scale of the building, and by its substantial brick construction carried through all major phases of its construction.

The building well represents the history of public works in Queensland, by showing the characteristic attributes of skilled professional design and substantial building construction. It is a characteristic work of the period when A B Brady was Government Architect (1892-1922), and Thomas Pye was his Senior Assistant. This aspect is expressed in the form and architecture of the building, and is somewhat masked by veranda enclosures and other changes made since the Second World War.

A Block has historical importance because it demonstrates clearly the characteristic form of state school buildings of its time. The typical aspects include the highset form; the plan arrangement; the verandas; the form, size and fittings of the classrooms; and the facilities for natural lighting and ventilation of the rooms.

The front entry, with the name plaque and towers above, and flanked by open verandas, is a strong symbol of the school in people's memories.

The use of brick construction sets the East Brisbane school apart from the general run of Queensland state schools. Of approximately 2,000 schools considered in the *Queensland Schools Conservation Study*, fewer than 50 were built of brick.⁵ The East Brisbane school is the first of a small group of brick schools built "in urban areas where population was rapidly increasing in the early 1900s".⁶ Others include New Farm State School (1900), Toowoomba South Girls and Infants (1905) and Hamilton State School (1906).

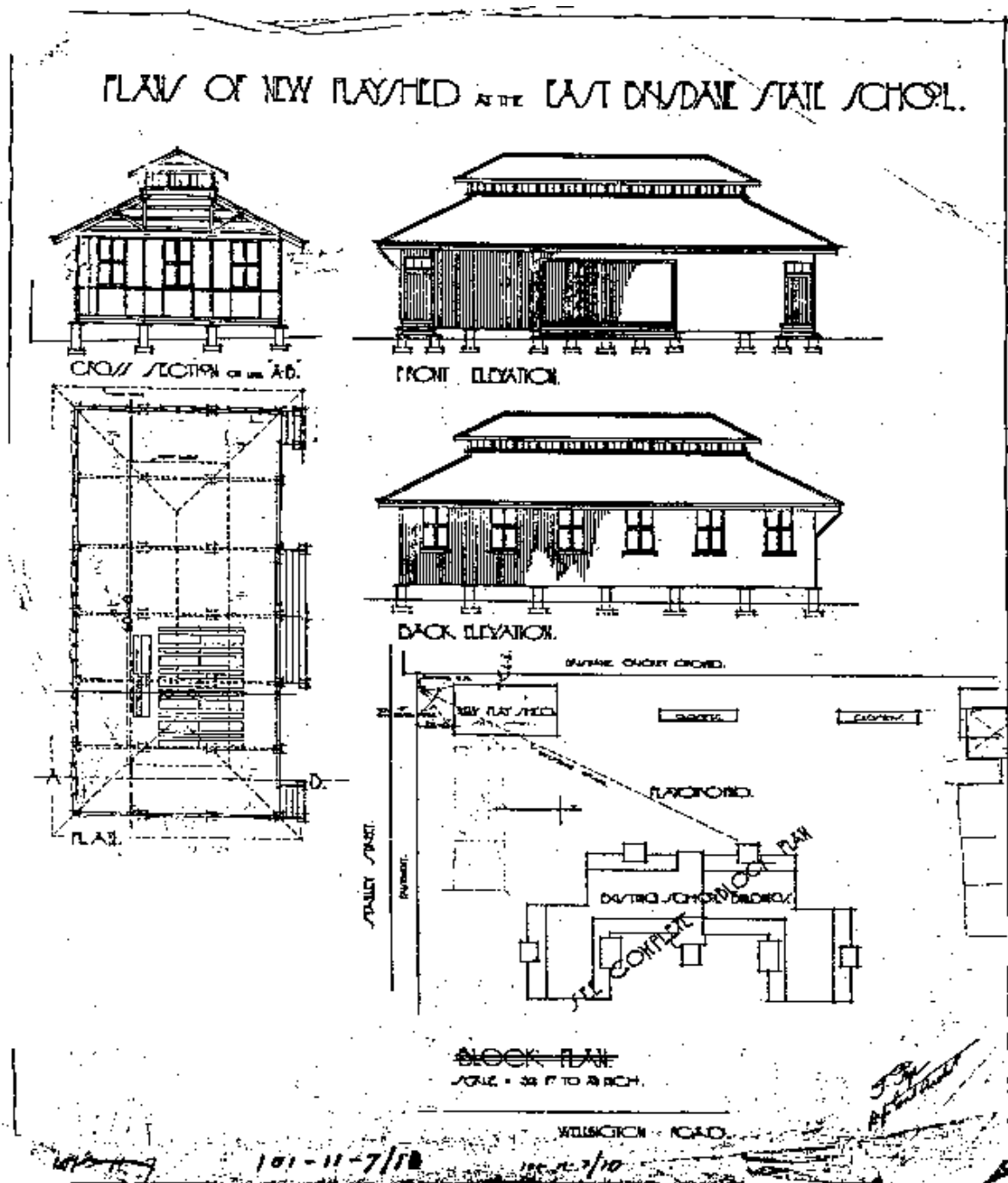
Generally, schools have special value for the community of people who spend their school days in them. To find out the level of social significance (as the *Burra Charter* calls this kind of value) that attaches to the East Brisbane State School it would be necessary to ask many people, a task beyond this present study. If the question was studied, it is likely



