

# Convent of Mercy and Academy of Mary Immaculate, Fitzroy

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

No. 88 Nicholson Street, Fitzroy 3065

March 2026

Prepared for



**ACADEMY**  
OF MARY IMMACULATE

Prepared by

**LOVELL CHEN**





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

This report was prepared on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people who have been custodians of this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge their stories, connection to land, water and culture which is embedded in Country. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and acknowledge that this report includes a post-contact history that forms only a small part of the ongoing story.

Academy of Mary Immaculate, Fitzroy is located on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, who are, and have always been the custodians of this land. We pay our respects to the Elders past and present, and acknowledge the stories, traditions and cultures of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## Quality Assurance Register

The following register documents the development and issue of this report prepared by Lovell Chen Pty Ltd in accordance with our certified quality management system.



Project no.	Issue no.	Description	Issue date	Approval
20230095	1	Incomplete draft for discussion	May 2025	AM
20230095	2	Draft for AMIF review	July 2025	AM
20230095	3	Final	16 March 2026	AM

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*Cover image:* Nicholson Street verandah (1930s) to the 'Goold residence' (Source: Lovell Chen)

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## 1.0 Introduction

This Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) has been prepared for the Academy of Mary Immaculate located at 88 Nicholson Street, Fitzroy. It provides an assessment of heritage impacts associated with a programme of works to existing buildings and areas within the campus. The works form part of a masterplan that seeks to perpetuate the viability of the subject site for educational purposes, a function that it has performed since 1857.

The Academy of Mary Immaculate is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) as the 'Convent of Mercy and Academy of Mary Immaculate' (H0507). It is generally referred to below by the acronym AMIF – the 'F' refers to Fitzroy. It is noted, respectfully, that the AMIF campus is located on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country.

### 1.1 The subject site

The AMIF complex is located on the east side of Nicholson Street, opposite the Royal Exhibition Building (REB) and Carlton Gardens (Figure 1). The site is bound by Palmer Street to the south, the Cairo Flats at 98 Nicholson Street to the north and Little Fleet Street to the east. It lies within the World Heritage Environs Area (WHEA), which has been established to safeguard the world heritage values associated with the REB and Carlton Gardens.

The AMIF complex has evolved iteratively since 1850. The earliest structures on the site are two bluestone houses generally referred to here as the Goold and Kennedy residences, dating from the 1850s; the most recent building was completed in 2014. The 1850s residences, and other nineteenth century structures, are located along the Nicholson and Palmer Street frontages while the more recent development is generally concentrated to the east of the site (this broad pattern of development is reflected in the levels of heritage sensitivity at Figure 3).

Development undertaken at the site has typically been opportunistic, as opposed to being guided by a strategic plan or vision. A legacy of this approach is a dense and highly congested campus. Views from the public domain to significant buildings in the campus and the visual relationships between significant buildings have variously been obscured as a consequence of these patterns of development. The 1850s residences, for instance, are partially obscured from public view due by an interwar verandah that conceals their western elevations.

### 1.2 Project rationale

#### Sisters of Mercy vacating the site

The Sisters of Mercy occupied part of the site from the mid-1850s until 2020. Due to the aging population of the resident community and the declining number of Sisters, a decision was made to relocate the remaining Sisters to an alternative premises. At the point of departure, the two-storey convent building (generally referred to below as the Goold residence) was gifted by the Sisters of Mercy to the AMIF. This was a significant moment in the history of the site. It represented the first time since the foundation of the complex that the entire property would be dedicated for educational use. With the objective of optimising the opportunity presented, AMIF embarked upon a strategic master planning process to unlock and maximise the potential of the site.



Figure 1 Aerial view of the Academy of Mary Immaculate campus (indicated)  
Source: Nearmap, December 2025 (accessed on 11 February 2026)

## Current challenges and needs of AMIF to remain commercially viable<sup>1</sup>

The development of the strategic master plan is grounded in the need to align campus infrastructure with the evolving demands of contemporary education. The Academy is a fee-paying institution which operates in a competitive environment, including government and Catholic schools.

Campus facilities, pedagogical models, and student wellness programs are increasingly influential factors for new students and their parents in the selection of schools. The Academy recognised that a long-term, future-focussed master plan is essential to sustain its educational mission and values. It aims to strengthen its position by prioritising student wellbeing and progressive teaching practices. However, the current campus infrastructure presents several limitations. Many of the existing buildings do not comply with modern standards or support the Academy's learning and teaching approaches due to their age, layout, and capacity constraints.

Educational facilities must now cater to diverse learning needs and accommodate a wide range of teaching styles including formal, informal and student led interactions and learning. There is also a growing recognition of the importance of student mental health and inclusive learning environments, which require adaptable and flexible spaces. The shift from traditional, didactic teaching models necessitates a built environment that fosters engagement, accessibility, and innovation.

An important finding during the planning process was the issue of overcrowding. The campus is currently designed to comfortably accommodate approximately 630 students, but student population is now closer to 680. This has placed strain on existing facilities and highlighted the urgency for expansion. To remain economically viable and meet the expectations of a modern fee-paying school, the Academy must upgrade its infrastructure to support the projected growth in enrolment.

To support this vision, PMDL-McGlashan Architects was appointed to conduct a comprehensive site review and lead the master planning process (see Section 3.1 for further details). Its assessment identified significant constraints within the current campus layout, including limited teaching space and a lack of outdoor, multi-functional recreational areas. These limitations not only hinder effective teaching and learning but also impact the overall student experience. These findings underscored the need for targeted upgrades and additions to support the continued viability of the school in its current location. Upgrading and expanding the facilities will enable the Academy to deliver high-quality education in a supportive and future-ready environment, while also reinforcing its position as a leading institution in the competitive Melbourne school market.

As part of the campus redevelopment strategy, the availability of the existing convent building presented a unique opportunity for adaptive reuse. Various options for the use of the convent were contemplated, including conversion into a library or administrative offices. After careful consideration, it was concluded that using the convent as a new library would be most compatible with the historical character and values of the building. This choice responds appropriately to the heritage significance of the site while providing an opportunity to create a diverse, flexible learning environment.

The adaptation of the convent will enable the introduction of both large and small-scale learning spaces, tailored to the Academy's evolving educational philosophy. It also supports the school's broader goals of enhancing student wellbeing. Furthermore, relocating the library to the convent will free up the existing library space, allowing it to be repurposed for other strategic campus needs. This adaptive reuse approach will not only maximise spatial efficiency within the existing envelope of the AMIF campus but will also reinforce the Academy's commitment to its rich history, heritage stewardship and innovative education.

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<sup>1</sup> Content in this section is informed by a meeting between Lovell Chen and Andrew Baker, Business Manager at AMIF and Sister Mary Moloney, Principal at AMIF held in person on 8 May 2025.

## Opportunities and constraints for new development within the complex

Constraints, and opportunities, that guided the development of the masterplan include the following:

### 1. Limited site area for growth

The AMIF complex is located on a constrained site, limiting opportunities for construction of new buildings or major extensions to existing buildings. There is limited open space available for expansion without further compromising circulation, outdoor space or the heritage setting.

### 2. Contextual heritage sensitivities

The site is within the WHEA, which was established to protect the setting and values of the adjacent world heritage listed REB and Carlton Gardens. Development within the WHEA is subject to stringent planning controls to ensure new work does not compete visually with or diminish the heritage values of the REB and Carlton Gardens. Any new development or additions that might increase the height or massing of existing structures are constrained due to potential view lines and setting impacts in relation to the REB. Heritage and planning guidelines advocate for low-scale, recessive additions that remain subordinate to existing structures and preserve key sightlines.

The WHEA includes various state and locally listed heritage buildings. Several controls have been developed to guide new development within the WHEA. Any development at the site must respect the significance of the subject campus as well as the world heritage listed significance of the buildings located in its vicinity.

Nicholson Street has retained a prevailing scale and character consistent with its development from the mid-nineteenth century. The AMIF complex is surrounded by buildings/places that are the subject of heritage controls – it is located within the South Fitzroy Heritage Precinct (HO334), as well as is in proximity to locally heritage-listed structures under the Yarra Planning Scheme (see Figure 6). Any new development within this context must consider the heritage value of these surrounding buildings, ensuring that the design is compatible and does not overwhelm or negatively impact their significance.

### 3. Heritage significance of existing buildings

The complex includes a number of buildings of high heritage significance, dating to the 1850s, including the Goold and Kennedy residences. As a result, much of the site is considered historically and architecturally significant, warranting careful management and retention.

### 4. Site access and circulation constraints

The complex's internal circulation and access points are impacted by the existing building layout and changes within the landscape, which have evolved opportunistically over more than 150 years. Upgrading access and ensuring equitable movement throughout the site, particularly for people with disabilities, had to be balanced against maintaining the heritage significance of the place. Complex and varied levels within the site and the congested nature of the place have led to a lack of legibility and issues with making all areas of the campus accessible to all.

### 5. Compliance

Some previous infill additions within the complex are recognised as being not fit for purpose and do not meet current building codes or accessibility standards. These areas were identified for potential removal or replacement, but such works still had to be approached sensitively to ensure they did not negatively affect adjacent heritage fabric. The design development followed the conservation principles of Article 3 of the *Burra Charter* and the proposed changes to the places are limited to, 'as much as necessary but as little as possible'. The changes have been broadly located in areas of lesser heritage significance or infill additions whose removal will not impact the heritage significance of the place.

## 6. Emphasis on adaptive reuse

Given the above limitations, the strategy for site development focused on the adaptive reuse of existing buildings rather than new construction. The availability of the two-storey convent, gifted by the Sisters of Mercy provided an opportunity to accommodate additional floor area required for the functioning of the school. This approach aligns with best-practice heritage management particularly Article 21 and Article 23 of the *Burra Charter*, promoting the continued use of site for educational purposes and ensuring that the heritage buildings are maintained within their existing setting and are used through sensitive adaptation.

## 1.3 Pre-application engagement

### 1.3.1 Pre-application meeting request (P40433)

Further to a pre-application meeting with Heritage Victoria in January 2025, the following written feedback was provided. The scheme was amended to reflect these comments, as well as relevant guidelines and policies.

- There is a general level of comfort with the proposal, noting that it will require consideration under a permit application.
- Proposed demolition is largely focused on later addition elements of lesser significance, such as the two-story balcony (added 1929-33) to Goold's Residence, the Classroom addition to Kennedy Residence (1922), and the infill addition to Twelve Sisters House (1930s).
- Notwithstanding the above point, any application must include a thorough options analysis regarding elements proposed for demolition. This analysis should clearly show that retaining these elements is not feasible and that their removal will, overall, cause the least harm while allowing for an outcome that supports the continued use of the site as a school, both in its current and historic context. The proposed demolition of the former laundry/kitchen addition (pre-1897 but with later additions) and the internal bluestone stair (1868) in the addition to Goold's residence (now staff spaces) may be considered if a comprehensive proposal is provided that includes archival documentation, as well as plans for salvaging and reusing the bluestone. This proposal should also demonstrate that these are the only viable options in order to provide the necessary upgrades.
- Reasonable or economic use rationale will be a critical in any permit application to justify the proposed works, as these relate to supporting the ongoing and historic use of place as a school.
- The place was observed to be in good condition at the site visit, however any application must include a scope of conservation works to be undertaken alongside the redevelopment and upgrade works. This may include but not be limited to: work to the tiles to Goold entrance hall, removal of paint from historically unpainted masonry, etc. It is likely that conservation and repair works would be required via permit conditions on any approval for development at the place.
- The place is part of the declared World Heritage Environs Area (WHEA), intended to protect the World Heritage values of the Royal Exhibition Building (REB) and Carlton Gardens. The Statement of Significance for the WHEA specifically identifies the Convent of Mercy as a 'key heritage building' which has a 'strong visual relationship or connection with the REB'. As such change at this place must be carefully managed in order to protect its individual State significance, as well as that of the broader WHEA. Any application must include an assessment of potential impacts of the proposal on the WHEA.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Written feedback for pre-application meeting received from Jessica Hood, Principal, Heritage Permits, Heritage Victoria to Suzanne Zahra, 25 February 2025

## 1.4 Documentation

### 1.4.1 Policy and guidance documents

This report has been prepared with regards to relevant principles and policy documents, including:

- *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*, ICOMOS, 2013
- *Principles for considering change to places in the Victorian Heritage Register*, Heritage Victoria, December 2022
- *Reasonable or economic use policy*, Heritage Victoria, June 2021
- *Chronology*, Lovell Chen, April 2024
- *Academy of Mary Immaculate Master Plan - Issue E*, PMDL McGlashan Everist Architects, 21 July 2023
- *World Heritage Strategy Plan for the World Heritage Environs Area*, Department of Transport and Planning, February 2025

### 1.4.2 Documents submitted for approval

The following documents are referred to in this report and are submitted for approval (subject to conditions):

- PMDL- McGlashan Everist Architects, *Academy of Mary Immaculate Fitzroy - Convent, Flynn and Whyte Buildings*, Heritage Victoria Application, dated 11 March 2025 comprising of the following drawings A00.00, A01.01, A01.02, A02.01, A10.01, A10.02, A10.03, A10.04, A10.05, A10.06, A10.07, A10.08, A14.01, A14.02, A14.03, A14.04, A21.01, A21.02, A21.03, A21.04, A21.05, A21.06, A21.07, A30.01, A30.02, A30.03, A30.04, A70.01, A80.02, A80.03, A80.05, A80.06 and A80.25
- Tract, *The Academy of Mary Immaculate Landscape Report*, dated 11 March 2026

Reference is also made in this HIS to the *Academy of Mary Immaculate, Fitzroy* Chronology report prepared by Lovell Chen, dated April 2024, which has guided and informed the following proposal.

## 1.5 Statutory heritage controls

### 1.5.1 Heritage Act, 2017

#### VHR extent of registration

Convent of Mercy and Academy of Mary Immaculate is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) as Registered Place H0507 and is subject to the provisions of the *Heritage Act 2017*. The VHR entry was amended in 2024 (discussed below).

The VHR extent of registration as gazetted is shown in Diagram 507 (Figure 2) and described as follows:

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 507 encompassing all of Lot 1 on Title Plan 758835, Lot 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 on Title Plan 23195, Lot 1 on Title Plan 707025, Lot 1 on Title Plan 354127 and Lot 1 on Title Plan 966253<sup>3</sup>

The place has been assessed as satisfying Heritage Council of Victoria criteria A, D and H.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/482>, accessed 15 April 2025

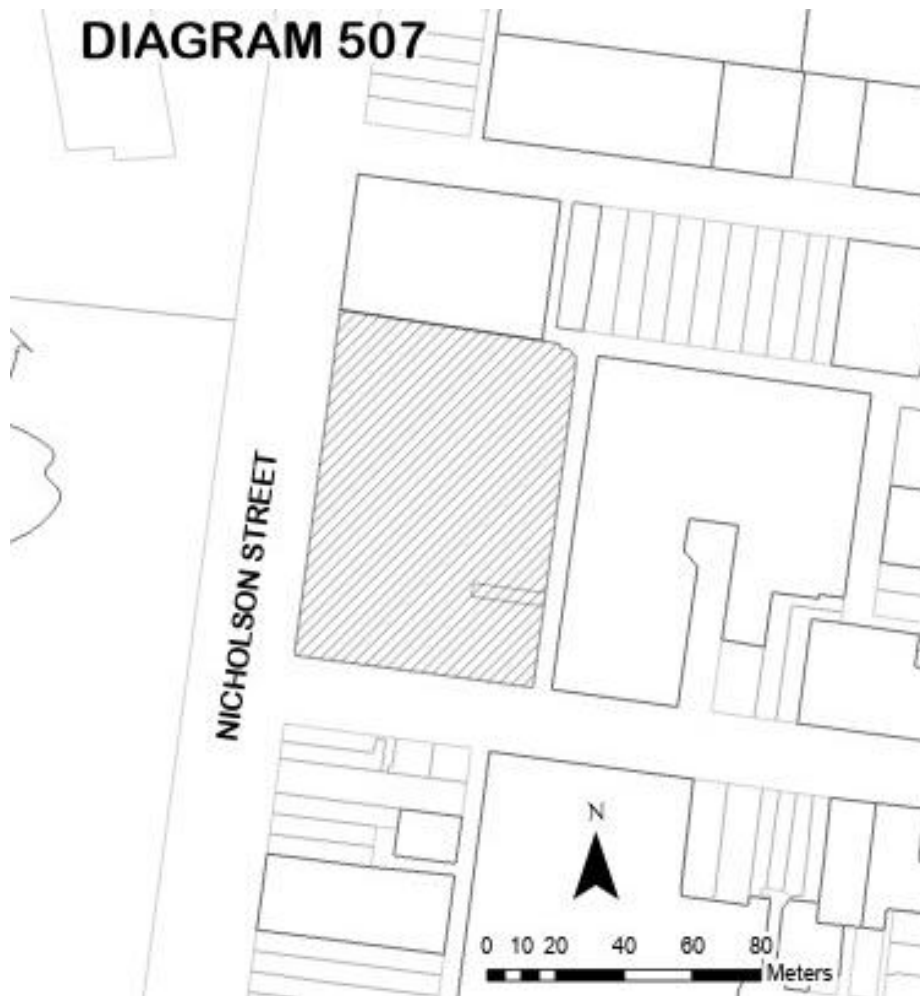


Figure 2 Mapped VHR Extent of Registration for Convent of Mercy and Academy of Mary Immaculate  
 Source: Victorian Heritage Database, Diagram 507

### Amendment to the VHR Registration (2024)

A detailed history and chronology of the development of the complex was prepared by Lovell Chen in April 2024 (see Appendix A). Following the preparation of this document, it was recommended to the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria to amend the registration for the Convent of Mercy and Academy of Mary Immaculate. A VHR Registration Amendment – Supporting Documentation was prepared by Lovell Chen in June 2024. This report provides an overview of the site, an assessment against the heritage criteria adopted by the Heritage Council of Victoria, an updated statement of significance, a proposed extent of registration and recommended permit policy and exemptions.

The earlier VHR registration for the AMIF did not apply to the entire campus. Following the 2024 review, the entirety of the complex is included in VHR registration. Based on the significance of each of the buildings on site, the complex was divided into two different areas of significance – area of greater sensitivity and area of lesser sensitivity (Figure 3).

The following site-specific permit exemptions are applicable to the Academy of Mary Immaculate complex –

#### *Area of greater sensitivity*

- Removal or change to non-original fit out, fixtures and fittings provided there are no works to or impact on original or early fabric.
- Like for like repair and maintenance.

*Area of lesser sensitivity*

- All internal alterations, including to fitout, floor layout, plant and equipment.
- Like for like repair and maintenance to the external building envelope.
- Demolition of buildings within the area of lesser sensitivity, provided there is no impact on buildings in the area of greater sensitivity.<sup>4</sup>

Most of the buildings fronting Nicholson Street and dating from nineteenth century, are included in the area of greater sensitivity. It is noted that the majority of the proposed works under the permit application are located in this area



Figure 3 Areas of greater and lesser sensitivity  
Source: Lovell Chen, available on the Victorian Heritage Database

<sup>4</sup> <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/482>, accessed 15 April 2025

## 1.5.2 World Heritage Environs Area

The Royal Exhibition Building (REB) and Carlton Gardens (located to the west of the subject site) were inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2004. As a result of this listing, a buffer zone known as World Heritage Environs Area (WHEA) was established in 2007 around the REB and Carlton Gardens to ensure that the world heritage values of the site are maintained.

A World Heritage Environs Area Strategy Plan was developed as a policy framework document to guide development within the WHEA. The first Strategy Plan was prepared in 2009 and formally approved in October 2013. In accordance with the requirements of the *Heritage Act 2017*, the 2013 Strategy Plan was reviewed, and a draft was prepared in 2021 by Hansen Partnership Pty Ltd in partnership with HLCD Pty Ltd for the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning. The draft 2021 Strategy Plan recommended that the WHEA be expanded. Accordingly, the WHEA boundary was extended in 2022 and was declared in the Government Gazette no. G30 on 28 July 2022. The Convent of Mercy and Academy of Mary Immaculate complex is located within this expanded World Heritage Environs Area (Figure 4). The 2021 draft Strategy Plan was updated in September 2022 to reflect the formal declaration of a new WHEA. The Strategy Plan was formally adopted and approved by the Minister of Planning on 17 April 2025.

Section 7.5 of the *World Heritage Environs Area Strategy Plan for World Heritage Environs Area* includes an updated Statement of Significance for the WHEA. The statement notes that the WHEA ‘...is of historical, ~~social~~, architectural and aesthetic significance and reflects the area of greater sensitivity within the buffer zone surrounding the World Heritage listed Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens’.<sup>5</sup> The Academy of Mary Immaculate complex is identified as one of several ‘...key heritage buildings from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are located in the precinct, some of which are considered to be landmarks in their own right, but which also have a ‘strong visual relationship or connection with the REB’.<sup>6</sup>

Section 7.3 of the Strategy Plan notes that the *Heritage Act 2017* controls development within the WHEA for places of State-level cultural significance included in the Victorian Heritage Register. The report also states that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries places located within the WHEA and having strong visual relationship and connection to the REB & Carlton Gardens should have this connection noted within their respective Statements of Significance. This will help in considering potential impacts for the WHEA when approvals are given for any development at each VHR-listed place.<sup>7</sup> The statement of significance for the subject site on the VHD does not include any details of its visual relationship or connection to the REB & Carlton Gardens.

The 2025 Strategy Plan identifies five types of views, ‘in relation to short, medium and long-range views depending on the visibility of the REB, Dome, Carlton Gardens and its 19th century setting in their current condition’. The identified views are - Direct Views, Proximate Views, Partial/ Glimpse Views, Distant Views and Oblique streetscape Views.<sup>8</sup> Among the identified significant views from the Royal Exhibition Building (REB) and Carlton Gardens, View 6C is considered to have potential relevance in relation to the proposed works at the AMIF complex which is located within the WHEA (see Figure 5).

- 6C View 6C: Views to the intact 19th century streetscape on the east side of Nicholson Street between Moor and Princes Streets from the western footpaths of Nicholson Street at designated entries into the Carlton Gardens and the Museum Forecourt.<sup>9</sup>

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5 Department of Transport and Planning, *World Heritage Strategy Plan for the World Heritage Environs Area*, February 2025, p. 46

6 Department of Transport and Planning, *World Heritage Strategy Plan for the World Heritage Environs Area*, February 2025, p. 47

7 Department of Transport and Planning, *World Heritage Strategy Plan for the World Heritage Environs Area*, February 2025, p. 44

8 Department of Transport and Planning, *World Heritage Strategy Plan for the World Heritage Environs Area*, February 2025, p. 65

9 Department of Transport and Planning, *World Heritage Strategy Plan for the World Heritage Environs Area*, February 2025, p. 69

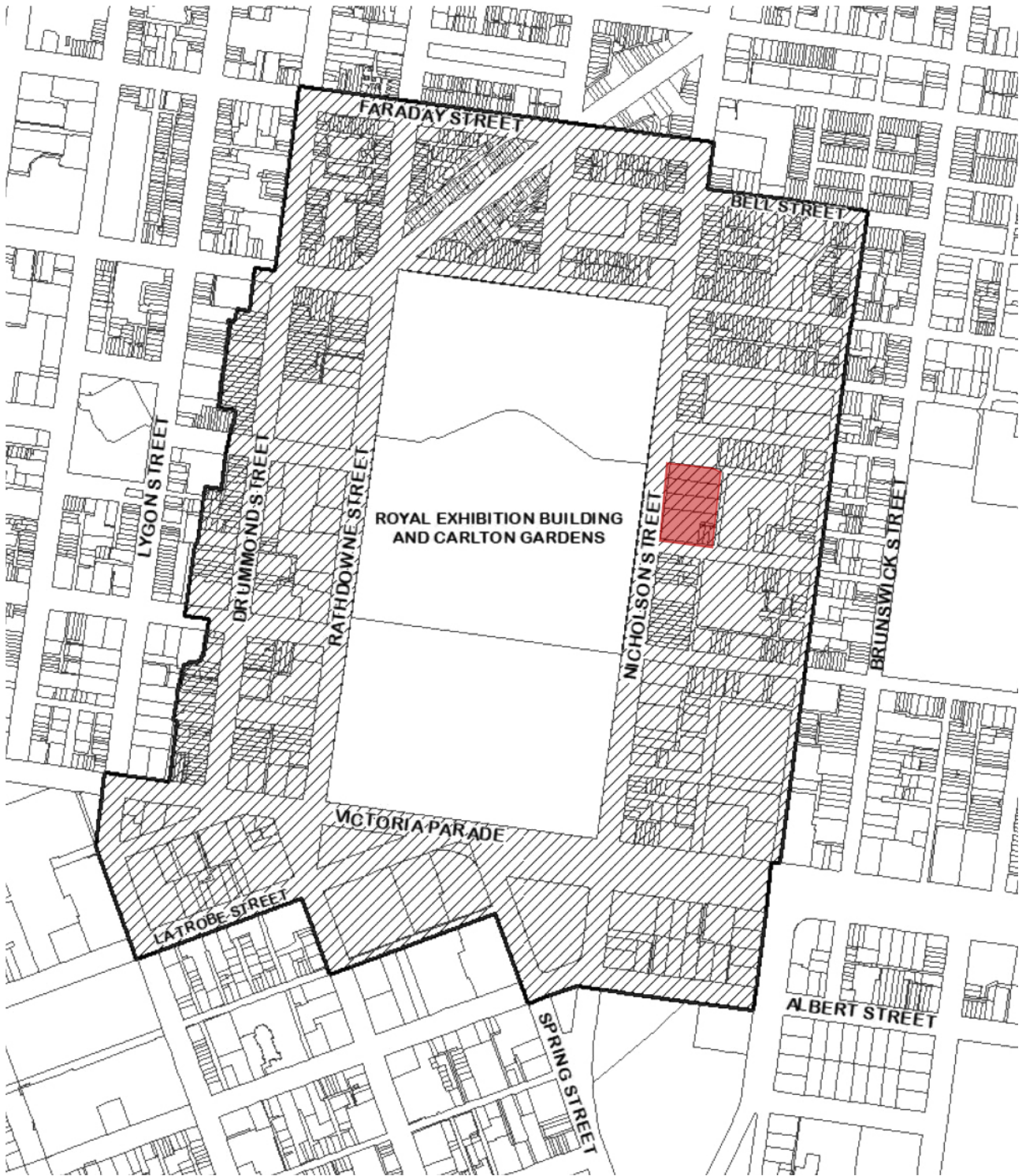


Figure 4 World Heritage Environs Area; the subject site highlighted in red  
Source: Victoria Government Gazette, G30, 28 July 2022, pg. 3284

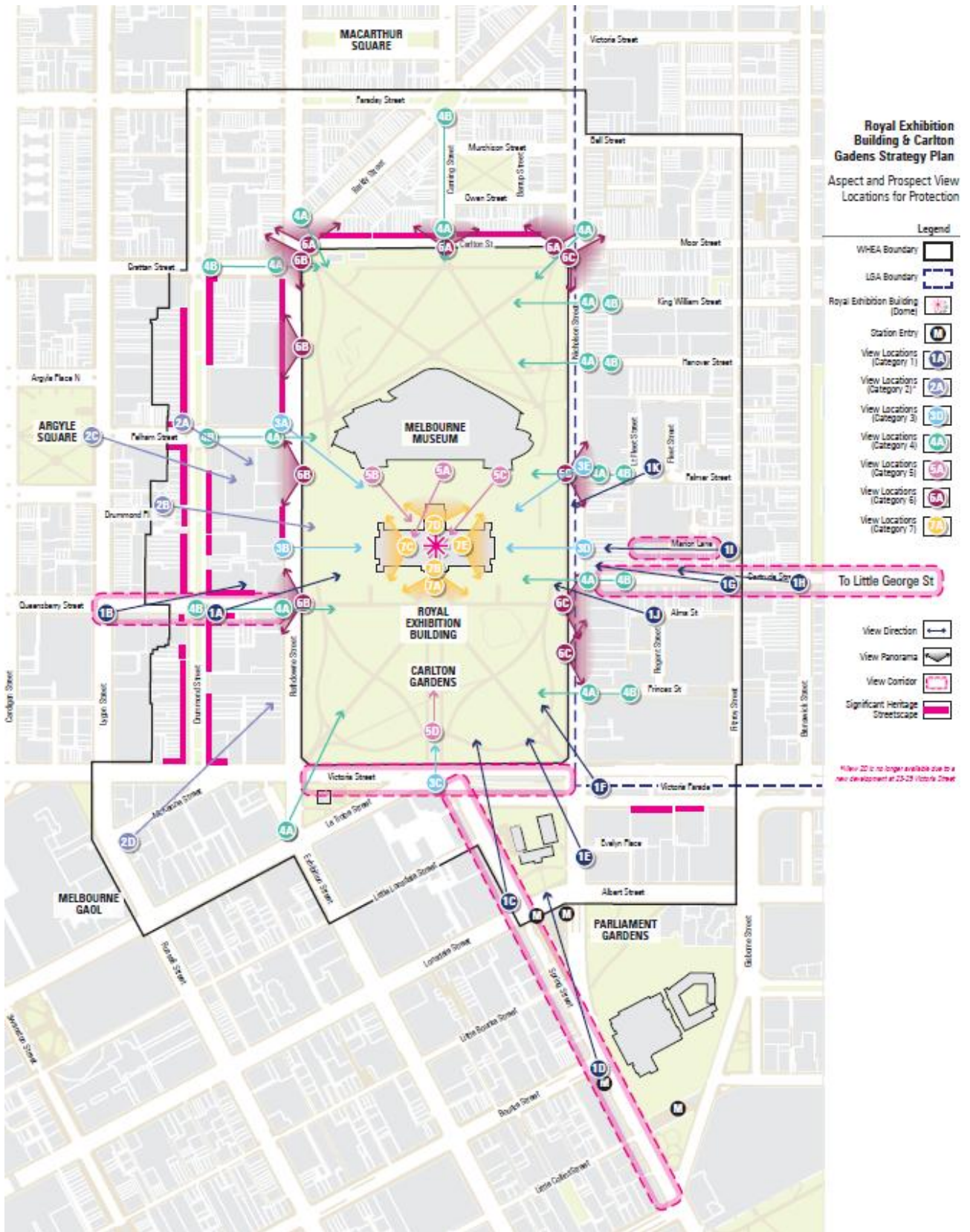


Figure 5 World Heritage Environs: aspect and prospect view locations for protection  
Source: *World Heritage Strategy Plan for the World Heritage Environs Area*, Department of Transport and Planning, February 2025, pg. 67

### 1.5.3 Planning and Environment Act, 1987 (Yarra Planning Scheme)

The 'Convent of Mercy and Academy of Mary Immaculate' is identified as HO184 in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (HO) of the Yarra Planning Scheme (YPS). The mapped extent of HO184 is consistent with the VHR extent of registration.

As per the Heritage Overlay provisions under Clause 43.01-3, no permit is required from Yarra City Council to develop a heritage place which is included in the VHR (other than that for subdivision). As such, the proposed development consisting of adaptive reuse and additions within the complex would not require a permit from Yarra City Council.

While the proposed development does not require a permit from Yarra City Council, the following has been noted regarding the WHEA within the Yarra Planning Scheme:

Amendment VC251 to the Victoria Planning Provisions and the Melbourne and Yarra Planning Schemes came into effect on 17 April 2025 and the approved 2025 Strategy Plan was formally adopted. The WHEA, within the City of Yarra, is included in the World Heritage Environs Area Heritage Overlay precinct (HO361). Clause 15.03-1L-01 of the Yarra Planning Scheme 'Heritage Places in the World Heritage Environs Area' applies to the proposed development, as does the policy document to this clause, *World Heritage Environs Area Strategy Plan: Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens*, Department of Transport and Planning (August 2024). Schedule 4 to Clause 43.02 Design Development Overlay of the Yarra Planning Scheme – DDO4 applies to the WHEA. This includes design guidelines for development within the WHEA. DDO4 limits the height of new development within the WHEA to 11m.

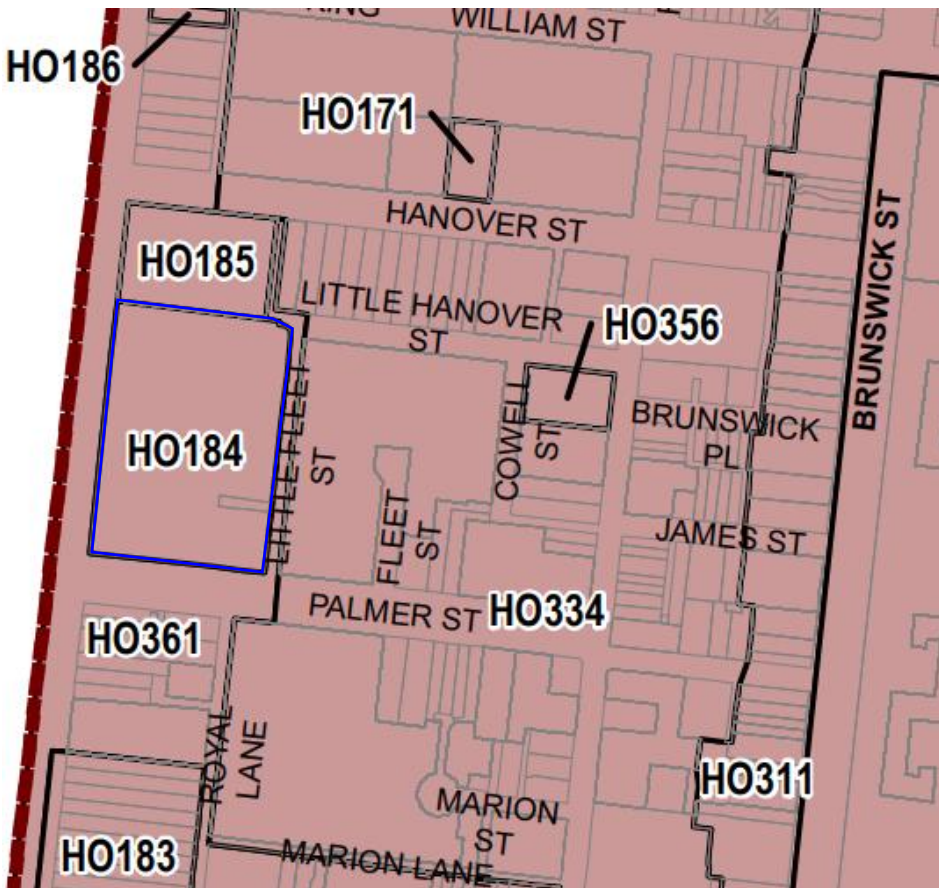


Figure 6 Heritage Overlay map, Yarra Planning Scheme with the subject site outlined in blue; note the heritage overlays in the vicinity of the site  
Source: Yarra Planning Scheme

## 2.0 Understanding the place and its significance

### 2.1 Chronology

The Convent of Mercy and Academy of Mary Immaculate complex has evolved and expanded over the years since 1850 (see Figure 7). The detailed chronology and history for the site is included in Appendix A of this report.

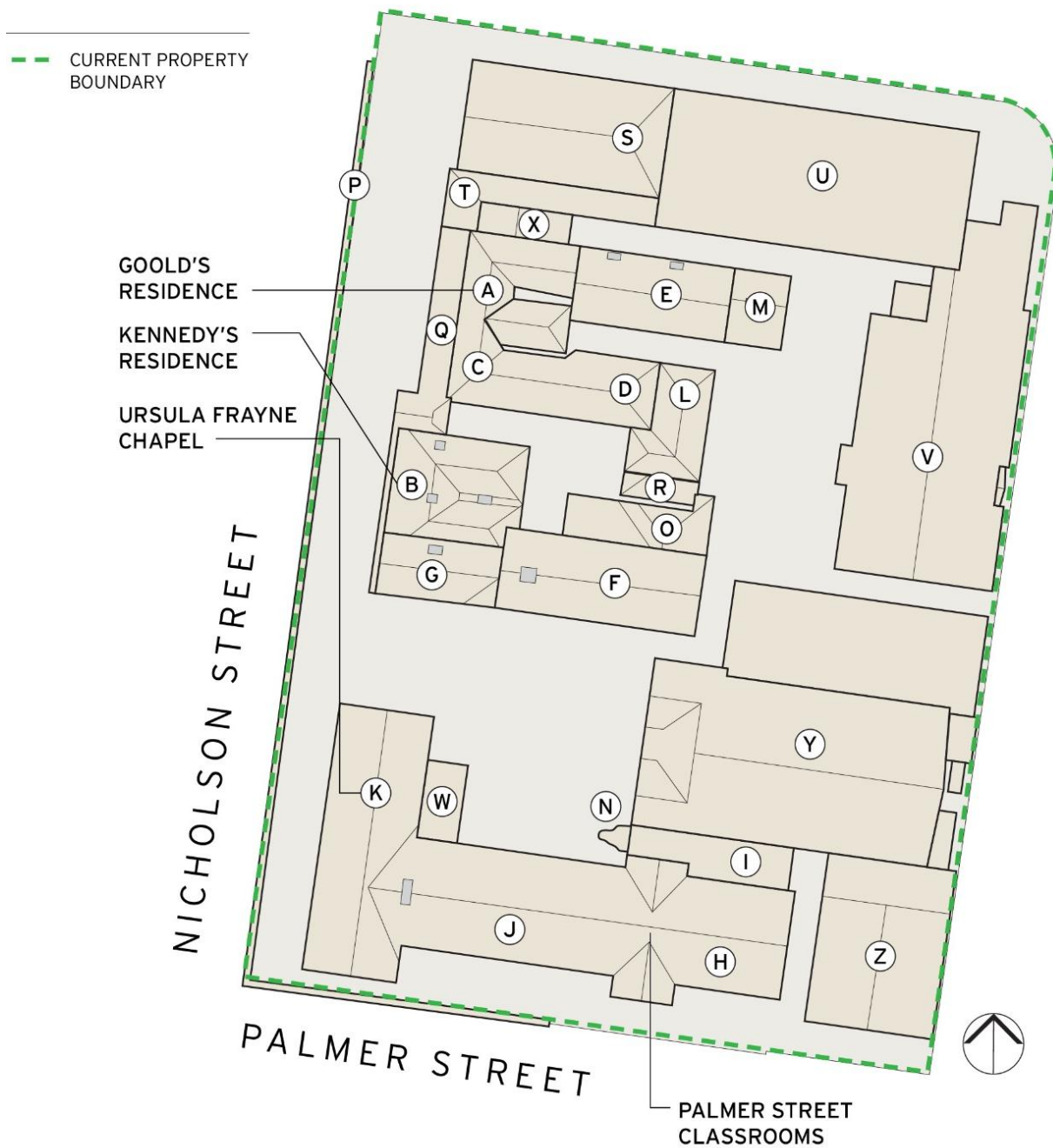


Figure 7 Plan of chronological site development (dates are at Table 1)

The buildings and structures on the site are below (Table 1). The primary heritage assets are in **bold**:

Table 1 List of buildings and structures at Convent of Mercy and Academy of Mary Immaculate site

Letter on plan	Building name	Construction date
A	<b>Goold's residence</b>	1850
B	<b>Kennedy's residence</b>	1850
C	Addition to Goold's residence	1854
D	Addition to Goold's residence (school)	1858
E	Addition to Goold's residence (convent)	1861-62
F and G	Additions to Kennedy's residence (school)	1862-63
H and I	First stage of <b>Palmer Street Classrooms</b> building	1869-71
J	Second stage of Palmer Street Classroom	1880-81
K	<b>Ursula Frayne Chapel</b>	1887-91
L	<b>Twelve Sisters House</b>	1891
M	Single storey kitchen to Goold Residence	Pre-1897, but with later alterations
N	<b>Grotto</b> of Our Lady of Lourdes	1908
O	Classroom addition to Kennedy Residence	1922
P	High brick surrounding fence	1926-29
Q	Two-storey balcony	1929-33
R	Infill addition to Twelve Sisters House	1930s
S	Walsh Building	1954-55
T	School office extension	1958
U	Perpetua Wing	1965-67
V	McKenna Building	1971-73
W	Three-level fire escape to Ursula Frayne Chapel	1978
X	School office rooms	1978
Y	Dillon Centre	1995-96
Z	McAllen Science Centre	2014

## 2.2 Significance

The key heritage values of the place summarised from the Statement of Significance available on the VHD are –

- The Convent of Mercy and Academy of Mary Immaculate complex is of historical significance for its role in the development of religious institutions and schooling in Victoria since it was established in 1857. The place also has importance for being set up by Mother Ursula Frayne and the Sisters of Mercy for imparting Catholic education and for social welfare in Melbourne. (Criterion A)
- The existing 1850s bluestone cottages on site outline the growth of the suburbs outside the city grid and are some of the oldest surviving buildings in the metropolitan area. The 1858 rear addition of Goold residence is also of importance as it was the location of the first Catholic Girls' School in Victoria. (Criterion A)
- The complex is also architectural significant as a good collection of nineteenth century religious and residential buildings that have been expanded over the years to meet its ecclesiastical and educational use. The buildings of note within the campus are the 1850s cottages, 1854, 1858 and 1861-62 additions to Goold's residence, and the 1862-63 additions to Kennedy's residence, the Ursula Frayne Chapel (1887-1891) and the Palmer Street Classrooms (1869-1871 and 1880-1881). (Criterion D)
- The 1850s bluestone cottage demonstrate the simple Regency detailing and materials used for construction of residences during that period. The complex has grown since its establishment, and it is the relays the historical use of the site for the convent and the school. (Criterion D)
- The complex has associative significance with Mother Ursula Frayne and the Sisters of Mercy who established the convent and the boarding school for girls at the subject site in 1857, which has continued imparting Catholic education for over 150 years. The educational and charitable work of the Sisters of Mercy form an important role within Victoria's history, as the state's first teaching nuns. The convent was the first establishment of the Sisters of Mercy in Victoria followed by several Mercy schools and convents all over the state. (Criterion H)

## 3.0 Description of proposal

### 3.1 Overview - Masterplan development

In 2022, PMDL McGlashan Everist Architects was engaged by AMIF to conduct a review and analysis of the existing campus facilities, culminating in the creation of a strategic master plan to guide the future development of the site. The master plan assessed the current condition of the campus, identifying both opportunities and constraints across the entire site as well as within individual buildings.

As highlighted in Section 1.2 above, a key driver for the proposed changes within the AMIF complex is the availability of the convent, vacated by the Sisters of Mercy, for educational use. This creates an opportunity to address key issues identified across the campus and optimise the use of the space for the growing educational needs of the institution.