that many people with present and former connections with the school would express a special regard for the place. A Block, with its front door, name plaque and bell tower, might stand as a symbol of people's warm feelings for the school in general.

E Block (hall)

This timber building was erected in 1907 as a playshed of an unusual form. Unlike the common type of open sided playshed with an earth floor, this one has a timber floor. It is enclosed with stud walls sheathed with vertical boards, with a trussed hipped roof with a lantern.

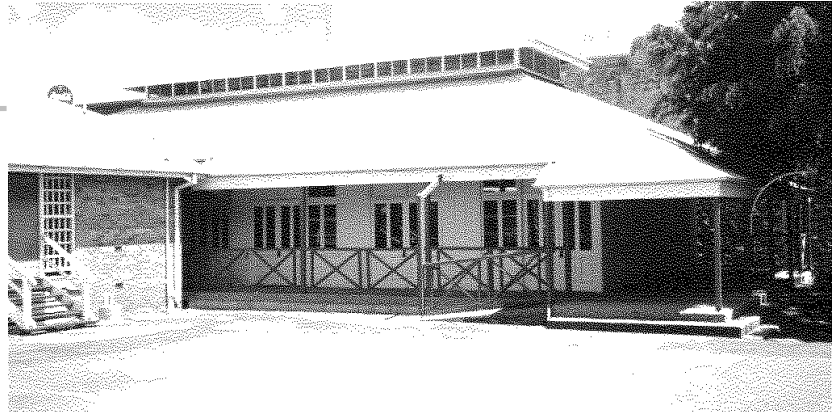


(A girls' playshed of the more usual open type was built around the same time in the other back corner of the school ground – the girls' playshed was removed some time before 1950).

A 1942 drawing of the building calls it a gymnasium, and shows a scheme for dividing it into three rooms for typists. This may have been a wartime use, but this has not been checked, and it is not known whether the work was carried out.

In 1950 the building was converted from a gymnasium to a pair of woodwork classrooms by constructing new partitions. At the same time extra casement windows were added and a covered way built, as a link to the new manual training building (D Block)

This 1998 photo shows that the building retains its 1907 playshed form, despite some alterations.