The main issues identified within the complex include:

- Compliance with current building standards –  
Ensuring that existing buildings meet contemporary safety accessibility and operational standards.
- Circulation and accessibility –  
Addressing the circulation pathways and level differences within the campus to ensure equal access for all users.

- Provision of additional teaching and learning spaces –  
Expanding the campus facilities to meet the demands of a growing student population, as well as enhancing amenities and infrastructure.
- Restructuring and adapting open spaces –  
Updating and optimizing existing outdoor spaces for both educational and recreational purposes.

The design focused on utilising the existing built form to provide compliant space for academic purposes. This approach also guided the design of new spaces within the complex for student gatherings, passive and active recreation, and indoor/outdoor learning environments.

The new design will ensure the complex is accessible to all and will provide a clear narrative of the site's historical and chronological development. By enhancing the overall functionality and accessibility of the campus, the proposed development will allow AMIF to remain competitive with other schools in Melbourne. The upgrades will meet current building standards and improve circulation and permeability throughout the campus.

In line with Article 22 of the Burra Charter, which emphasises respect for the cultural significance of places while allowing for necessary adaptations, the proposed alterations and additions will be recessive in nature. These new additions will be clearly identifiable as modern interventions, ensuring that the existing heritage buildings remain the focal point of the site. The master plan prioritises the retention of significant buildings, with most of the proposed changes focused on areas where alterations or removals will not affect the overall heritage significance of the place. This careful approach ensures that the site's historical and cultural value is preserved while adapting it to meet contemporary educational needs.



Key outcomes of the masterplan prepared by PMDL McGlashan Everist Architects can be summarised as:

- Removal of infill additions (intrusive or of little significance) to improve the understanding of the original built form of the heritage buildings within the area of greater sensitivity of AMIF.
- Construction of a modern two-storey addition consisting of a new staircase and lift with walkways connecting to the Twelve Sisters House and Kennedy residence for compliance purposes, providing equitable access to the upper levels of the campus.
- Alterations within the first floor of the 1862-63 addition of the Kennedy residence currently accommodating the staff areas to rationalise the various internal levels to provide equitable access.
- General internal refurbishment to the interiors of the Goold and Kennedy residences and the Twelve Sisters House to accommodate new staff areas and student learning spaces.
- Reconfiguration and alterations to the existing landscape setting of the complex to provide easy access and provide more open spaces within the complex.

### 3.2 Demolition

The nature of the project is such that extensive works is required throughout the complex. As far as possible, however, demolition is limited to known later additions and areas of lesser sensitivity. Major interventions are identified at Table 2.

Table 2 Primary areas where demolition is proposed

Area proposed for change	Rationale	Photographs
1897 laundry addition to the rear of Goold residence	The proposal includes the demolition of the 1897 laundry building, constructed to the north of the original Goold residence (convent). This addition, which is not visible from the public realm, has undergone several alterations and additions and consists of contemporary fabric within its interiors. The removal of this addition will address circulation shortcomings within the campus and assist in the creation of a central courtyard.	
Internal stairs in Kennedy residence	The 1862-63 addition to the Kennedy residence includes an internal stair which has been modified over time – the underside is reinforced with concrete. This stair is non-compliant. Demolition is required to improve circulation within the campus and to make the building compliant for education use.	

**Area proposed for change**     **Rationale**

**Photographs**

First-floor of the 1862-63 addition of Kennedy residence

The first floor of the 1862-63 addition of the Kennedy residence has varied floor levels. The existing staff kitchen area is connected to the staff offices through a narrow door that has three steps set within the doorway. The proposal includes the demolition of these steps and lowering of the floor in the staff offices area to resolve the varying levels within first floor and make the areas accessible to all.

The works also include the removal of the window above the bluestone staircase to accommodate a new door within this opening, connecting to the proposed walkway, new lift and staircase, providing equitable access to this area.



1923-33 Interwar verandah/balcony

Works to the verandah/balcony is limited to four openings on each level - ground and first floor. The alterations will increase the size of the windows with the objective of providing additional light within the interiors of the Gould residence and improving its functionality.



**Area proposed for change**   **Rationale**

**Photographs**

Infill additions of Goold residence

As the complex has had ad-hoc additions constructed at different times, the floor levels of each building are not consistent. The infill addition constructed in between the Goold residence, and the Twelve Sisters House will be removed to accommodate a new glass bridge link on the first floor. This will resolve an issue of building compliance.

The lean-to addition in the Goold residence will be removed to reinstate the original internal courtyard.



Infill additions of Twelve Sisters House and Kennedy residence

The 1930 infill addition located to the south of the Twelve Sisters House and the 1922 addition located to the rear of Kennedy residence will be removed to provide space for the construction of a new stairs and lift required for compliance purposes and to provide equitable access to the first floor of the heritage buildings.

The removal of the 1922 classrooms located along the northern elevation of the Kennedy residence will allow for the creation of the Flynn Court, a new open space for use of the students.



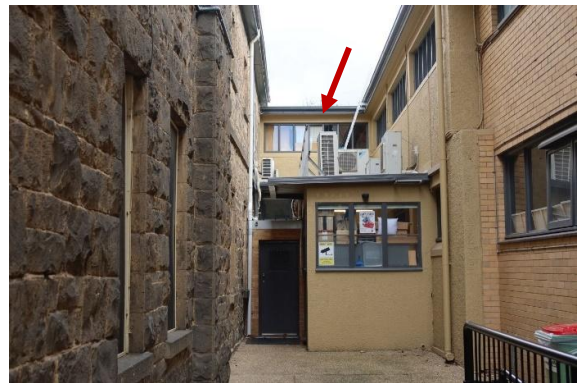
**Area proposed for change**     **Rationale**

**Photographs**



Infill additions between Goold residence and Walsh building

The 1978 infill addition consisting of the school office rooms, constructed in between the Goold residence and Walsh House, will be removed to improve circulation within the campus by creating a new east-west access link.



Interior of the library on the ground floor of the Palmer Street classroom building

Works within the library include the removal of the later metal staircase and walkway for use as decant spaces – and for future adaptation as staff offices - while the works are underway.



### 3.3 Adaptation and internal refurbishment

Refurbishment works are proposed on each level of the Goold and Kennedy residences as well as the Twelve Sisters House. Some of the wall, ceiling, and floor finishes within the interiors of these buildings – most or all of which are not original or have been altered – will be updated. Lighting, services, and amenities will also be upgraded throughout the interiors of these buildings to meet OH&S standards.

#### Goold residence

The works include the partial demolition of some internal walls within the ground floor to introduce new arched openings, including in the entrance hallway. These works are mostly in areas which have previously undergone alterations to accommodate a lift and smaller offices. The lift within the convent will also be removed. The two front rooms on the ground floor will be preserved in their current configuration, with the fabric conserved. These rooms will be used as 'Heritage Rooms', providing interpretive displays that highlight the site's historical use. The 'Heritage Rooms' on the ground floor of the Goold residence (established in their present configuration in the 1990s) are secured and generally accessible only by appointment. To enable view lines into the spaces it is proposed to remove two timber panelled doors to these spaces (Figure 10). These doors – which do not appear to be original and will be stored on site for potential future re-use – will be replaced with a fixed glazed panel and a glazed door within two of the three openings, enabling views to the interiors while maintaining security and climate control arrangements.

The internal walls on the ground floor in 1861-62 addition will be removed to consolidate the space and new lightweight partition walls will be introduced to accommodate new amenities and toilets. The first floor of the convent is proposed to be altered to accommodate the new Learning Resource Centre - works to remove the internal partition walls on the first floor of the convent were approved under a permit exemption application (P39822) in July 2024. The works include some conservation, and reinstatement works within the interiors on the first floor particularly within the chapel on the first floor. This space will be converted into a senior study with most of the new services installed below the timber floor or within the new cabinetry. Based on evidence found on site an original arch will be reinstated in the chapel.

The works also include removal of the later addition plasterboard ceilings in the rooms on the ground and first floor as well as the pressed metal ceilings on the first floor. The pressed metal ceilings (presumed to date to the early decades of the twentieth century) are in a poor condition and have been impacted by the installation of services over the years. As per the current building and fire safety standards, the works include the replacement of the plasterboard and pressed metal ceilings within new perforated plasterboard ceilings.

The 1862-63 addition of the building features a pitched roof clad with corrugated metal sheeting, which is in poor condition. It is understood that a slate roof is extant below the corrugated metal roof, the condition of which is unknown. The proposal is for the removal of the metal sheeting as well as the slate tiles to ensure that the new roof complies with the current building standards – re-useable slates will be salvaged. The works include installation of a new corrugated metal roof in custom orb profile with new flashings and plumbing.

#### Kennedy residence

Internal demolition is generally limited to the removal of non-original lightweight partition walls within the ground floor, including in the 1862-1863 addition. The works also include alterations to the internal wall linings, plasterboard ceilings, and floor finishes (carpets) on the ground floor, most (if not all) of which are later. The ground floor of the Kennedy residence will be refurbished to accommodate staff areas and a new student reception and toilets. The removal of internal stairs will assist in improving circulation and connectivity within the complex.

The first floor of the Kennedy residence will be upgraded to provide space for staff work areas. As mentioned above, the floor within the staff work area will be dropped to match the floor level of the staff kitchen area – the floor level will be reduced from RL 48.420 to 48.000. Demolition within the interiors of the 1850s parts of the residence will be

limited to modern lightweight partition walls. These spaces will be reconfigured to accommodate new amenities, toilet and staff offices.

### Twelve Sisters House

The proposal is for the removal of non-compliant stairs within the interiors and demolition of the later toilets on the ground floor. The external windows on the ground floor along the eastern elevation will be extended to ground level, opening out to the new central courtyard and landscaped areas. The refurbishment and adaptation works will accommodate a new staff kitchen and café area on the ground floor and a new library reading space on the first floor of the building. The works also include raising the floor (new level RL 47.600) on the first floor for equitable access purposes and to match the floor levels within the first floor of Goold residence. The original floor will be maintained, and a new floor will be installed on top.

## 3.4 New additions

As noted at Section 3.2, the removal of the infill additions located in between the Kennedy residence and the Twelve Sisters House will provide space for the introduction of a new staircase and lift connecting to the first-floor levels of the heritage assets – it will be connected to Kennedy residence and the Twelve Sisters House via two narrow walkways (Figure 8). This independent structure will assist in providing compliant access to the upper levels. It will be visually recessive and clearly identifiable as a new addition.

Another contemporary addition seen from within the complex will be the new glass bridge link, connecting the Goold residence and the Twelve Sisters House (Figure 9). This will replace the existing later addition link, and it will be limited to the first floor.

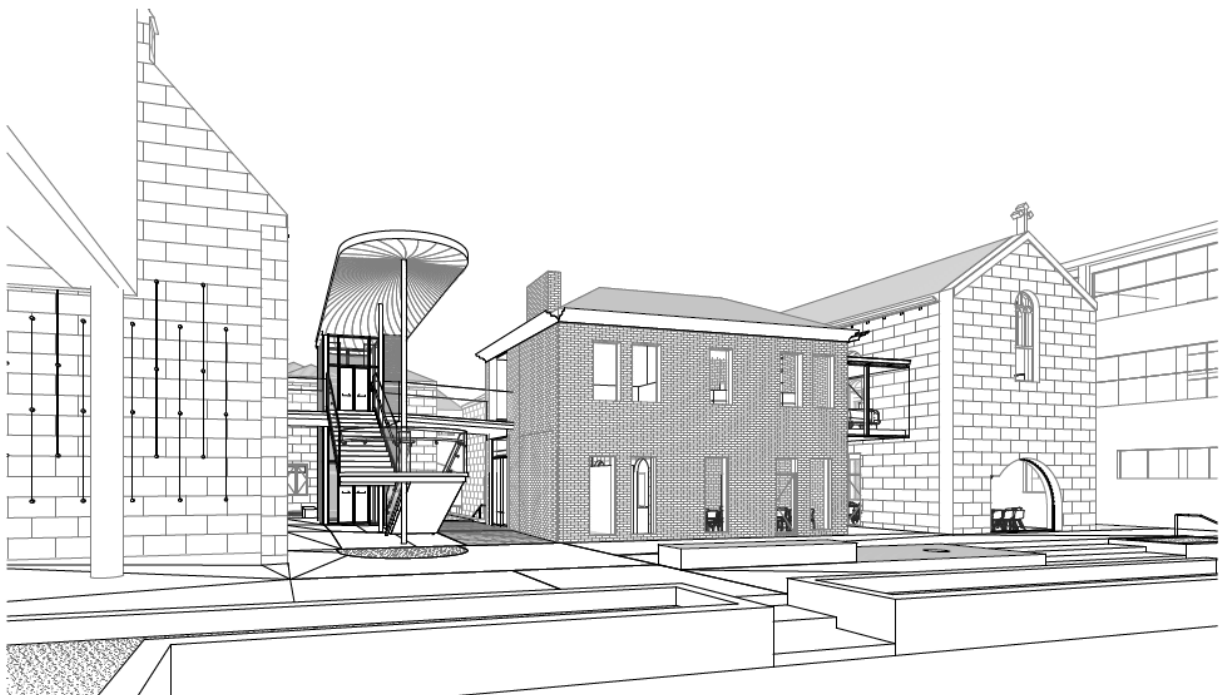


Figure 8 3D view of the new staircase and the walkways between Kennedy residence and Twelve Sisters House  
Source: PMDL-McGlashan Everist



Figure 9 Perspective of the new glazed link on the first floor between Twelve Sisters House and Goold residence  
Source: PMDL-McGlashan Everist

### 3.5 Services

The proposed works include upgrades to the existing services within the heritage buildings. The proposal includes installation of new mechanical, hydraulics, electrical and fire services to ensure that the historic buildings are compliant with standards for educational purpose. The design of the services has been developed to use existing openings and penetrations as far as possible. The services ducts for the mechanical services have been confined within the ceiling spaces of rooms which have later addition plasterboard ceilings. In rooms where original ceilings and details are extant floor mounted units will be introduced.

Further, mechanical plant units/ platforms will be installed above Goold and Kennedy residences. These will be installed between two gabled roofs of the residences and set below the roof ridges to ensure that they are not visible from the public realm.

### 3.6 Landscaping

Landscaping works aim to deliver equitable access and circulation within the complex, including the removal of later surface treatments, ramps, and steps. A key objective is to rationalise and resolve the different levels and to provide compliant, accessible, and flexible open spaces for students. The proposal includes the removal and introduction of some trees within the complex – existing trees have not been identified as contributing to significance.

Key aspects of the landscape works are summarised below:

- Convent Garden – The garden/open space in front (west) of the Goold and Kennedy residences will be altered to accommodate new finishes, seating and planting (Figure 10 and Figure 11). These works will be concealed in view from the public realm by the existing masonry fence.
- Flynn Court – The landscaping will include works to the courtyards in between the Goold and Kennedy residences and Twelve Sisters House. The finishes within these areas will be refurbished and new informal seating and open spaces will be introduced. The retaining wall within Flynn Court will be retained and the sculpture located outside the western elevation of the Twelve Sisters House will be relocated within the campus.

- Heritage Lane and East West Link – The historic entrance between Goold and Kennedy residence will be reinstated with new floor finishes, and the intrusive additions will be removed along the northern elevation of Goold residence to rationalise and improve the circulation within the campus. These links will improve the east-west connections within the campus.
- The Courtyard – A large central courtyard within new seatings, floor finishes and new plantings. This will be the central meeting space for the school, promoting an informal learning environment as well as a space for collaboration.
- Light Yard – The original courtyard between the Goold residence will be reinstated and new timber floorboards would be installed in this area, and it will also improve lighting within the internal areas of the building.
- North Yard – A new open space will be introduced along the northern boundary as a spill out space for the canteen.



Figure 10 Existing landscaping in front of Goold residence



Figure 11 Existing landscaping in front of Kennedy residence

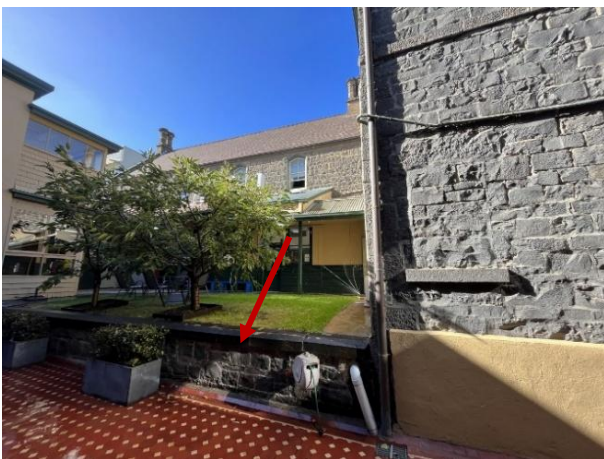


Figure 12 Original bluestone retaining wall (indicated) in Flynn courtyard proposed for retention

### 3.7 Conservation works

Given the incompleteness of the documentary record, this is a complex where the physical fabric will be critical in providing insight into early/original details, as was demonstrated by the experience of the strip-out works undertaken within the first floor of the Goold residence in 2024 (referenced above).

While it is not possible to predict with certainty the full quantum of conservation works that will be required – it is anticipated that the preparation of a detailed schedule of conservation works will be conditioned on permit (see Section 4.3) – assumptions and general principles are listed below and a tentative list of works is identified at Table 3.

Overall, general repair works to the significant heritage buildings on site will include the following –

- Blue stone masonry walls
  - Remove paintwork to bluestone walls and make good to match existing
  - Repointing and mortar repairs to bluestone masonry walls as required
  - Render repairs as necessary
- Timber fenestration
  - General repair works to the existing timber windows - make-good to match existing. It is understood that some windows need to be updated to meet the current fire safety standards. It has been recommended that the windows be retained and any new works should match the existing like-for-like.
  - General repair work as required for the stained-glass windows.
- Timber flooring and floor structure
  - The timber flooring within the interiors of the heritage buildings will be retained and conserved
  - The works in some of the rooms include strengthening of the existing floor joists, these works will remove the existing floorboard, skirtings and strengthen the timber floor joists with Z purlins and timber blocking. The timber floorboards and the timber skirting will be reinstated back after the completion of the strengthening works to the existing timber floor structure.
- Roof
  - Repair and make good works to the slate tiles cladding and the corrugated metal roof sheeting of the heritage buildings
  - General cleaning works and to the existing slate tiles to remove efflorescence and secure the loose slate roof tiles
  - Repair corrugated metal roof sheeting wherever required and if it is an extremely poor condition and rusted then it is to be replaced to match existing in the same custom orb profile
  - Flashing – Repair and replace flashing which is in poor condition to match existing like-for-like
  - Guttering – The existing gutter should be cleaned and checked for compliance with the current standards. If required, the rainwater goods are to be inspected and re-designed by a hydraulics engineer to ensure that they comply with the current standards. The materials of the rainwater goods is to match existing like-for-like

Table 3 Tentative list of conservation works that have been identified at the AMIF campus

**Conservation works**

**Areas identified**

**Photographs**

Tessellated tiles

**Goold residence entrance –**

The tessellated tiles in the Goold residence are impacted by salt efflorescence from the ground. Determination of the conservation scope will be determined by further investigative works.



Removal of paint

**Kennedy residence –**

The paint is to be removed from the bluestone masonry along the ground floor of Goold residence after the removal of the lean-to addition within the courtyard

**Twelve Sisters House –**

The paint is to be removed from the external masonry walls of Twelve Sisters House to reinstate the original face brick masonry



**Conservation works**

**Areas identified**

**Photographs**

Conservation works to bluestone masonry

**Goold residence –**

Conservation and reinstatement work to the bluestone masonry along the eastern façade of Goold residence will be delivered following the removal of the laundry (full scope to be determined further to demolition).

**Kennedy residence –**

Conservation works to the bluestone masonry along the western elevation after the removal of the rough-cast render

Following investigative works undertake conservation and reinstatement work to the bluestone masonry along the northern facade after the removal of 1922 classroom. This area is currently inaccessible to determine the condition of the original fabric



Conservation works to face brick masonry

**Twelve Sisters House –**

Conservation and reinstatement work to the southern brick masonry façade of Twelve Sisters after the removal of the 1930 addition



Conservation works for internal fabric

**Goold residence –**

Conservation of the heritage fabric in the front rooms on the ground floor of Goold residence that are to be converted into heritage rooms

Conservation of fabric in the chapel on first floor



## 4.0 Assessment of heritage impacts

Section 101(2)(2) of the *Heritage Act* requires the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria to consider a number of factors in determining an application for a heritage permit, including:

The extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place or registered object [s.101(2)(a)]

The extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or registered object [s.101(2)(b)]

### 4.1 The extent to which the works would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place [s.101(2)(a)]

Section 101(2)(a) of the *Heritage Act 2017* requires that the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria evaluates any detrimental (or 'harm') that any permit application may engender on the heritage values identified for a place against the benefits that would be brought about to the place by any new alterations or additions.

According to the guiding document by Heritage Victoria *Principles for considering change to places in the Victorian Heritage Register*,<sup>10</sup> the determination for impacts of the proposal starts from Principal 1 'Understand why the place is significant'. The other three 'principles' are as follows: *Principle 2*, A cautious approach; *Principle 3*, Protect significant settings and views; *Principle 4*, Respectful change and new built form.