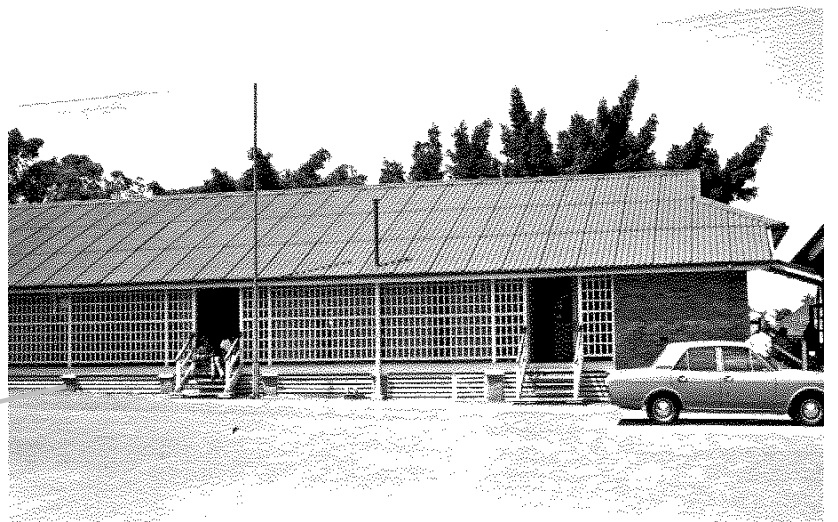


E Block has a high level of cultural heritage significance because it is a rare example of an unusual type of enclosed playshed, with an overlay of later adaptations that demonstrate a succession of uses within the school.

D Block (pre-school)

D Block was built in 1950, as a range of three classrooms for teaching sheet metal work. It is similar to timber vocational training buildings of the period. Its brick walls and low-set form – unusual for its type – were probably selected to make the building fit in with the existing A Block.

This photo, c1970, shows the brick walls and low set form of D Block.



In 1986 the building was converted for use as a preschool. This conversion involved internal rearrangement of walls inside, and extensive refitting – as a result it is no longer immediately evident that these were sheet metal classrooms.

The cultural heritage significance of D Block is slight

B Block (classrooms and after-school care)

B Block soon after construction in 1954, attached to the back of A Block.

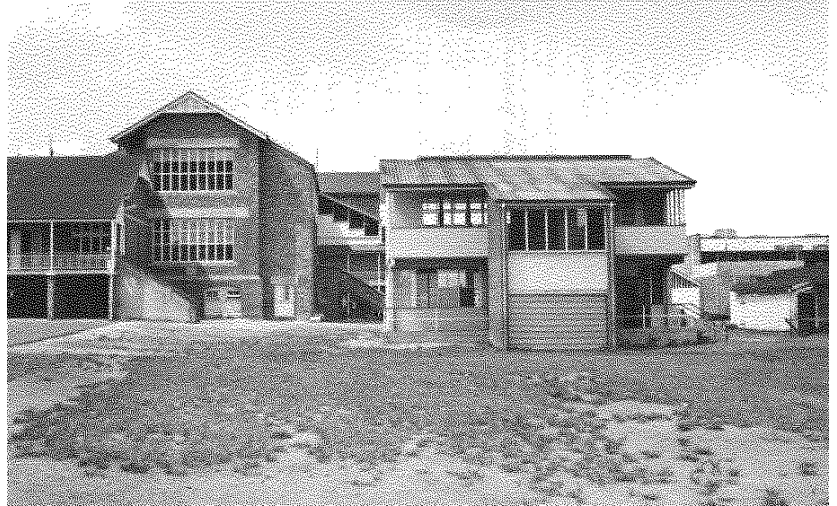
B Block was built in 1954 as a wing of three classrooms, in a typical form of the time (the high set timber school building, type F/T4). Again, as a minor variant probably adopted to fit with the existing A Block, the walls were of brick veneer, and the veranda balustrade was made to match those on the older building.



The cultural heritage significance of B Block is slight

C Block (resource centre and classroom)

C Block was built in 1968 as a high set classroom and services room, with semi-enclosed play area underneath. In 1976 the building was adapted to form a double teaching area upstairs, with a library underneath.



The cultural heritage significance of C Block is slight

Swimming Pool

The swimming pool, built in 1959, is of slight cultural heritage significance.

The grounds

The present school site consists of three adjoining blocks of land, as shown on the key plan on page 5. All development before the Second World War was confined to the southern block (lot 2, at the corner of Stanley Street and Wellington Road). This portion was originally enclosed by a timber picket fence,⁷ but nothing remains of this, or of the chain wire fence that replaced it in the late 1930s.

The central block (lot 3, fronting Wellington Road) was formerly occupied by a drill hall and a cottage associated with it. The northern block (lot 4, at the corner of Wellington Road and Vulture Street) may have been a parade ground associated with the drill hall. These two blocks seem to have been incorporated into the school grounds at some time in the 1950s. The drill hall may still have been standing at the time B Block was built in 1954, and the cottage was probably there until the swimming pool was built in 1959. This part of the site remains generally open and undeveloped, except for the pool, tennis courts, cricket pitch, cricket nets and a long jump pit.

The historical division of the whole site into its three constituent blocks is only subtly visible on the ground, marked by the locations of various minor structures. The most notable feature of the landscape is the collection of mature trees, concentrated around the frontages to Vulture Street and Wellington Road – photographs from the 1950s show that there were already mature trees in these locations at that time.

The age and appearance of the trees (principally the figs and camphor laurels) contribute to the visual character of the grounds. Altogether, the arrangement of the trees, buildings and minor structures on the site have some cultural heritage significance because they record the historical development of the school and the previous uses of the grounds.

Conservation

This chapter sets out general policies intended to safeguard the cultural significance of the school. These policies are also intended to show the potential for development of the site in ways that do not cause damage to significance. The policies arise from the various aspects of significance discussed in the preceding chapter.

Decision making process

Since the school is included in the Queensland Heritage Register, all changes to the fabric are regulated by the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992* under Section 37, which deals with listed properties owned by state agencies. In essence, the Act sets up a mechanism for notifying the Heritage Council of proposals before they are carried out, and gives the Heritage Council an opportunity to recommend to the minister responsible for the property whether the work should be done. In the end, the responsible minister can decide whether to accept the advice of the Heritage Council. A prudent minister would not normally be expected to go against the Council's recommendation.

The *Heritage Act* approval mechanism reinforces the need for responsible decision making for culturally significant places. The Heritage Council will be concerned to see that the proposals it considers are the results of a rigorous process, based on a good understanding of cultural significance and taking account of all relevant issues. Such clear thinking is also advocated by Australia ICOMOS in the *Charter for the conservation of places of cultural significance*.⁸ I hope that this report is an aid to clear thinking on the subject.

The Queensland Heritage Register uses the land title system to precisely identify each registered place. It is quite common for a number of buildings of varying significance to be affected by registration. Even to make changes to buildings that don't contribute to significance, application to the Heritage Council is still required. But, once it is shown that the proposed changes will not harm the value of the site, the Heritage Council will not obstruct them.⁹

Good advice, on conservation principles and their practical application, is available from officers in the Heritage Buildings Section, Built Environment Research Unit, Department of Public Works and Housing.

Continued use as a state school

To retain their social and historical value, the use of the site and buildings for a state primary school should continue.

Informing the school community

Copies of historical documents that explain and illustrate the history and development of the school should be collected and made available to members of the school community.

Caring for the significant buildings

These general principles should guide the care for the significant building:

Timely maintenance

Building fabric should be maintained by regular scheduled maintenance and repair, using like materials and methods. Where deterioration requires elements of the buildings to be reconstructed (such as replacement of rusted roof sheeting or rainwater goods) the materials and details should match the original design and specification.

Paint colours should reproduce the original schemes, based on the best available physical and documentary information.

New work recognisable as new

Where adaptation is required, new fabric should be distinguishable from original fabric. New elements should not be copies of old elements of their type.

Reversibility

As a general rule, no change should be made to the fabric that cannot be unmade.

In particular, no major new openings should be made in masonry walls, nor should existing door or window openings be enlarged. Openings for services should be confined to minimum sizes, and placed in locations chosen to mitigate damage to significance.

Precautionary principle

If in doubt, do less.

Transitional arrangements

I understand that the constraints of time and space will require some temporary relocation of functions displaced by the cricket ground expansion. For example, it will probably not be possible to provide toilets and resource centre facilities in their long term locations.

Temporary facilities should not be installed in A Block (main building) or E Block (hall) unless the installation is entirely reversible.

Suitable arrangements would include temporary installation of transportable toilets in the grounds, and relocation of library functions to

E Block (using movable furniture only – no alterations to the building fabric).

Conserving A Block

Much of the cultural significance of the site resides in the main school building. The future use and care of the building should be guided by the principles set out below. It is not imperative to do everything suggested here right away, but nothing should be done that takes away the opportunity to do these things later.