From a heritage perspective, the proposed development at the AMIF raises the following issues:

- The impact of the proposed development on the historical significance of the place (criteria A and H)
- The physical impacts of the proposed works to the nineteenth century buildings at the complex, and the appropriateness of the new additions with respect to the significance of the complex (criterion D)
- Visual impacts of the proposed development on the World Heritage Environs Area

#### 4.1.1 Impact on historical significance

The subject site holds significant historical value as a complex that has been central to Catholic education for girls in Melbourne since 1857. It has operated continuously for educational purposes since that time. At its core are two 1850s bluestone residences, which have undergone numerous alterations and additions over the years to accommodate the evolving needs of the convent and the school. The two-storey construction and use of bluestone are indicative of the relative wealth of the original owners, underscoring the site's importance within its historical context. Despite being partially obscured by interwar screens along their western facade, the early construction of these cottages is legible externally. An ability to discern the original internal layout and decorative treatments has, however, been diminished by alterations over a sustained period.

The AMIF complex has associative significance with Mother Ursula Frayne and the Sisters of Mercy, who established a convent and boarding school for girls in 1857. The convent was the first establishment of the Sisters of Mercy in Victoria followed by several Mercy schools and convents across the state. With the departure of the Sisters from the site in 2021, value that attaches to the site's use as a convent is increasingly an aspect of its historical significance (as reflected in the 2024 amendments to the VHR entry). There are opportunities to reinforce an understanding of this aspect of the site's history through interpretation (anticipated as a condition on permit, see Section 4.3).

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<sup>10</sup> *Principles for considering change to places in the Victorian Heritage Register*, [https://www.heritage.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0015/612402/Principles-for-considering-changes-to-places-in-the-Victorian-Heritage-Register-3.pdf](https://www.heritage.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/612402/Principles-for-considering-changes-to-places-in-the-Victorian-Heritage-Register-3.pdf), December 2022.

The works proposed are required to upgrade the complex to meet contemporary standards, enhancing accessibility, safety, and the efficiency of the historic buildings. The works have been designed in a manner that respects the site's heritage values, using sensitive interventions that allow for the continued appreciation of its historical elements, while accommodating the evolving needs of the educational institution.

By undertaking these upgrades, the complex will remain a vibrant and fully functional space for education, thereby ensuring that AMIF can continue its mission of providing high-quality Catholic education for future generations. The preservation of the site's historical character, combined with the adaptation of its facilities to modern standards, reinforces its ongoing role in Melbourne's religious and educational heritage. This continuity of use not only maintains the site's relevance but also strengthens its historical significance within the community, ensuring that it remains a landmark institution for years to come.

#### *4.1.2 Impacts on the site's ability to demonstrate the principal characteristics of a class of place*

AMIF is representative of a mid-nineteenth-century educational institution established by the Catholic Church, reflecting the early and ongoing role of religious orders in the provision of education in Victoria. Established in 1857, the site has operated continuously for educational purposes and remains closely associated with the Sisters of Mercy and the broader development of Catholic girls' education in Melbourne. The complex comprises a layered collection of religious, residential, and educational buildings, including 1850s structures that are among the earliest of their type in metropolitan Melbourne. The campus has evolved incrementally in response to changing educational needs and site constraints, resulting in an ad hoc pattern of development that reflects long-term use and adaptation.

As noted, the departure of the Sisters of Mercy from the site represents a significant transition in the history of the place and provides an opportunity to introduce a degree of order, legibility, and planning rigour to the campus.

The proposed master-planned works seek to rationalise circulation, improve accessibility and remove later intrusive additions, while reinstating the original built form of the nineteenth century buildings. Importantly, the proposed works are largely internal or located away from the streetscape and will be almost entirely imperceptible in views from the public realm. The established streetscape presentation along Nicholson Street will be retained, and key heritage buildings will continue to read as a cohesive nineteenth-century institutional ensemble.

#### **Demolition**

The proposed works within these buildings are carefully planned to occur in areas that have already been altered or in sections where modifications will not affect the heritage significance of the site. The primary aim of the proposed demolition is for providing compliant access to the heritage buildings and to strip back the twentieth-century infill additions, allowing the original configuration of the nineteenth-century buildings to be better understood and appreciated. Each of the interventions proposed at the site has been subject of alternative design explorations to ensure there are minimal impacts on the identified heritage values of the place and original heritage fabric.

- **1897 Laundry –**

The proposed demolition of the single-storey 1897 laundry is intended to facilitate the creation of a central courtyard, enhancing the site's functionality and providing an open learning environment for the school. The laundry is a later addition, does not have any public presence and has been significantly modified, particularly internally. It is considered that its demolition will have a minimal impact on the identified heritage values of the place. It is also considered that this minor loss will be balanced by the opportunity to liberate a key space in the centre of the campus.

- Staircase (Kennedy residence) –

The previously modified internal staircase is non-compliant. Its removal is required to improve accessibility and circulation within the campus. It is noted that the bluestone treads will be salvaged for future re-use within the site.

- Timber infill additions to Kennedy and Goold residences –

The proposed works generally include removal of mostly 1920s and 1930s timber infill additions to Goold and Kennedy residences that obscure the original form of the historic buildings. These changes would help reveal the original architectural layout and external presentation of the heritage buildings. The demolition of these later additions will also provide the necessary space for the installation of a new staircase and lift, which will improve circulation and accessibility throughout the site. These works will not only enhance the building's functionality but also enable a better integration of various levels across the site.

- Lowering of floor to 1862-63 addition of Kennedy residence –

The works include lowering the floor within the first-floor staff office areas of the Kennedy residence from RL 48.420 to RL 48.000 to rationalise inconsistent internal levels resulting from the incremental construction of the building. The existing level changes impede equitable access, with the staff kitchen and offices currently connected by a narrow doorway containing internal steps and insufficient head height, presenting both access and safety issues. Alternative solutions, including the introduction of an internal ramp, were explored but were found to be impractical and ineffective. The lowering of the floor will not affect the external presentation of the building and will not impact ground-floor windows or be visible from the public realm. Ceilings in this area are later plasterboard insertions, and no original ceilings or cornices will be affected. Timber floorboards and joists will be reused wherever possible. While a substantial internal intervention, the works are essential to address existing DDA non-compliance and improve the functional use of the building.

- Palmer Street classroom building –

The proposed works in the library on the ground floor of the Palmer Street residence will include the removal of a 1990s metal staircase and walkway to adapt this space for staff office areas. The removal of the metal staircase and walkway will not result in the loss of any original heritage fabric and will maintain the external presentation of the building.

## Adaption and internal refurbishment

The proposed adaptive reuse works focus on sensitively adapting the existing heritage buildings to meet contemporary educational needs. At the Goold residence, the works provide an opportunity to reinstate the original first-floor chapel as a library and open learning space, representing a positive conservation outcome through the reinstatement of an important historic space within the complex.

The proposal mostly includes the removal of later lightweight partition walls, floor finishes, and ceilings, all of which comprise non-original fabric and will not impact heritage significance of the site. Original walls of the heritage buildings will be retained to ensure that the historic layout and key characteristics of the nineteenth-century buildings remain legible, while allowing improved functionality and circulation. Internal alterations are largely confined to previously modified areas, with significant architectural elements such as nibs and spandrels retained and incorporated into the new design. On the ground floor of the Goold residence, two timber panelled doors to the 'Heritage Rooms' will be replaced with a fixed glazed panel and a glazed door to improve visibility and engagement. The doors will be carefully removed, stored on site and will be available for future reinstatement.

Works are also proposed to enhance functionality and accessibility within the Twelve Sisters House while respecting its historic fabric. On the ground floor, windows along the eastern elevation will be enlarged to improve natural light and strengthen connections with the surrounding landscape. On the first floor, new openings will create an open

library environment suited to flexible and collaborative learning. Level differences will be resolved by retaining the existing floor and installing a new false floor on the first floor, ensuring equitable access while preserving the integrity of the original floor structure. Overall, the adaptive reuse works balance modern functionality with historical authenticity, enabling continued educational use with minimal impact on heritage significance.

### **New works**

In order to ensure that the building is accessible to all users, a new staircase and lift will be constructed between Kennedy residence and Twelve Sisters House, which will be clearly identifiable as a later intervention. This approach allows for the modernisation of the heritage buildings while maintaining the integrity of their original structure. The new staircase and the lift will be set away from the heritage buildings and will be connected via simple walkways to the heritage buildings. The connection to Kennedy residence will include alteration to one of the window openings along the north elevation on the first floor. The existing opening of the window will be maintained, and the alterations will include the removal of the window and its framing to accommodate a new door. These alterations are essential to make the first-floor levels of heritage buildings accessible to all and will have minimal impact on the heritage significance of the site.

### **New services**

Most new services within the heritage buildings will be confined to areas that have previously been altered. Rooms with modern plasterboard ceilings will receive new perforated plasterboard ceilings to accommodate HVAC services, while rooms retaining original ceilings and cornices will remain unaltered, with floor-mounted units used to avoid impacts on original fabric. New mechanical plant on the roofs of the Goold and Kennedy residences will be located below roof ridgelines and positioned so as not to be visible from the public domain, ensuring there is no impact on the external presentation of the heritage buildings.

As part of the proposed alterations to the Goold residence, strengthening of the existing first-floor structure is required to meet current building standards. Works will involve the temporary removal of timber floorboards and skirtings in selected rooms, installation of Z-purlins to strengthen existing timber joists, and reinstatement of the floorboards and skirtings in their original locations. These works are essential to support the new learning spaces and will not result in the loss of original fabric.

### **Landscape works**

The AMIF has not been identified as a place that derives significance for reasons of its landscape setting.

Landscape works proposed within the campus will improve circulation and rationalise varying levels. The works will be limited to alterations of modern fabric and plantings. As part of the upgrade works to Flynn Court, the works will retain the original bluestone retaining wall, maintaining all original landscape elements of the site. The proposed landscaping upgrade works to the areas in front of Kennedy and Goold residence will enhance the lawned areas providing modern seatings, paved areas, ground cover, and shrubs. It is noted that these works will not alter the existing views to the site from Fitzroy Street or from the REB.

#### *4.1.3 Visual impacts and impacts on the WHEA zone*

The Strategy Plan approved for the World Heritage Environs Area (WHEA) in April 2025 highlights the importance of preserving historic views to the nineteenth century streetscape along Nicholson Street, as seen from the Royal Exhibition Building (REB) and Carlton Gardens. In line with this, the proposal includes carefully considered amendments to the Interwar verandah along the western elevation of the Goold residence. These are the only changes proposed that would be visible from the REB and Carlton Gardens. Notably, the Interwar verandah is not part of the original nineteenth century fabric of the site; rather, it is a later addition that obscures the 1850s cottages, which are significant heritage buildings within the AMIF complex.

The alterations to the interwar verandah primarily involve enlarging the existing openings to better align with the architectural proportions and detailing of the arched openings on the verandah of the adjacent Kennedy residence. This approach ensures that the alterations remain in harmony with the building's existing architectural character. Importantly, these modifications will not impact the low scale of the complex, and no negative effects on the world heritage values of the REB and Carlton Gardens are anticipated. The scale and overall character of the complex will remain unchanged, preserving the heritage context of the area. The majority of the proposed works are limited to the interior and rear portions of the buildings, which are not visible from the surrounding streets.

The impact on historic views will be minimal, as the majority of the nineteenth century streetscape will remain intact. The key heritage buildings within the streetscape will be conserved as part of the proposed development, ensuring that their historical integrity is maintained. The preservation of these structures will contribute to the continued appreciation of the historic context of the site and its surroundings. As a result, the proposal will not only respect the visual and architectural significance of the original cottages but also safeguard the overall heritage value of the streetscape, ensuring that the historic views to the REB and Carlton Gardens are maintained and respected.

## 4.2 The extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place [s.101(2)(b)]

In considering the extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the AMIF, reference has been made to Heritage Victoria's *Reasonable or economic use policy* of June 2021. Paragraph 14 (under 'reasonable use') of the policy states:

When taking into account the circumstances of the permit application and the registered place or object, the Executive Director may consider: (1) the historic, recent and current uses of the registered place or object, (2) other compatible uses of the registered place or object, (3) the context and setting within which the place or object is located, and (4) other relevant matters.

A key consideration for the Academy of Mary Immaculate (AMIF) complex is its deep historical significance as a site that has been central to Catholic education for girls in Melbourne since 1857. The Academy's enduring role as both a religious and educational institution has shaped its cultural and community importance, and its continued use for educational purposes is crucial to maintaining its heritage value. As outlined in the project rationale in Section 1.2, the AMIF complex requires a thoughtful upgrade to meet modern needs while ensuring its historical integrity is preserved. The proposed adaptation of the convent building, specifically the Goold residence, provides an opportunity to address the evolving requirements of the school while maintaining the site's longstanding educational function.

Having regard to the above, the works proposed are 'compatible' as defined in the *Burra Charter*, Article 1.11:

Compatible use means a use which respects the cultural significance of a place. Such a use involves no, or minimal, impact on cultural significance.

The proposed internal refurbishment of the historical buildings, compliance works within the surrounding landscape, and the construction of new additions have been carefully considered to sustain and enhance the site's educational mission. The complex, which has evolved over more than a century, faces increasing student numbers and a shift toward more modern, flexible pedagogical approaches. This evolution necessitates the creation of adaptable learning spaces that can accommodate a range of teaching methods and activities. The new design aims to integrate these functional needs with the preservation of key heritage elements, ensuring that the complex continues to serve as a vibrant educational institution while respecting its historical and cultural legacy. These upgrades will allow the Academy to continue its mission of providing high-quality secondary education, while preserving the significance of the site for future generations.

Paragraph 18 (under 'economic use') in Heritage Victoria's *Reasonable or economic use policy* states:

The 'economic use' consideration is concerned with the economic functioning of the registered place or object and is not focussed on the financial circumstances of the applicant or owner. The feasibility of a proposed development may be relevant insofar as it relates to the viability of an ongoing use or an adaptive re-use of the registered place or object.

As outlined in Section 1.2, the implementation of the proposed changes to the AMIF campus is critical to ensuring the institution's continued commercial viability within a competitive secondary education sector. The strategic alterations involve sensitive adaptations to the campus's heritage buildings, enabling them to support new educational functions while preserving their historical character. These modifications are not only necessary to accommodate the evolving pedagogical and wellbeing needs of students but also serve to unlock opportunities for reallocations and enhancement of other campus facilities. Failure to approve or implement these changes would have direct and adverse implications for the Academy's economic sustainability. It would constrain the institution's ability to meet contemporary educational demands and could jeopardise its continued operation at its current location.

The Academy's heritage significance is deeply rooted in its uninterrupted use as an educational facility and its status as one of the earliest continuously operating Catholic education institutions in Melbourne. From both a practical and heritage management perspective, refusal of the proposed development would compromise the viability of future adaptive reuse strategies intended to support the dual goals of educational advancement and conservation. Considering this, the effect of a refusal would compromise the implementation of the strategic master plan for adapting the AMIF campus and would hinder the continued and reasonable use of the place for educational purposes.

### 4.3 Recommended heritage permit conditions

Conservation of the heritage significance of the Convent of Mercy and the Academy of Mary Immaculate complex relies on the continued use of the place for educational purposes and the retention of the significant nineteenth century buildings.

Subject to a determination by the Executive Director to grant a heritage permit for the proposed development, permit conditions are recommended to support the ongoing coordination of the development with conservation and interpretation objectives. Suggested conditions are provided in Table 4 below.

Table 4 Suggested condition for the permit application

Condition subject	Suggested requirements
<b>Photographic survey</b>	An archival quality photographic survey of the areas affected this permit is to be prepared prior to works commencing. The survey must record the existing condition of the place including views from key exterior vantage points and key interior spaces and details which are to be visually and/or physically impacted by demolition.
<b>Salvage schedule</b>	A salvage schedule be prepared identifying significant fabric that is to be salvaged and stored for reuse at the site.
<b>Staging plan and construction documentation</b>	Allowing for the approval of a Staging Plan and the staged submission and endorsement of construction documentation in accordance with this plan.
<b>Schedule of conservation works</b>	A heritage architect/ consultant must prepare a schedule of conservation works identified as required for the exterior and interior of the place and accompanied by detailed conservation works architectural drawings.
<b>Heritage interpretation</b>	A heritage consultant must prepare a heritage interpretation plan for the site outlining its heritage significance.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The package of upgrade works to the existing heritage buildings within the AMIF campus has been developed to deliver an outcome that respects the significance of the heritage place while accommodating the current needs of the school for it to compete and remain commercially viable in its current location at 88 Nicholson Street, Fitzroy. The approach followed for the design of the new works has been, as far as possible, that alterations or new works have been limited to areas that have previously been altered area, and/or make a modest contribution to significance. The design rationale follows Heritage Victoria's *Principles for considering change to places in the Victorian Heritage Register*, including: understanding why the place is significant, adopting a cautious and respectful approach to the upgrades and new works, protecting the relationship between the buildings and its setting, seeking to manage impacts on key views and delivering an outcome that will enable AMIF to maintain its historic and going use as an educational institution since its inception in 1857.

The proposal will ensure the continuity of use of the campus for educational purposes which is a key aspect of its history. Upgrades to the existing campus are carefully planned to ensure that it meets the contemporary educational needs of the Academy while also making the campus compliant with the current building standards. Legibility of the original form of the heritage buildings will be improved by the removal of the ad hoc additions. Landscape upgrade works within the campus will ensure compliance while providing equitable access for all, as well as aid in the creation of a central gathering space (central courtyard). Upgrades to the interiors of the heritage buildings are consistent with the Academy's current and anticipated educational needs and include the provision of a range of flexible spaces that would enhance the modern teaching and learning philosophy. The works, which will remove fit outs of varying age and integrity, will not result in changes to the building's external presentation.

While acknowledging the architectural significance of the 1850s residences, it is considered that the new additions of the bridge link and the staircase and lift have been carefully sited in areas that are of little heritage significance and are within the limits of acceptable change. The additions will be understood as a later alteration and will be of a scale and form that will not dominate the existing buildings in the campus or unduly detract from the prevailing qualities of the existing buildings as a distinct presence in the Nicholson streetscape. The proposed changes of the heritage buildings will also be located in the internal areas of the site and will be largely obscured from the public domain. Works to the interwar verandah along the western façade, fronting Nicholson Street will include minor alterations for reasons of internal amenity and will not result in detrimental impact on the world heritage values of the REB and Carlton Gardens.

# ACADEMY OF MARY IMMACULATE, FITZROY

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CHRONOLOGY

88 Nicholson Street, Fitzroy 3065

April 2024

Prepared for



**ACADEMY**  
OF MARY IMMACULATE

**PMDL**   
mcglashan everist

Prepared by

**LOVELL CHEN**



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

This report was prepared on the lands of the Wurundjeri people who have been custodians of this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge their stories, connection to land, water and culture which is embedded in Country. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and acknowledge that this report includes a post-contact history that forms only a small part of the ongoing story.

Academy of Mary Immaculate, Fitzroy is located on the lands of the Wurundjeri people, who are, and have always been the custodians of this land. We pay our respects to the Elders past and present, and acknowledge the stories, traditions and cultures of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE REGISTER

The following quality assurance register documents the development and issue of this report prepared by Lovell Chen Pty Ltd in accordance with our quality management system.

Project no.	Issue no.	Description	Issue date	Approval
20230095	1	Draft	19.04.24	LB
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## REFERENCING

Historical sources and reference material used in the preparation of this report are acknowledged and referenced as endnotes or footnotes and/or in figure captions. Reasonable effort has been made to identify and acknowledge material from the relevant copyright owners.