General approach

The first requirement is to preserve the original fabric of the major stages of construction of 1899, 1900 and 1938.

A secondary aim is to reveal those significant attributes of the building that have been obscured by recent modifications. Some missing components will need to be reconstructed.

Remove accretions

The veranda enclosures, consisting of chamferboard sheathed stud walls with sliding aluminium windows or timber casements, should be removed when the opportunity arises, and open timber balustrades reconstructed.

Preserving the undercroft

The open sheltered play space under A Block should remain generally open, with no more than minor parts enclosed for storage or other functions.

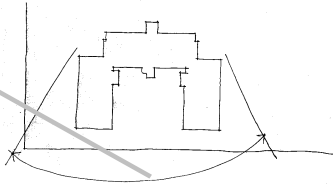
Use

A Block's primary use for classrooms, and as the symbolic 'front door' to the school, should continue.

Keeping views of A Block

The views of the main building seen from a range of viewpoints in Wellington Road are of primary significance. No new building should in-

The range of viewpoints that need to be protected from intrusion by new building.



trude between the boundary and A Block in the area shown in the sketch.

Conserving E Block

The 1907 playshed – later used as a gymnasium, woodworking classrooms, and presently as a hall – should be preserved and the physical evidence of the various adaptations retained.

Recording before demolition

If any of B, C or D Blocks is to be demolished, a detailed photographic record should be made of it first, and the records lodged in a suitable archive.¹⁰

New architecture

These principles should guide the design of new buildings on the East Brisbane State School site:

Architecture of our time

New buildings should not replicate the old buildings, nor pretend to be older than they are. They should be well designed within the spirit of our own time.

Good neighbours

New buildings sited close to the old buildings should be positioned so as not to obscure important views of them. The form, materials and details of the new architecture should arise from a considered analysis of the relationship of the buildings. The visual scale of new buildings should not be more prominent than the scale of A Block.

Site boundaries

The original extent of the grounds, and the make up of the site of three separate allotments, should be kept visible.

The school grounds

The mature figs and other mature large scale trees along the fence line should generally be preserved, and plans made to replace unsound or senescent specimens.

Appendix

This appendix contains information to supplement and explain the main text of the report. Historical changes to the site are summarised in the *Chronology of development*, conservation terms are explained in *Definition of terms*, and details of information sources are given in the *Notes*.

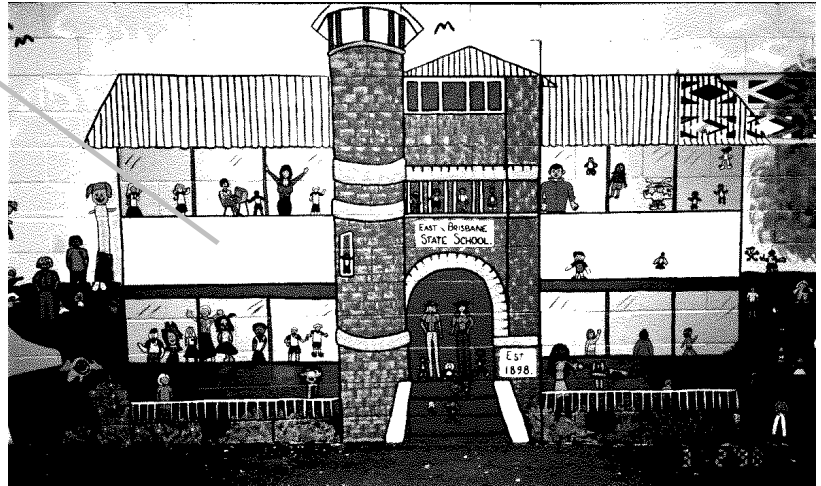
Chronology of development

This brief chronology records the main steps in the development of the school site. The information comes from documents in the files of the Department of Public Works and Housing and its predecessors, helpfully analysed and summarised by officers of the department at various times.¹¹ Generally, the year given here is the year when each item of work was completed.