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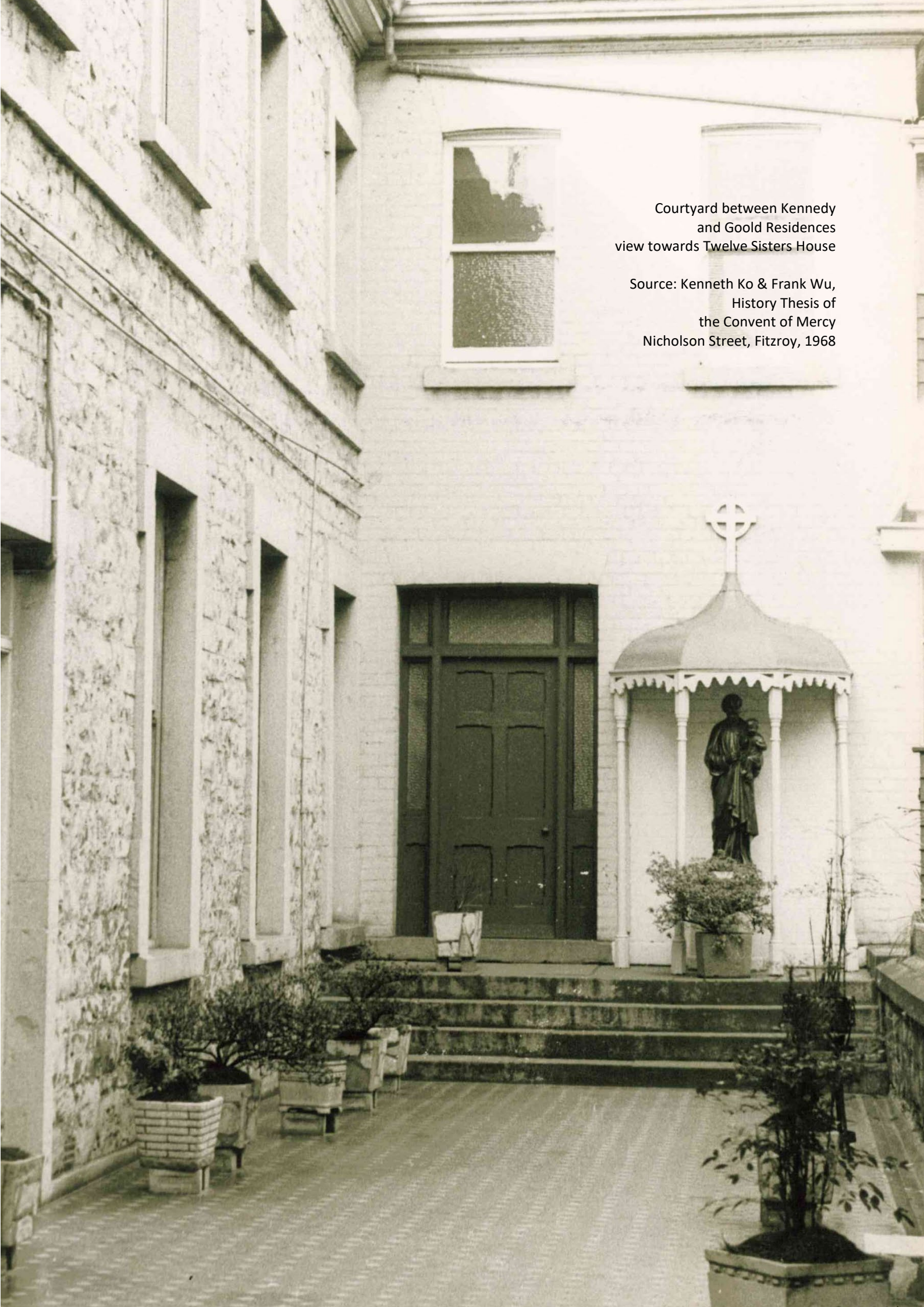
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Cover image: Ursula Frayne Chapel, viewed from Palmer Street

Source: Lovell Chen



Courtyard between Kennedy  
and Goold Residences  
view towards Twelve Sisters House

Source: Kenneth Ko & Frank Wu,  
History Thesis of  
the Convent of Mercy  
Nicholson Street, Fitzroy, 1968

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Ursula Frayne Chapel and Palmer Street Classrooms  
viewed from Carlton Gardens, c. 1950-1959  
Source: H2009.154, State Library Victoria

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The following presents a chronological history of the Academy of Mary Immaculate complex at 88 Nicholson Street, Fitzroy, from the first two bluestone private residences constructed on the site in 1850 to the Sisters of Mercy vacating their former convent in the late twenty-first century.

It is a summary of material collated from a range of sources, including contemporary newspaper articles, papers and theses, reports, published texts, disparate archival sources including the archives of the Academy of Mary Immaculate, photographs and architectural drawings available at the time of writing.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

The chronology is divided into six time-periods that represent different phases of built development at the Academy of Mary Immaculate, Fitzroy. At the beginning of each phase in the chronology, a sequential mapping diagram is provided, which illustrates the location of the built elements that were constructed during this time period within the property boundary that was owned by the Sisters of Mercy (or later Academy of Mary Immaculate). The chronology is divided into the following time periods:

Early 1850s	Private Residences
Late 1850s to mid-1860s	Convent and school
Late 1860s-90s	Convent and school expansion
1900-1930s	Consolidation and school expansion
1950s-70s	Further development
1990s-present	Refurbishments and convent closure.

This history has been informed by primary and secondary sources, along with informal oral history interviews. Primary sources have included historical maps and photographs, newspaper articles, aerial photographs and site plans and building drawings where available.

Secondary sources have included publications about the site, and the Sisters of Mercy and Catholic education more broadly.

Olga Abraham's publication, *88 Nicholson: The Academy of Mary Immaculate 1857-2007*, National Library of Australia, 2007, is an important resource for this chronology, and provides much of the information relied upon in discussing the operation of the convent and school.

### 2.1 Limitations

Architectural plans/drawings from the nineteenth century have not been located, and as such, the original layout of buildings from this period has not been confirmed. Archives, including those at the University of Melbourne, Academy of Mary Immaculate, Public Record Office Victoria, the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, and collections held by the State Library Victoria, do not hold such material.

### 2.2 Acknowledgements

This report has been prepared with the generous assistance of a number of people connected with the Academy of Mary Immaculate, Fitzroy. These include principal, Sr Mary Moloney, archivist, Olivia Parkinson, Andrew Baker, business manager, and former principal, Sr Eileen-Ann Duffy.





1875 Nettleton view from Gaelic Church  
Source: H88.22/21, State Library Victoria

### 3.0 CHRONOLOGY

#### 3.1 Early 1850s: Private Residences

This early period saw the construction of the two bluestone residences to Nicholson Street in 1850, for merchants John Watson (A) and E B Wight (B). These early residences, built before Victoria's separation from New South Wales and the gold rush, are evidence of the relative wealth of their owners in this early post-contact period of Melbourne's history.

KEY

--- CURRENT PROPERTY BOUNDARY

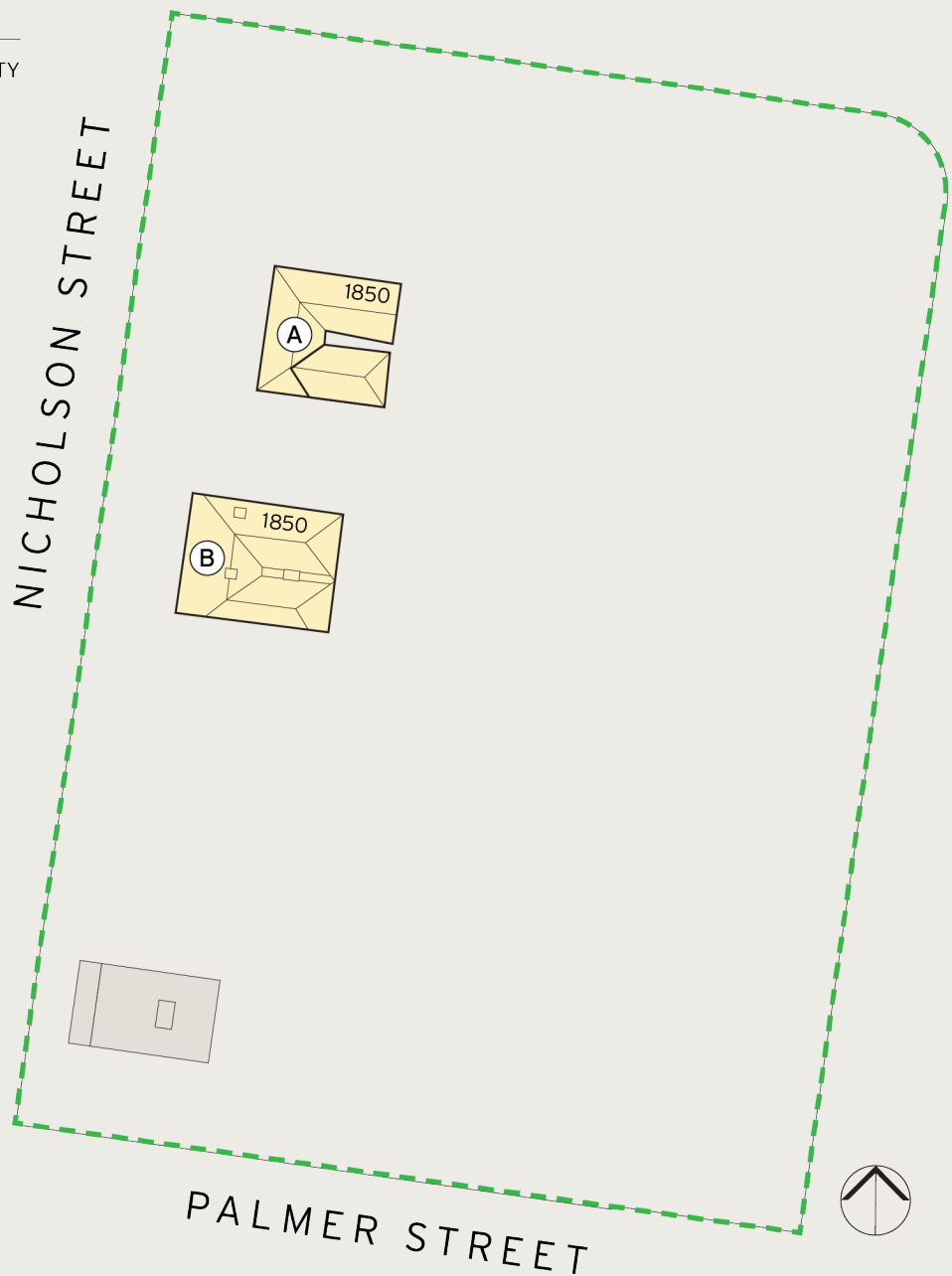


Figure 1 Early 1850s development of subject site

The subject site is located on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, whose connection to the land goes back tens of thousands of years, and continues to this day. After the arrival of Europeans, land dispossession, disease and dislocation took place, significantly impacting the Wurundjeri people, whose way of life in the area known as Naarm was transformed. Fitzroy became an important place for Aboriginal people in the post-contact period, as both a meeting place and for employment and accommodation. The Moreton Bay Fig Tree in Carlton Gardens, 160 metres from the subject site, became a well-known gathering place in the interwar period, where prominent Aboriginal speakers addressed the community.<sup>1</sup>

1850

Two double-storey bluestone residences were constructed on the eastern side of Nicholson Street, Fitzroy, then known as part of Collingwood. They were designed by architects Newson and Blackburn, and constructed by builders White & Cowey.<sup>2</sup> These residences are considered to be some of the earliest residences constructed in Melbourne.<sup>3</sup>

The houses were constructed for John Watson (A, later Goold's Residence) and E B Wight (B, later Kennedy's Residence) in mid-1850. The pair had worked in partnership as merchants from as early as 1845, trading in cured meat and other goods as part of the commerce of the early city.<sup>4</sup>

1853

The City of Melbourne rate books of 1853 contain the earliest rate information of the residences. Watson's residence to the north (A, later Goold's Residence) was described as comprising '8 rooms, kitchen and roof off cellar, stable and gighthouse,'<sup>5</sup> and had a rateable value of £300.<sup>6</sup> The southern residence (B, Kennedy's Residence) was described in the rate book as a 'stonehouse [of] 5 rooms, kitchen and washhouse' with a rateable of £250.<sup>7</sup> The rate book entry also lists Donald Kennedy, as the owner, having purchased the house from Wight.<sup>8</sup> Kennedy was a Western District pastoralist who had been appointed to the Victorian Legislative Council in 1851, a position he held until 1861 and which likely required a townhouse in Melbourne.<sup>9</sup>

The Hodgkinson's 1853 contour plan of Collingwood and East Melbourne is an early survey map which shows both houses (Figure 2). Both residences are shown to have similar footprints, with verandahs to the western elevation and service wings to the rear (east). The northern residence is also set slightly further back from Nicholson Street than the southern residence.

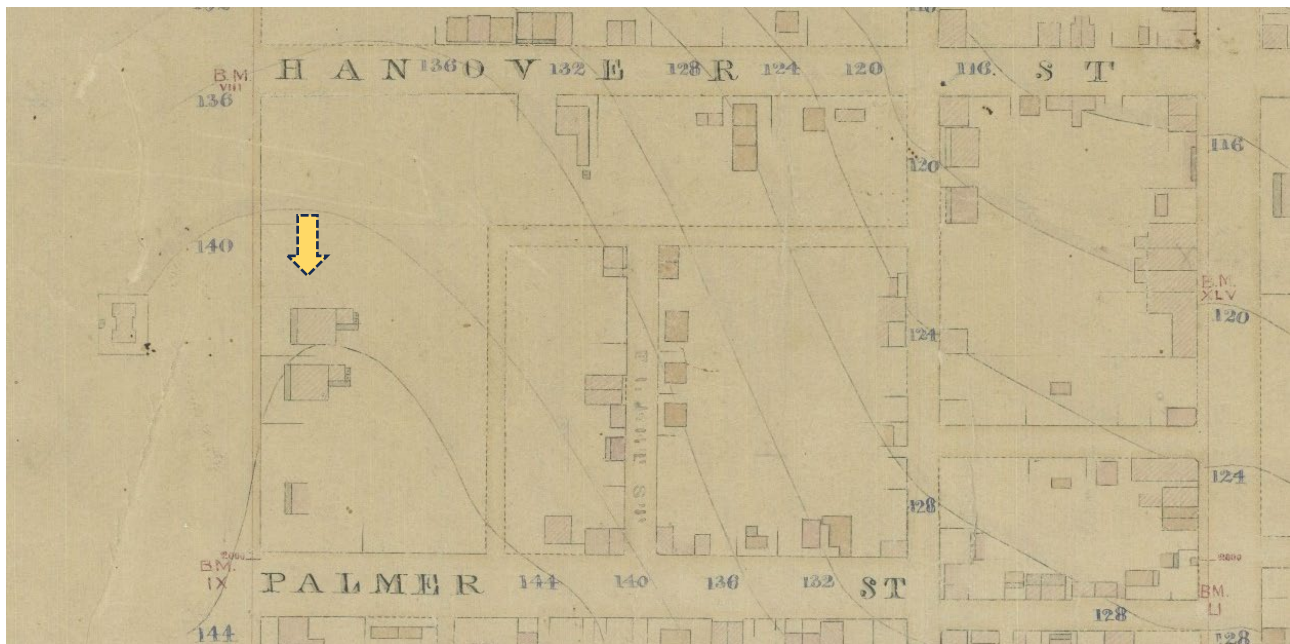


Figure 2 Hodgkinson contour plan of Collingwood and East Melbourne, 1853. The 1850 residences are indicated  
Source: VPRS 8168, Public Record Office Victoria

## EARLY FITZROY

Fitzroy, originally known as Newtown, was one of the earliest areas beyond the Melbourne grid to be subdivided, sold and developed. Nicholson Street was the western boundary of this subdivision, although was not officially named as such until 1851, after the then Melbourne City Mayor.<sup>10</sup> The first Government land sales were held in 1838, only a few years after the arrival of Europeans in the Port Phillip District, land which was (and remains) part of the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. Much of early Fitzroy was elevated with good drainage, making for land which was considered 'healthy', away from the city's pollution, and attracting some of the 'principal inhabitants' of the fledgling city.<sup>11</sup> With its proximity to the city and its situation on the Fitzroy hill, the land at the corner of Nicholas Street and Victoria Parade was considered prime land.<sup>12</sup>

Fitzroy remained part of the City of Melbourne, as the Fitzroy ward, through the 1840s, and, as such, the provisions of the *Melbourne Building Act of 1849* applied. The Act stipulated building materials, party walls and building setbacks, principally to improve fire safety, a major concern of the period. Unlike in Richmond and Collingwood, where the Act did not

apply, buildings from the 1850s in Fitzroy were typically 'cement finished bluestone or brick, exposed rough-face bluestone, or exposed brick.'<sup>13</sup>

John Watson was a prominent member of early Fitzroy politics, standing to represent the newly created Fitzroy Ward in the Melbourne City Council elections of 1850, although his group of wealthy merchants and landowners ultimately failed in their bid.<sup>14</sup> At the time of this election, there were just over 500 houses in the Fitzroy ward, which was less developed than the wards in the city. The fast-growing locality, however, saw another 250 houses constructed within the next year<sup>15</sup>

By the early 1850s, larger freestanding townhouses and villas belonging to merchants and professionals had been constructed at the southern end of Brunswick Street, and on Nicholson Street; substantial terrace rows including Glass Terrace and Royal Terrace were constructed from the mid-1850s, following the laying out of the Carlton Gardens.<sup>16</sup> Nicholson Street was the border between Carlton and Fitzroy, but remained an 'much neglected thoroughfare' in the mid-nineteenth century. With growth continuing through the 1850s, suburb was created as a separate municipal district in 1858.

## BIOGRAPHY: NEWSON AND BLACKBURN

James Blackburn (Jnr) and Arthur Newson were an architectural partnership that practiced in Melbourne for a brief period in the 1850s, known for designing bluestone churches in a common Gothic Revival mode. James Blackburn (Jnr) was son of James Blackburn senior, one of the most important promoters of Picturesque domestic architecture in Australia.<sup>17</sup>

The partnership was responsible for the designs for the Gothic Revival style bluestone St. Stephens Church Richmond (1849) and St. Enoch's United Presbyterian Church, Collins Street (1850) (demolished in 1911).<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps their most well-known work is the 1849 design of the residence for the Anglican Archbishop in East Melbourne, Bishops court (Figure 3). The partnership dissolved in March 1851.<sup>19</sup> Blackburn was individually responsible for the designing of the Gothic Revival style St Mark's Anglican Church, Fitzroy (1853-4), although he died before the church was completed, with architect Leonard Terry instead supervising the finalisation of the bluestone stairs and gallery in 1865.<sup>20</sup> Other projects designed by the partnership included domestic commissions in Collingwood and South Yarra.<sup>21</sup>



Figure 3 Bishops court, East Melbourne  
Source: Charles Rudd, photographer,  
H39357/236, State Library of Victoria

### 3.2 Mid-1850s to mid-1860s: Convent and school

This decade saw the establishment of the Convent of Mercy complex at Nicholson Street, with the purchase of John Watson’s residence by Bishop Goold, and the arrival of the founding figure Mother Ursula Frayne and the accompanying sisters. The sisters raised funds to acquire buildings and erect additions to accommodate a convent and school. A number of additions were made to the site accommodate the school and convent, and the adjacent bluestone residence (former Kennedy House, B) was purchased by the Sisters to establish a House of Mercy for young women. Additions were also made to this building to house a new chapel and school wing.

**KEY**

- - - CURRENT PROPERTY BOUNDARY
- - - MID-1850s to MID-1860s SITE BOUNDARY

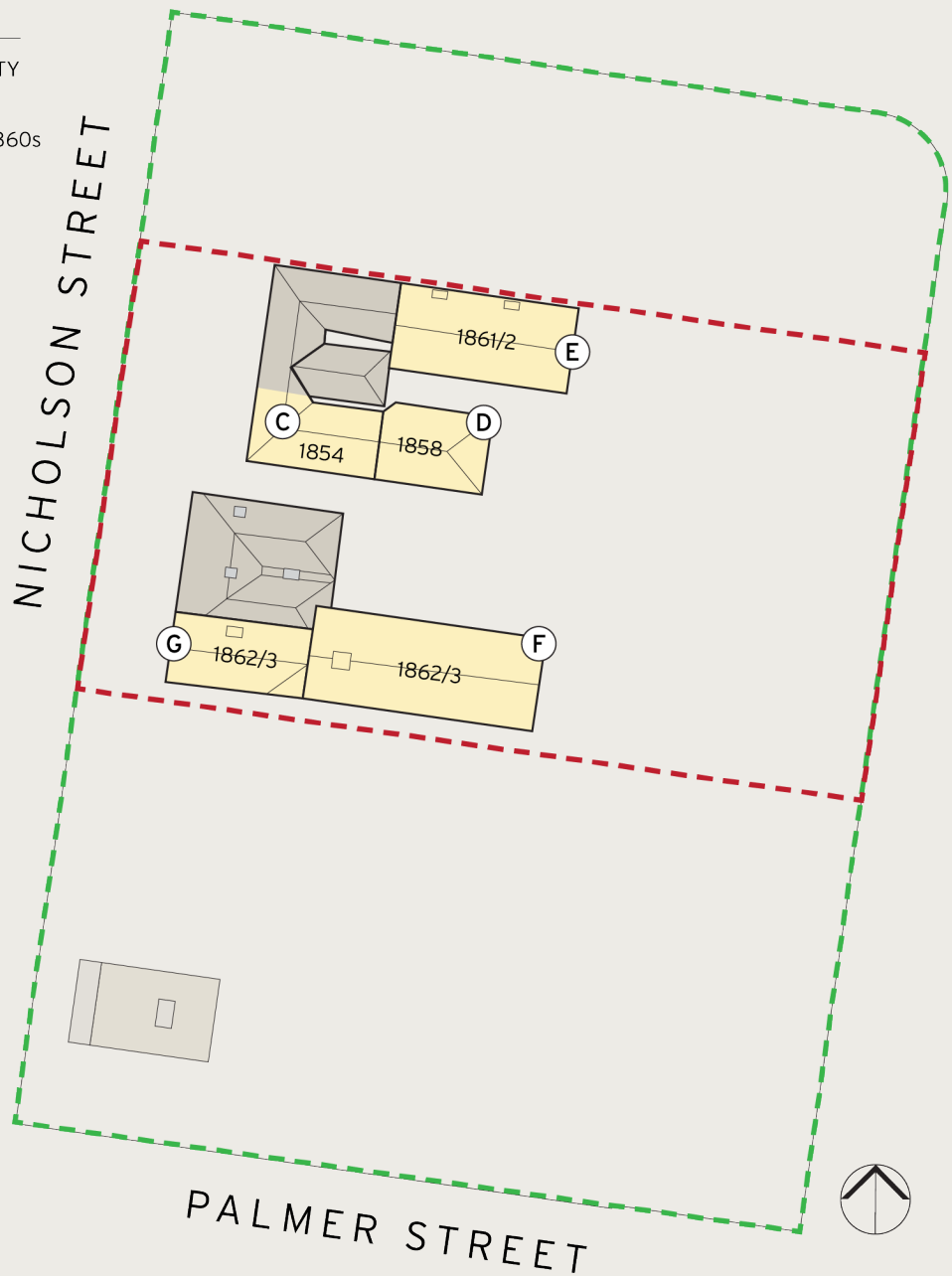


Figure 4 Site development between mid-1850s and mid-1860s



1853

Dr James Goold, the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Melbourne, purchased the northern residence in August 1853 for £7,000 (Goold's Residence), for the purpose of establishing a convent at the site.<sup>22</sup> In September, a tender notice in the *Argus* advertised for 'plans and estimates' for the convent proposed by Bishop Goold.<sup>23</sup>

1854

The *Hobart Town Advertiser* reported in January 1854 that the Sisters of Mercy were travelling to Melbourne with the purpose of founding a convent. The 'large and elegant' house occupied by Bishop Goold on Nicholson Street was to be used for the convent, with Bishop Goold to relocate to East Melbourne once his residence had been completed.<sup>24</sup> It was later reported that Bishop Goold, having worked with Mother Ursula Frayne to establish a Sisters of Mercy religious order in Perth, encouraged Mother Ursula Frayne and two other sisters to establish an equivalent order in Melbourne.<sup>25</sup> The establishment of a convent was an important part of the early work of Bishop Goold and the Catholic Association of the Melbourne Diocese.

The 1854 municipal rate book entry for Goold's residence lists the building as comprising 14 rooms and with an increased rateable value of £600, indicating improvements or change to the building.<sup>26</sup> It is likely that this reflects the construction of the additional bay to the south side of the Goold residence, following his purchase of the residence. Given the property was purchased for use as a convent, it is likely this addition was made as part of the convent development of the site.<sup>27</sup>

1857

By early 1857, Mother Ursula Frayne and two Sisters had established the convent at the Nicholson Street site, and taken on ownership of Goold's house, and the accompanying mortgage which amounted to £2,600. A public appeal was made by the Sisters for funds and subscriptions to construct further buildings to accommodate a boarding school and House of Mercy.<sup>28</sup> As published in the *Argus* newspaper, the appeal stated that the institute was 'founded for the instruction of young girls, the visitation of the sick, and the protection of distressed young women of good character'.<sup>29</sup>

The Sisters of Mercy's convent school, housed in the Goold Residence, opened on 20 April 1857 and accommodated nine fee-paying female pupils.<sup>30</sup> By the end of 1857, 43 students were enrolled in the school.<sup>31</sup>

1858

A two-storey bluestone extension designed by architects George and Schneider was added to the rear of the c. 1854 wing at Goold's Residence (C), and used as a boarding and day school.<sup>32</sup> This boarding and day school officially opened on 13 September 1858.<sup>33</sup> The school has been recognised as the one of the oldest Catholic girls schools in Victoria.

1859

Sisters of Mercy, in their continued appeal for additional funds to establish buildings to accommodate their institution publicise their institutional aims:

The protection of distressed young women of good character while out of employment; and secondly, the practical training of such as might be found ignorant in the various household duties which would afterwards enable to the to earn a livelihood...<sup>34</sup>

1860

The Sisters of Mercy purchased the adjacent Kennedy Residence for £3,000, initially using the building as a House of Mercy for 'the temporary protection of young women of good character while destitute' (Figure 5).<sup>35</sup>

1861-62

A two-storey bluestone addition was constructed on the north-east of the Goold Residence (E), which comprised two refectories, kitchen and storeroom on the ground floor with chapel and sacristy above.<sup>36</sup>

1862-63

The double-storey bluestone additions were constructed to the south of the Kennedy Residence in c. 1862-3, which included accommodation for the site's schools (F and G respectively) (Figure 6 and Figure 8). This building included the gable end fronting Nicholson Street, with upper level pointed arch window; the first public architectural expression of the site's religious use. It is not known who the architect for these works was, although the two programmes of works in the early 1860s were constructed by builder John Young.<sup>37</sup> A description of the then newly completed school additions is contained in an *Argus* article of September 1863:

A visit to the school-rooms enables us to speak favourably of the accommodation provided for the pupils. The buildings, which is of constructed bluestone, in the simple gothic style, contains six apartments, lofty, well ventilated, and in all respects neatly fitted up. Of the lower rooms, one is set apart for children from three years of age to seven, a second for children from seven to thirteen, while the third is furnished as a library and museum for the general use of the scholars. Altogether, two hundred pupils are provided for here. The rooms in the upper portion of the building are appropriated to the young ladies' school, which has been existence at the convent for some time past.'<sup>38</sup>

It appears further works were also undertaken to the chapel at the rear of the Goold Residence in this period, with the same *Argus* article noting it was now 'in character with the other parts of the institution', incorporating a 'handsome' altar of crimson, gold and white'.<sup>39</sup> The chapel at the rear of the site was used for convent and school ceremonies, including the conferring of new nuns to the Order of Mercy, with families and visitors able to attend.<sup>40</sup>

1865-66

Sisters of Mercy purchased land on the corner of Nicholson and Palmer streets and the House of Mercy was relocated to the weatherboard residence located on this corner.<sup>41</sup>

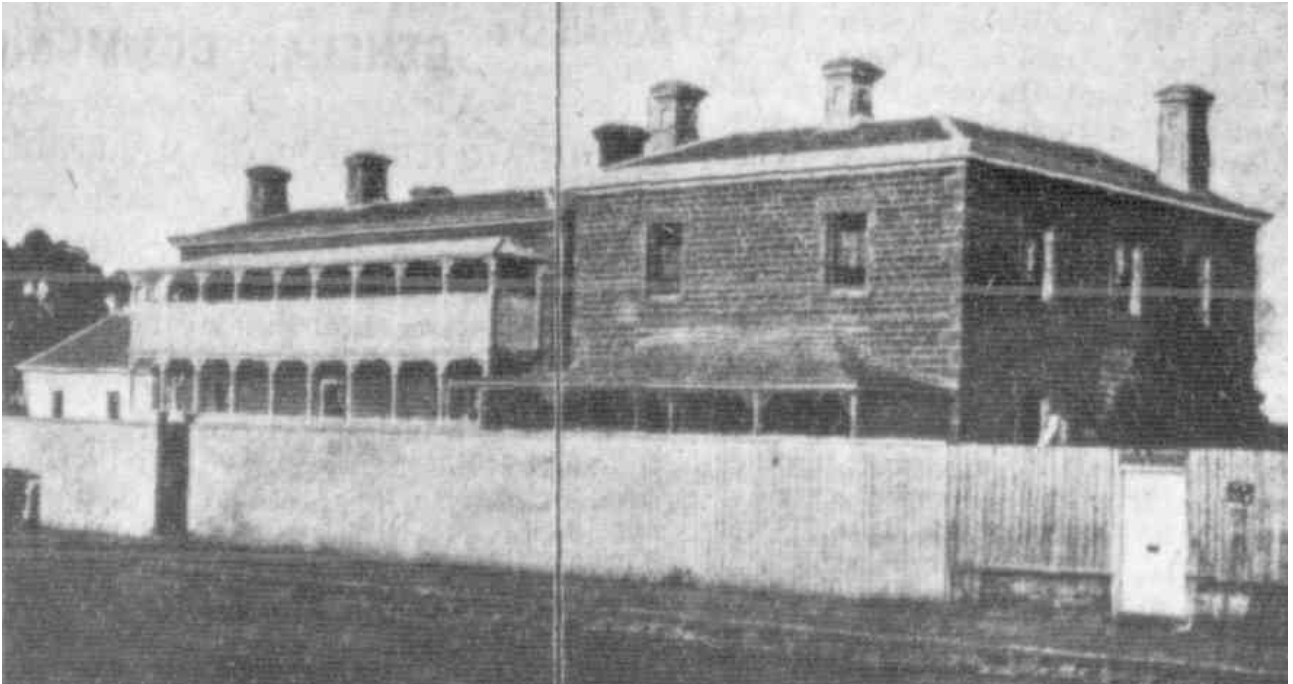


Figure 5 View of the residences from Nicholson Street prior to the additions of c. 1862  
Source: 'Golden Jubilee of the Nicholson Street Convent', *Advocate*, 1907



Figure 6 View of the Sisters of Mercy school and convent buildings following 1860s additions  
Source: Academy of Mary Immaculate archives



Figure 7 View south from the former Goold's Residence to Kennedy Residence and the 1862-3 school buildings. Note closed doorway anticipating a first-floor balcony.

Source: Kenneth Ko & Frank Wu, History Thesis of the Convent of Mercy Nicholson Street, Fitzroy, 1968



Figure 8 Illustration of Nicholson Street, Fitzroy in 1864, with the Sisters of Mercy school and convent visible to the left  
Source: H42683, State Library Victoria

## CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN NINETEENTH CENTURY VICTORIA

Catholic education developed in the Port Phillip District (Victoria) from c. 1839-40, with the establishment of two small schools in Melbourne. In 1842, a purpose-built schoolhouse was constructed adjacent to St Francis Catholic Church, with both boys and girls taught at the school, with other schools operating through the 1840s in rented rooms and church halls. By the late 1840s, at the time of Bishop Goold's arrival, there was only a small number of schools in the district.<sup>42</sup> Catholic schools were administered under the government's Denominational School Board, which distributed funds to religious bodies, while non-sectarian schools were the responsibility of the National School Board.<sup>43</sup> These funds, however, were insufficient and fundraising by parents and local communities was often required.<sup>44</sup> Bishop Goold was influential in the development and direction of Catholic education through the mid-nineteenth century. He had a particular focus on the importance of education of both boys and girls of the growing middle class, and the societal opportunities and mobility enabled by a broad education.<sup>45</sup>

The growth in population of the 1850s gold rush period saw an equivalent increase in the number of Catholic schools across Victoria, from 5 in 1849 to 113 in 1860. This included a seminary at St Francis which functioned both as a secondary school for boys and an ecclesiastical seminary.<sup>46</sup> This was replaced by the St Patrick's College, a substantial bluestone building in East Melbourne, which continued to provide both secondary and ecclesiastical education.<sup>47</sup> It was from the gold rush period onwards that the use of congregation members as schools teachers was gradually replaced with securing teachers from religious orders including the Jesuits and Christian Brothers for boys schools, and the Sisters of Mercy and Sisters of the Good Shepherd for girls schools.<sup>48</sup> The introduction of the *Education Act 1872*, which provided for free, compulsory and secular education to all Victorian children was opposed by Goold, whose resistance to integration into the new system saw the retention of a separate Catholic school system, one which remains today. There was a commitment in the late nineteenth century to outperforming the public schools, and specialist scholarship schools were

established in Fitzroy and North Melbourne.<sup>49</sup> Conversely, Catholic schools were established in the traditionally working-class inner suburbs, educating a broad range of children. Concerns by some parents about the diminished role of religion in secular education saw enrolments at Catholic schools rise, and the construction of further buildings at the subject site was the result of the increased enrolments during this period.<sup>50</sup>

### BIOGRAPHY: JAMES ALIPIUS GOOLD (1812-1886)

Bishop Goold was born on 4 November 1812 in Cork, Ireland. Educated by the Augustinian order, he joined the novitiate in Wexford in 1832. He trained in Perugia and was ordained as a priest in 1835. Goold was recruited to work in Australia by Dr William Ullathorne, the vicar of Archbishop Polding. He spent 10 years in Campbelltown, New South Wales, under Archbishop of Sydney John Bede Polding.<sup>51</sup> He participated in several of Polding's architectural projects including overseeing completion of the church at Campbelltown, and involvement in preparations for the church at Berrima erected to Pugin's designs. Goold was appointed as Bishop of the new Diocese of Melbourne in 1847. As Catholic Bishop, he travelled widely throughout Victoria undertaking pastoral activities and dealing with the needs for new clergy, parishes and schools.<sup>52</sup>

Goold was primarily concerned with improving the education systems available to Catholic children in Victoria, viewing the privately-run schools in the early 1840s and 1850s as providing inadequate education.<sup>53</sup> Between 1851 and 1873, he made five visits to the Vatican and Europe, using his networks to recruit missionaries and procure decorative and ceremonial items for the diocese. In 1874, Goold became the first Roman Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne.<sup>54</sup> In recent years, his role as a cultural patron in early colonial Victoria has been increasingly recognised, especially his contribution in overseeing the building of St Patrick's Cathedral as well as collecting and donating books and artworks to decorate churches and support Catholic teaching.<sup>55</sup>





Figure 9  
Portrait of Bishop James  
Alipius Goold, 1859 (artist  
unknown): note St Patrick's  
College in top left, at that time  
among the Bishop's most  
notable achievements

Source: Jaynie Anderson, Max  
Vodola and Shane Carmody,  
*The Invention of Melbourne: A  
Baroque Archbishop and a  
Gothic Architect*, 2019, The  
Miegunyah Press, p. 46 (from  
the collection of the Sisters of  
Mercy, Fitzroy)

## BIOGRAPHY: MOTHER URSULA FRAYNE AND THE SISTERS OF MERCY

Mother Ursula Frayne, founder of the Sisters of Mercy order at Fitzroy, was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1816.<sup>56</sup> In 1832, she entered the Institute of Mercy in Dublin, which had been founded by Mother Catherine McAuley a year earlier for the instruction of poor girls, visitation of sick and the protection of distressed women of good character.<sup>57</sup> The Sisters of Mercy, once established, rapidly expanded establishing institutions, schools and religious foundations throughout the United Kingdom within its first 20 years.<sup>58</sup> In September 1845, Mother Ursula Frayne led six Sisters of Mercy to Perth, Western Australia to carry out the work of the order in the new colony.<sup>59</sup> In 1849, the Sisters of Mercy founded their first secondary school and House of Mercy, which cared for newly arrived female immigrants and convicts.<sup>60</sup>

In 1857, Bishop Goold encouraged Mother Ursula Frayne to establish a Sisters of Mercy institution in his diocese, Melbourne. Over the next 30 years, the Sisters of Mercy, under the leadership of Mother Ursula Frayne, were successful in establishing a number of schools and a House of Mercy at the Nicholson Street site, supervising an extensive building programme and land expansion. The Sisters of Mercy were the first teaching nuns in Victoria.<sup>61</sup> As well as their work at Nicholson Street, Fitzroy, they were also responsible for the management of the St Vincent de Paul Orphanage at South Melbourne from the 1860s, and the establishment of a Sisters of Mercy foundation in Kilmore in 1875.<sup>62</sup>



Portrait of Mother Ursula Frayne, undated

Source: Kenneth Ko & Frank Wu, History Thesis of the Convent of Mercy Nicholson Street, Fitzroy, 1968

### 3.3 Late 1860s-90s: Convent and school expansion

This 30-year period was foundational for the Sisters of Mercy's institutions at Nicholson Street, Fitzroy. The site was expanded with land acquired to Palmer Street, and new buildings were constructed, notably the Palmer Street school building and the Ursula Frayne Chapel. The school populations increased significantly, a result of the shifts in education in the colony from the 1870s.

**KEY**

- - - CURRENT PROPERTY BOUNDARY
- - - 1869-90s SITE BOUNDARY

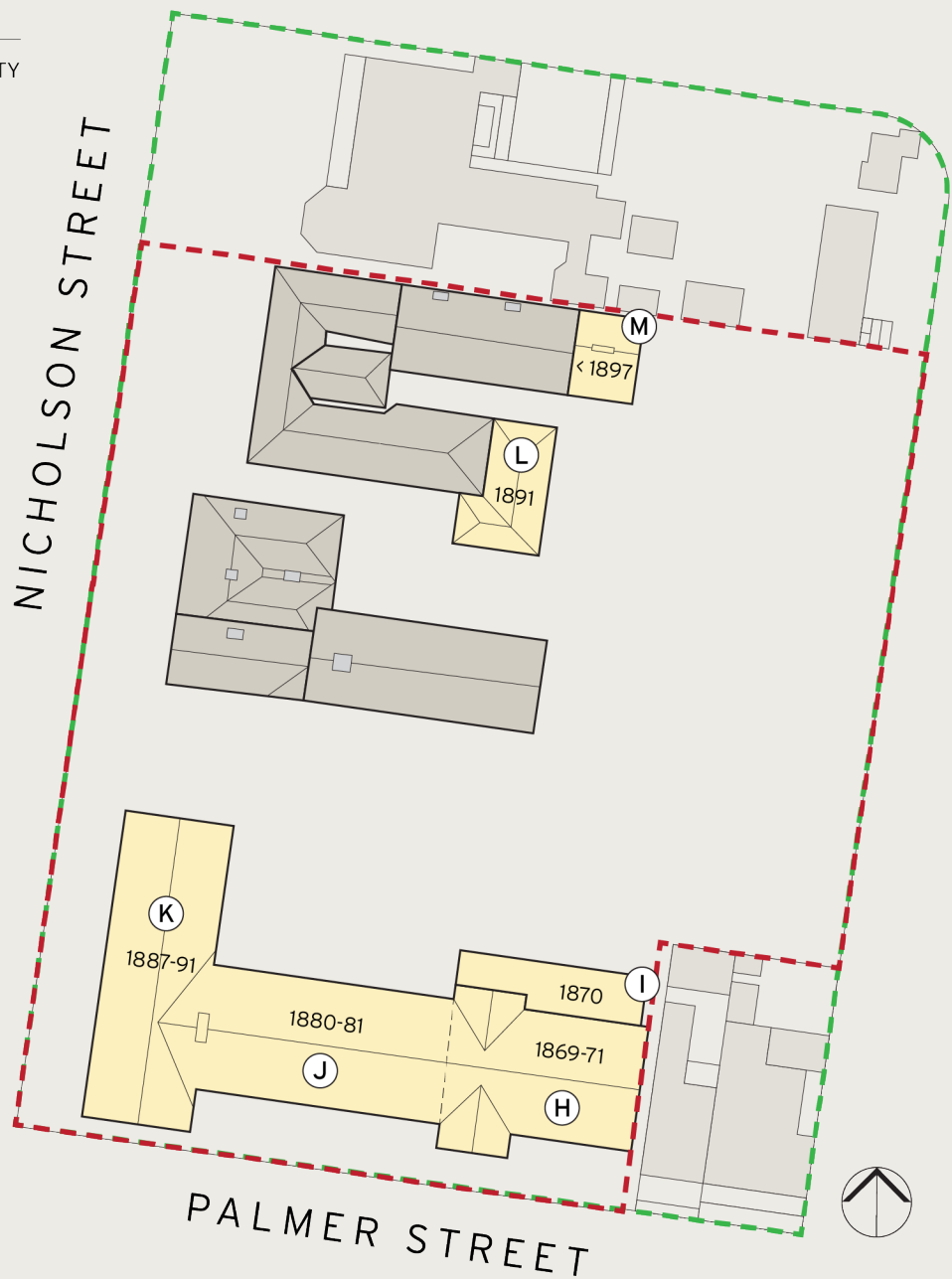


Figure 10 Site development between late 1860s and late 1890s



1869

On 8 December 1869, the foundation stone was laid for the first stage of Palmer Street classrooms (G), located on the portion of land that the Sisters had acquired to Palmer Street.<sup>63</sup> The Palmer Street classrooms were planned to accommodate the growing requirements of the Sisters of Mercy complex, with inadequate space in the existing school buildings following increasing enrolments in Catholic education after the enactment of the *Victorian Education Act 1872*.<sup>64</sup> The plans for the building, designed in a Gothic Revival mode were described as a handsome 'ecclesiastical structure', an 'ornament to the city' and 'creditable not only to the enterprise of the Sisters of Mercy but to the Catholic community.'<sup>65</sup>

An advertisement in the *Advocate* of 13 February 1869 detailed the subjects offered at the Convent of Immaculate Lady of Mercy's schools:

Every branch of a thorough English education, the French language drawing, use of the globes, plain and ornamental needlework. Extras are pianoforte, harp, singing, [painting, German, Italian and dancing ... Infant and middle day schools are attached to the Convent. Also a House of Mercy, for the protection and instruction of poor young women of good character.<sup>66</sup>

1870-71

Difficulties with raising funds to cover the costs of building the entirety of the planned Palmer Street school building meant that the building was constructed in two stages. The first stage was designed by architect Thomas A Kelly, in a Gothic Revival mode, and was completed in 1871 (G and H) (Figure 11 and Figure 12).<sup>67</sup> The building is visible in photographs of c. 1875 (Figure 11) and c. 1880 (Figure 12).<sup>68</sup>

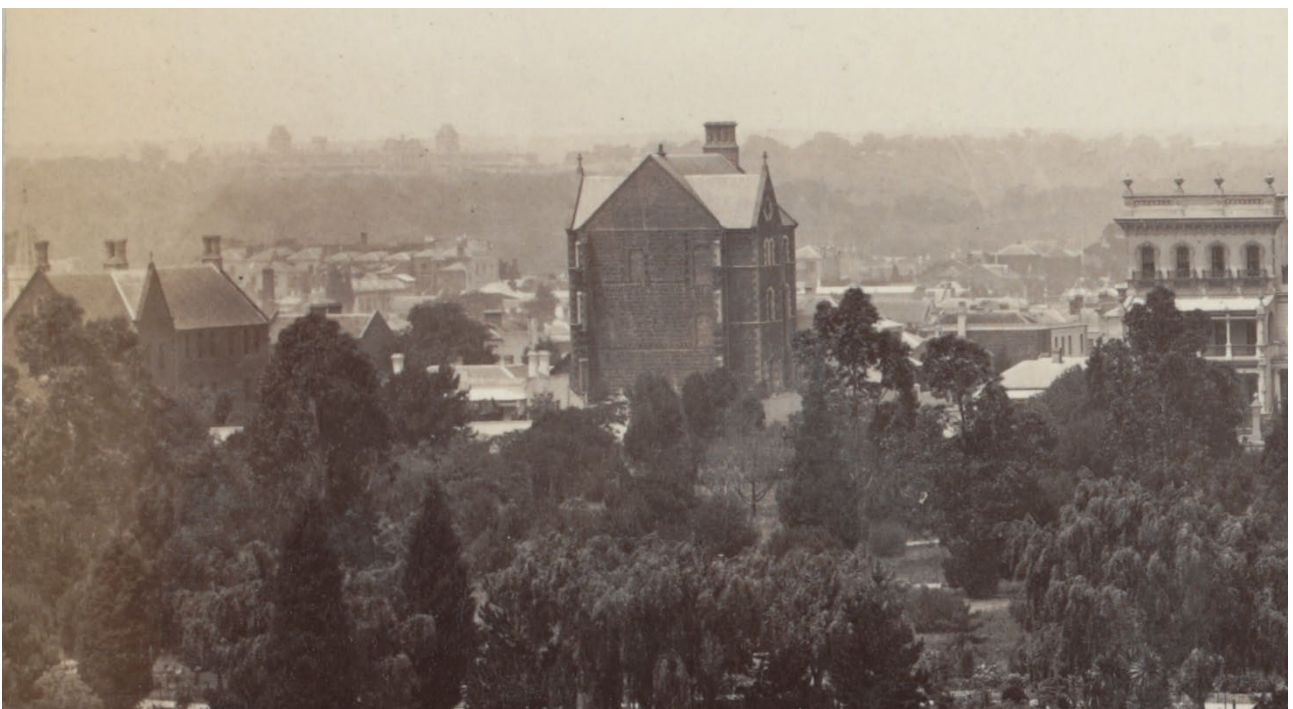


Figure 11 First stage of Palmer Street classrooms: note 'lean-to' bluestone annex, c. 1875  
Source: Charles Nettleton, photographer, H88.22/21, State Library Victoria



Figure 12 Extent of Sisters of Mercy's complex by c. 1880, viewed from Exhibition Building  
Source: H4571, State Library Victoria

## 1880-81

The second stage of the three-storey bluestone Palmer Street building (I) was designed by Leonard Terry and completed at a cost of £12,000.<sup>69</sup>

The school buildings were connected to the rear of the convent grounds via a covered weatherboard way on the ground floor, which incorporated a cloak room and washroom (Figure 22).<sup>70</sup> The completed Palmer Street building accommodated the following schools run by the Sisters of Mercy: the Sacred Heart School, the Angels Guardian School, the Divine Child School and St Anne's School (which all later merged into the parish school of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart by 1877 and occupied these buildings until the 1950s).<sup>71</sup> A classroom in the 1881 section can be seen at Figure 13.