- 1899 First part of A Block constructed (two wings in L configuration); boys' and girls' toilets constructed.
- 1900 A Block extended (adding mirror image of the first stage, plus tower, forming U configuration); toilets extended.
- 1907 E Block constructed as an enclosed playshed; separate open playshed for girls constructed.
- 1911 Infants' School constructed.
- 1927 Toilets fitted with WCs.
- 1938 A Block extended by adding a second storey to the central wing; extensions added to the flanking wings.
- 1940 New fence constructed along Stanley Street and Wellington Road.
- 1942 E Block adapted to accommodate typists.
- 1950 The girls' open playshed and the Infants' School have been removed at some time before this.
- 1950 D Block constructed as three metalwork classrooms; E Block converted to two woodwork classrooms.
- 1954 B Block constructed as a wing of three classrooms.
- 1959 Swimming pool constructed.
- 19?? Refurbishment of A Block, including enclosure of some verandas with chamferboard spandrels and louvre or awning casement windows.
- 1968 C Block constructed as a high set classroom and services room with semi-enclosed play area underneath.

- 1973 Toilets replaced by new concrete blockwork building.
- 1976 C Block adapted to form double teaching area upstairs, with library underneath.
- 1984 A Block refurbished, including further enclosure of verandas
- 1986 A Block adapted to form new remedial room.
- 1986 D Block adapted to form preschool.

A Block, depicted in a mural on the swimming pool wall.



Definition of terms

The *Australia ICOMOS charter for the conservation of places cultural significance (the Burra Charter)* defined a number of terms which have since become standard in conservation debate in this country. These terms, wherever they occur in this report, have the meanings defined in the charter:

Place means site, areas, building or other work, group of buildings or other works together with associated contents and surrounds.

Cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for past, present or future generations.

Fabric means all the physical material of the place.

Conservation means all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance. It includes maintenance and may according to circumstance include preservation, restoration, reconstruction and adaptation and will be commonly a combination of more than one of these.

Maintenance means the continuous protective care of the fabric, contents and setting of a place, and is to be distinguished from repair. Repair involves restoration or reconstruction and it should be treated accordingly.

Preservation means maintaining the fabric of a place in its existing state and retarding deterioration.

Restoration means returning the EXISTING fabric of a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new material.

Reconstruction means returning a place as nearly as possible to a known earlier state and is distinguished by the introduction of materials (new or old) into the fabric. This is not to be confused with either recrea-

tion or conjectural reconstruction which are outside the scope of this Charter.

Adaptation means modifying a place to suit proposed compatible uses.

Compatible use means a use which involves no change to the culturally significant fabric, changes which are substantially reversible, or changes which require a minimal impact.

Notes

- 1 Paul Burmester, Margaret Pullar & Michael Kennedy, *Queensland schools: a heritage conservation study* (Brisbane: xerox report to the Department of Education, 1996).
- 2 Department of Environment, *Entry in the Heritage Register: File No 601476: East Brisbane State School*, p. 2.
- 3 *Entry in the Heritage Register*, p.3.
- 4 The census figures are extracted from a report to Brisbane City Council: Peter Marquis-Kyle & Thom Blake, *Brisbane housing character study* (Brisbane: Allom Lovell Marquis-Kyle Architects, 1993).
- 5 *Queensland schools: a heritage conservation study*, p. 92.
- 6 *Queensland schools: a heritage conservation study*, p. 18.
- 7 Shown in a photograph in the 1900 annual report of the Department of Works.
- 8 For an introduction to this process, see Peter Marquis-Kyle & Meredith Walker, *The illustrated Burra Charter: making good decisions about the care of important places* (Sydney: Australia ICOMOS, 1992).
- 9 The schools heritage conservation study suggests that the provisions of Part 6 of the *Heritage Act*, which deals with heritage agreements, could be useful in the management of listed schools. See *Queensland schools: a heritage conservation study: conservation management*, p. 4.
- 10 Such as John Oxley Library or the picture collection of the History Unit, Department of Education.
- 11 In particular, I have relied on the very useful handwritten notes compiled by historical researchers formerly working in the department, now held in the Built Environment Research Unit. These notes summarise information from annual reports and the indexes to the department's archive of drawings. The department's drawing batch was the other essential source.