The Palmer Street building represented the last stage of works directed by Mother Ursula Frayne at the Fitzroy site, and upon completion the school complex was officially known as the Convent of the Immaculate Lady of Mercy.<sup>72</sup> Mother Ursula Frayne died at the convent in 1885.

## 1887

The foundation stone of the Ursula Frayne Chapel (J) was laid by Archbishop Dr Thomas Carr, who spoke about the ceremonial importance of the building, and of the importance of Mother Ursula Frayne, in whose honour the structure was dedicated.<sup>73</sup>

## 1889

The Ursula Frayne Chapel was designed by the prominent Melbourne architects Reed, Henderson and Smart and completed in 1889 (Figure 14).<sup>74</sup> The Gothic Revival style chapel was constructed with bluestone foundations, with walls of predominately Barrabool Hills stone, Waurn Ponds stone detailing and a Welsh slate roof.<sup>75</sup>

Following its completion, the chapel was described in 1890 as follows:

The body of the chapel is 80ft long by 27ft wide, while the heights are 37ft to the cornice and 48ft to the apex of the vaulted wooden roof. The length is divided into seven bays strengthened by massive buttresses and surmounted by a perforated stone parapet. The north-west angle terminates with a bell turret whilst the south gable is flanked by a tower which is capable of holding a peal of bells...

The chapel is lighted on the south end by a five light window with rich geometrical tracery and at the side by two lights in each bay, ornamented by similar tracery. Ample ventilation is provided from the outside in the shape of quatrefoil openings.



Figure 13 Undated photograph of classroom in 1881 section of Palmer Street classroom building  
Source: Kenneth Ko & Frank Wu, History Thesis of the Convent of Mercy Nicholson Street, Fitzroy, 1968



Figure 14 Ursula Frayne Chapel, c. 1892-1900  
Source: State Library Victoria, H39357.1

1891

Twelve Sisters House (K) was constructed to the south of Kennedy's Residence (Figure 15). The two-storey brick building accommodated the twelve postulants recently arrived from Ireland, who had volunteered for international missions including the Sisters of Mercy's institutions.<sup>76</sup>

1898

A 'new and very handsome' marble high altar was installed in the Ursula Frayne Chapel. The alter arrangement of dark and light coloured marble was 'in accordance with nature', with the 'the various graduations of colour [rising] upwards through the design', with pure white at the apex.<sup>77</sup>

1890s

In the late 1890s, the complex of buildings at Sisters of Mercy site is shown on the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) plans of 1897 (Figure 16) and 1899 (Figure 17). The plans show the prominent Ursula Frayne Chapel on the corner of Nicholson Street connected to the completed Palmer Street classrooms, the Gould and Kennedy Residences with their 1860s additions, a number of covered walkways connecting the school and convent grounds, and a number of weatherboard outbuildings at the east of the site (later demolished). Two residences of masonry construction are also visible on the corner of Palmer and Little Fleet streets outside the property boundary of the Academy of Mary Immaculate at this time.

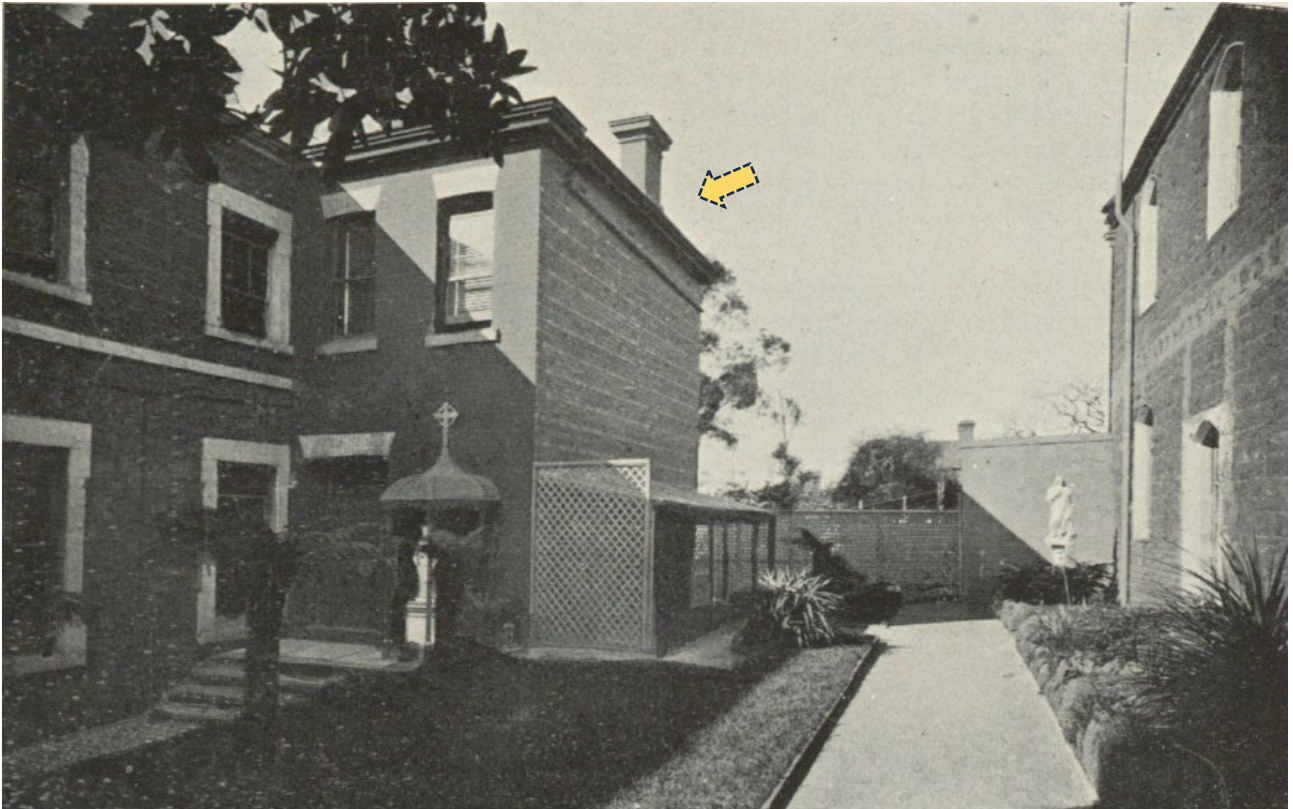


Figure 15 Twelve Sisters House (indicated) located at the end of the courtyard at the rear of Kennedy's Residence, c. 1909  
Source: *The Academician*, 1909, provided by Academy of Mary Immaculate archives

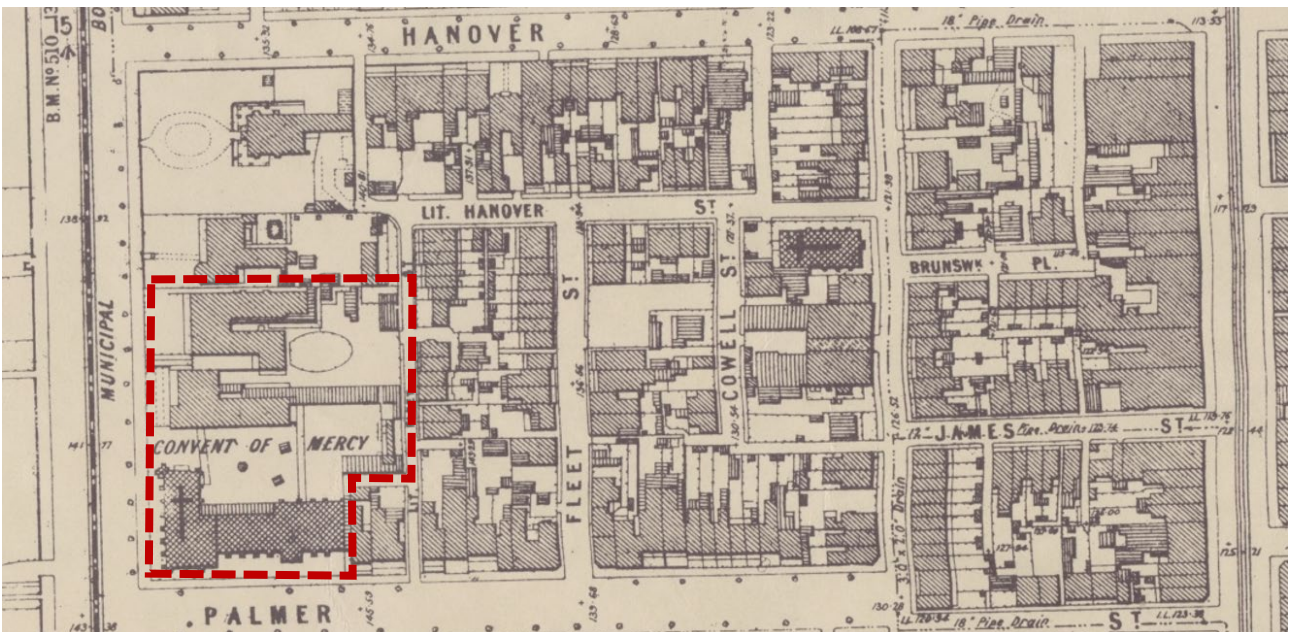


Figure 16 Detail, boundary of consolidated grounds of the Convent of Mercy (red line) as shown on MMBW plan, 1897  
Source: State Library Victoria

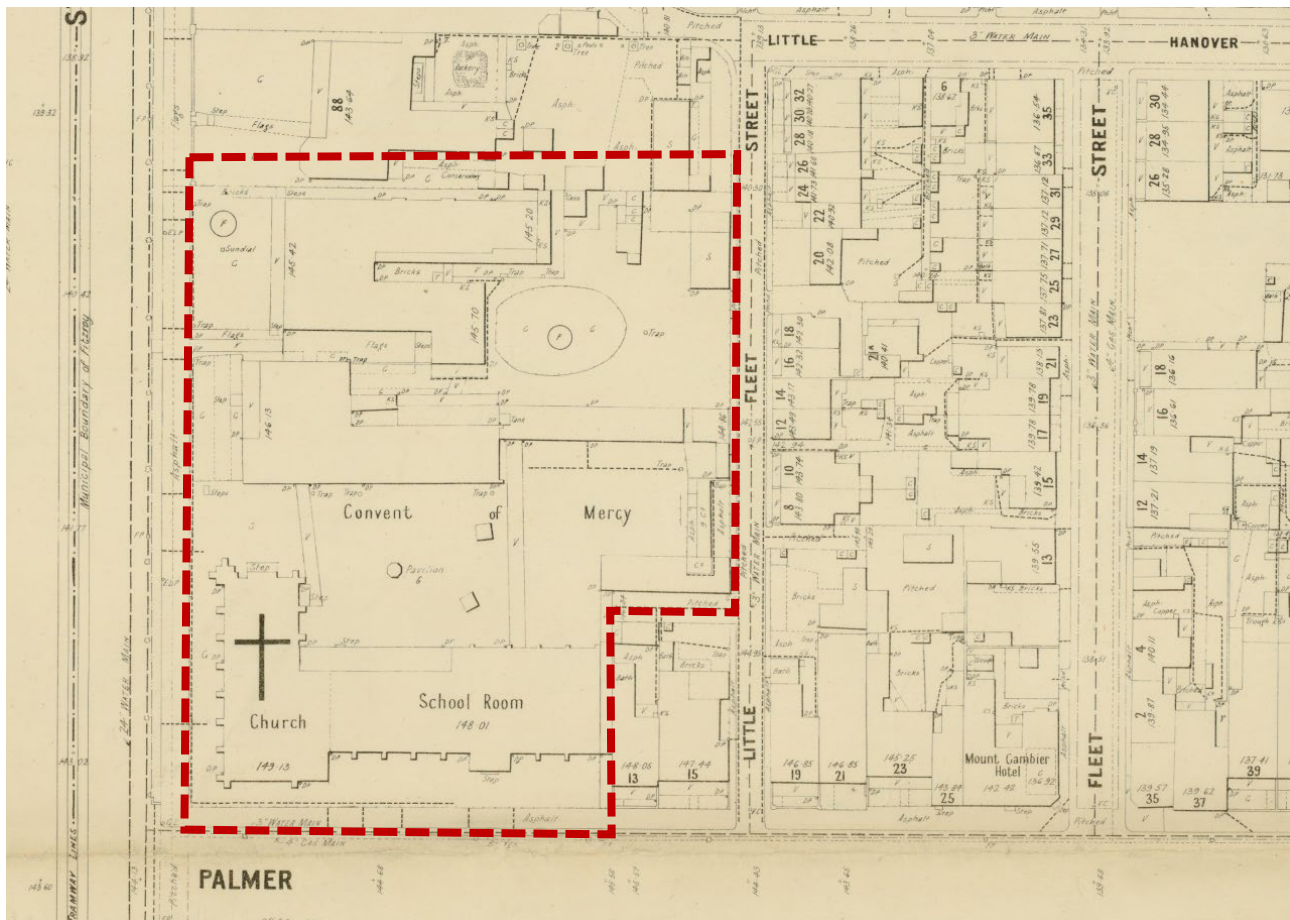


Figure 17 Detail, property boundary and consolidated grounds of the Convent of Mercy, church and school as shown on MMBW Plan, 1897, red line  
Source: State Library Victoria

## LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY FITZROY

By the late nineteenth century, Fitzroy was a fully developed suburb. It was known by this time for its increasingly working-class population, having lost some of the status of its early development in the 1840s and 1850s. The appeal of emerging dormitory suburbs to the east of the city saw many wealthier residents of Melbourne leave the inner suburbs, Fitzroy included.

Nicholson Street had developed as a main thoroughfare from the city to North Fitzroy and Brunswick and marked the eastern boundary of the Carlton Gardens. The gardens had been redesigned to accommodate the Exhibition Buildings in time for the 1880 Melbourne International Exhibition, an event which attracted over a million visitors in seven months.<sup>78</sup> A cable tram route from the city along

Nicholson Street had been established in 1888, coinciding with the Centenary Exhibition.<sup>79</sup>

Although Nicholson Street had retained a level of prestige due to its proximity to the Carlton Gardens, away from this thoroughfare and the gardens, the narrow back streets and laneways of Fitzroy were occupied by small houses and even smaller cottages. The municipal rate books of the period demonstrate the difference in housing sizes: brick terrace houses of 10-12 rooms to wooden cottages of 2 or 3 rooms.<sup>80</sup> Boarding houses were also established in some of the suburb's larger residences, including a number at the southern end of Nicholson Street, as the economic crash of the 1890s impacted the suburb.<sup>81</sup>

The 1890s crash also saw an increased demand for charitable and church welfare services, particularly for children and women in need.<sup>82</sup> The Sisters of Charity established St Vincent's Hospital on Victoria Parade in

1893, and the St Mark's Benevolent Society conducted a scheme to distribute meals and provide shelter.<sup>83</sup>

There were a number of schools operating in the suburb, through the nineteenth century, reflective both of the population of the suburb, and later, the effects of the 1872 Education Act. These included the school associated with the 1853 St Mark's Anglican Church, the Bell Street National School of 1864, the Fitzroy State School (formerly George Street School No. 450) of 1855, as well as a number of public and church schools in North Fitzroy. The Sisters of Mercy convent was also known as a place where food or other welfare could be obtained if needed, particularly when other services were closed over the weekend.<sup>84</sup>

### CONVENT LIFE

The work of the Sisters of Mercy in the nineteenth century was not just focused on the schools. Sisters of Mercy, unlike other orders, were not bound by a single purpose, instead responded to needs as required. The work of the Fitzroy Sisters of Mercy extended beyond the education of children at the site's schools. The sisters provided training for the women accommodated at the House of Mercy for employment, mainly in domestic service. Girls from orphanages were increasingly included in this training, and the sisters also offered religious instruction for servants, although it is unclear what this training comprised. The sisters also regularly undertook visits to hospital and benevolent asylum patients and inmates of the Melbourne and Pentridge gaols.<sup>85</sup> Through the nineteenth century operation of the convent, 64 sisters were professed at the site, most of whom had arrived from Ireland.<sup>86</sup> The sisters occupied the north of the site, accommodated within the former Gould residence, with its private chapel and refectories constructed in 1861. Through its over 160-year history of operation, the convent occupied various spaces across the two nineteenth century residences as the size of the community grew or declined.

Life at the convent for the sisters followed a daily pattern, partly in step with the school students and partly their own charges (tasks) and routines. On a typical weekday, sisters would rise early to say prayers, before heading to morning Mass with the boarders in the Ursula Frayne Chapel. After breakfast

and chores, the sisters would head to their respective workplaces at the Mary Immaculate or other schools, or domestic duties within the convent. A formal dinner was held in the middle of the day, preceded by prayer time, and after the end of the workday there was a light evening meal, evening prayer in the Ursula Frayne Chapel and some evening recreation time. On the weekends, sisters undertook visitation to people in need or had visits from family. Life beyond the convent grounds was regulated, with permission required from the Mother Superior to leave the site and for fares for trams or other requirements. Mother Superior also determined the various charges of the sisters, which might include supervision of the boarding students.<sup>87</sup>

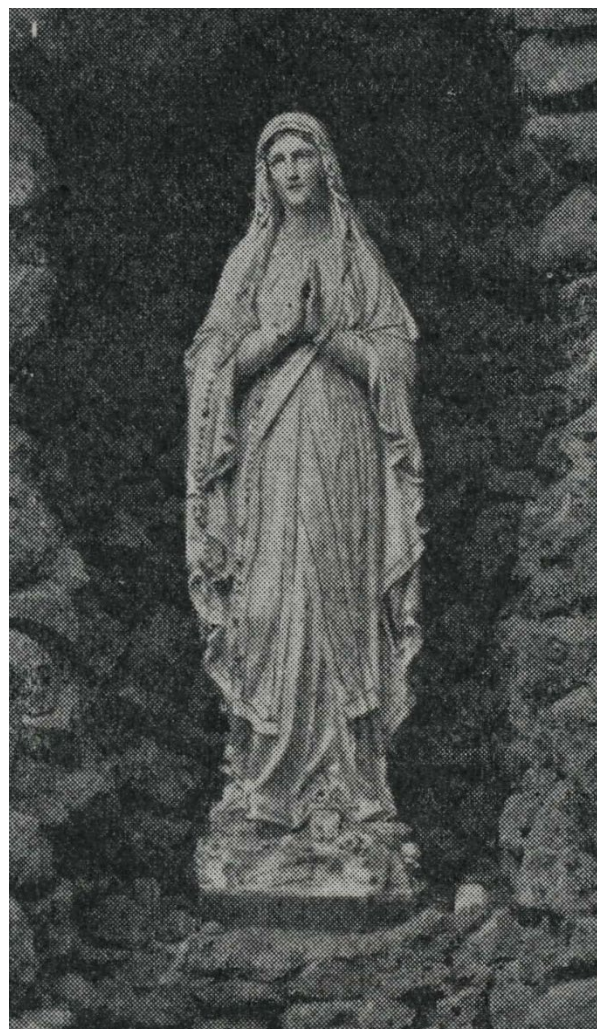


Figure 18 Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes  
Source: Academian, 1909, provided by the Academy of Mary Immaculate



## THE ARCHITECTS

Rather than being a single architect's vision for the site, the complex of buildings was the result of designs by a number of architects, responding to the various needs of the Sisters of Mercy activities.

*Thomas A Kelly* is a relatively understudied architect who completed numerous commissions for the Roman Catholic church in Victoria from the 1860s to the 1890s. Through the patronage of James Goold, Kelly designed many of Melbourne and Victoria's Catholic buildings, including South Melbourne's St Peter's and St Paul's Church (1869), St Brigid's Church, North Fitzroy (c.1869), St Augustine Church, Melbourne (c. 1869), St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Williamstown (c. 1869), St Ignatius' Presbytery, Richmond (1871-2) and the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Hawthorn (1871-2).<sup>88</sup> Kelly's most notable work is considered to be his designs for parts of St. Patrick's College in Cathedral Place in 1869 and a new college for Xavier College (the current South Wing), Kew in 1873-5.<sup>89</sup>

*Leonard Terry* is well-regarded English architect who worked in the early 1850s to the early 1880s in Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia, and most notably designed buildings for at least fifty branches of Australia's major banks.<sup>90</sup> Terry arrived in Melbourne from Yorkshire in 1853 and initially was employed by Charles Laing, Diocesan Architect to the Anglican Church, a position Terry would obtain following Laing's death.<sup>91</sup> Terry's work for the banking institutions predominately adopted a Renaissance palazzo mode, with his most notable bank designs along Lydiard and Sturt streets in Ballarat, including the Bank of New South Wales, Ballarat (1862), the Colonial, Ballarat (1860), the National, Ballarat (1862) and Australasia, Ballarat (1864).<sup>92</sup> Terry also designed a number of Anglican churches in Victoria, mostly of bluestone in Early English or Decorated Gothic modes.<sup>93</sup> Terry in his later career undertook commissions for the Roman Catholic church, and was notably appointed supervising architect for St Paul's Cathedral for a brief period in the 1880s.<sup>94</sup>

*Reed, Henderson and Smart* was an architectural firm comprised of three prominent nineteenth century Melbourne architects: Joseph Reed, Ankell Mathew Henderson and Francis Smart. The firm continues today as Bates-Smart.<sup>95</sup> Joseph Reed and Frederick Barnes designed some of Melbourne's most famous landmarks including the State Library Victoria (formerly Melbourne Public Library, 1854-1870).<sup>96</sup> Upon Barnes' retirement, Henderson and Smart joined Reed, with the firm's projects demonstrating an eclectic use of architectural modes, designing notable buildings across Victoria including the Baroque style Sacred Heart Church, St Kilda (1884) and the Queen Anne style Queenscliff Hotel (1887).<sup>97</sup> It was common practice in the mid to late nineteenth century for religious institutions across Victoria to employ prominent Melbourne architects to design their institutional buildings.<sup>98</sup> Accordingly, Reed, Smart and Henderson won numerous commissions for the Catholic and Anglican church orders including the Ursula Frayne Chapel (1887-9) for the Sisters of Mercy.

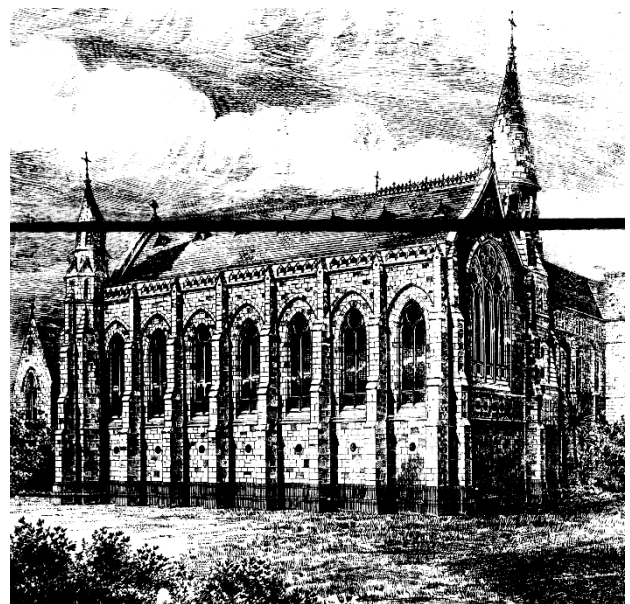


Figure 19

Detail, perspective sketch of Ursula Frayne Chapel

Source: *Australasian Builder and Contractor News*, 1890, State Library Victoria



HANOVER

MMBW detail plan no. 1205, 1899  
Source: State Library Victoria

STREET

137 17

139 32

140 42

141 77

143 02

143 60

144 13

144 68

145 79

146 34

146 89

Flower Garden

Flower Garden

Gardens

1183

Carlton

3" Gas Main (Open Arched)

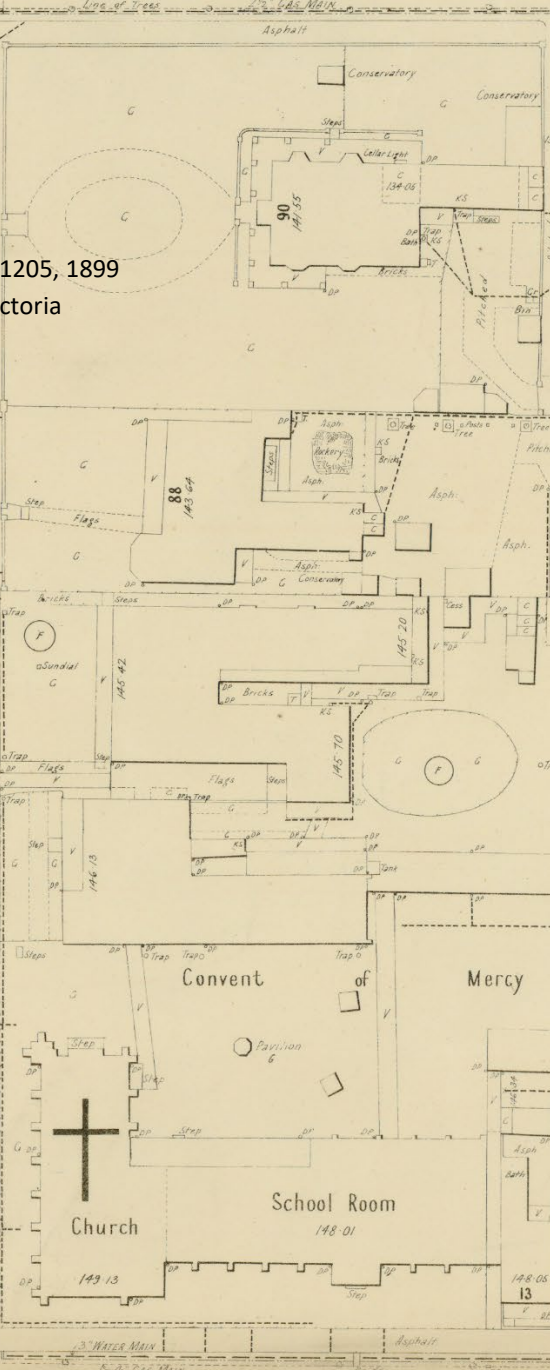
Asphalt

WATER MAIN

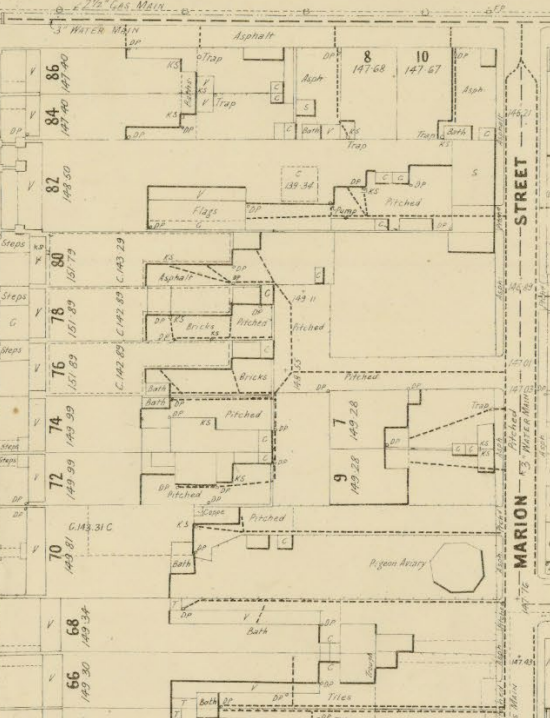
Municipal Boundary of Fitzroy

Municipal Boundary of

WATER MAIN



PALMER



STREET

144 50

144 50

144 50

144 50

144 50

144 50

144 50

LITTLE STREET

137 04

137 04

137 04

137 04

137 04

137 04

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STREET

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137 04

137 04

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137 04

MARION STREET

144 50

144 50

MARION

144 50

144 50

WATER MAIN

144 50

144 50

### 3.4 1900-1930s: Consolidation

These years represented a consolidation of operations at the school grounds and convent site, whereby the complex came to be known as a whole: the Academy of Mary Immaculate. Additional land was acquired to the north at 88 Nicholson Street, although only minor infill development took place at the site in this period.

**KEY**

- - - CURRENT PROPERTY BOUNDARY
- - - 1920s-30s SITE BOUNDARY

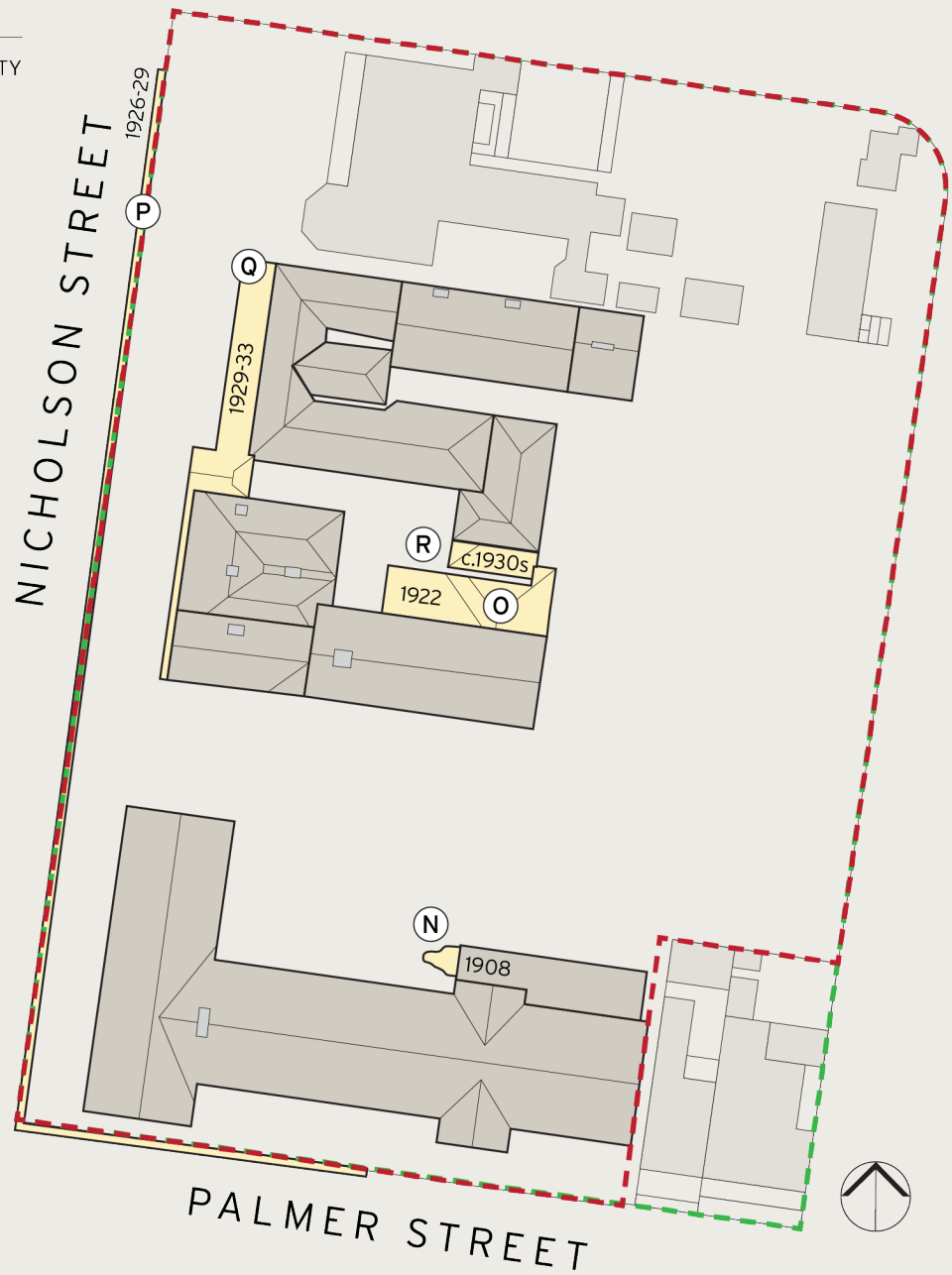


Figure 20 Site development, 1900-1930s



1908



The Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes (N) was added to quadrangle, to the west of the lean-to bluestone annex of Palmer Street classrooms.

1922



Music rooms, typing room and boarder's pantry (O) added in between the Twelve Sisters House and the c. 1862 southern addition to Kennedy's Residence (Figure 21).



Figure 21 East elevation of the convent showing the various c. 1920s and 1930s weatherboard infills in between the Twelve Sisters House and Kennedy's Residence  
Source: Kenneth Ko & Frank Wu, History Thesis of the Convent of Mercy Nicholson Street, Fitzroy, 1968

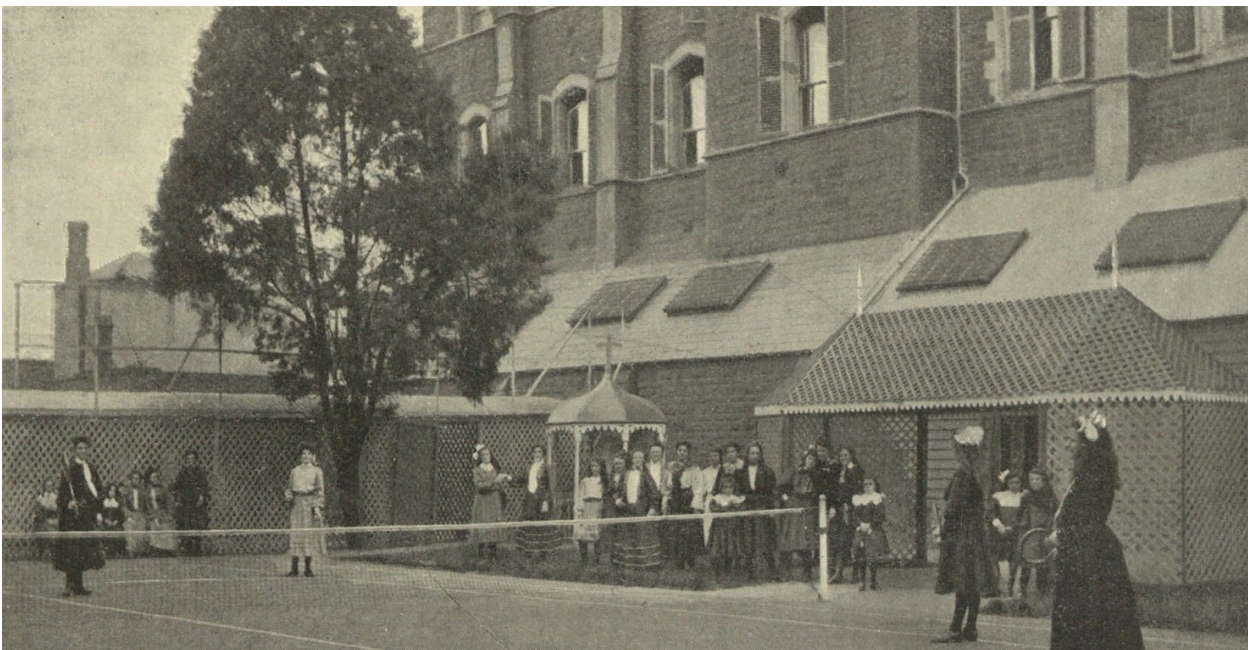


Figure 22 Covered way connecting Palmer Street classrooms with the Convent grounds and a tennis court located within the quadrangle  
Source: *Academian*, c. 1907, provided by the Academy of Mary Immaculate



1926-29

A tall brick fence (N) was constructed to replace an earlier weatherboard fence along the property boundary of the Nicholson and Palmer streets (Figure 24 and Figure 25).

1929-33

The connecting balcony and verandah (Q) was constructed to the front elevation of the Gould and Kennedy residences (Figure 26).<sup>99</sup> The new balcony was designed by a P Harper. This new façade treatment resulted in a unified and ecclesiastical presentation of the two former private residences.

1933

Academy of Mary Immaculate purchased the adjacent property at 88 Nicholson Street (later the site of the Walsh building).<sup>100</sup> This area remained undeveloped in this period, although the existing villa residence appears to have been demolished in anticipation of new built form soon after.

c. 1930s

Two-storey weatherboard addition (R) was constructed to the Twelve Sisters House (Figure 21).



Figure 23 Covered way connecting Palmer Street classrooms with the rear of the Kennedy residence, and asphalted quadrangle in foreground

Source: *Academian*, c. 1909, provided by the Academy of Mary Immaculate

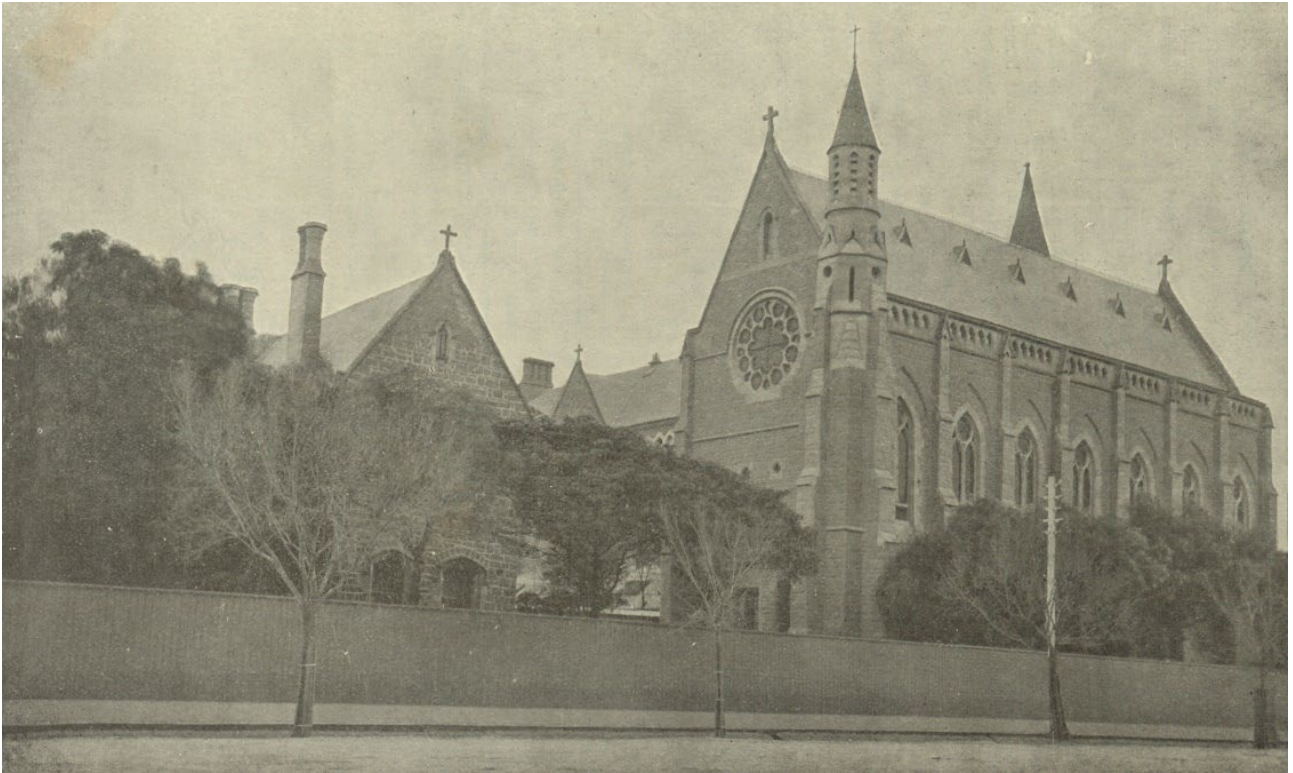


Figure 24 Previous high weatherboard fence running along Nicholson Street prior to construction of the current brick fencing, 1907  
Source: *Academian*, 1907, provided by the Academy of Mary Immaculate archives



Figure 25 Academy of Mary Immaculate's new high brick fence illustrating the consolidation of the complex  
Source: 'Convent of Mary Immaculate', *Advocate*, 31 August 1933

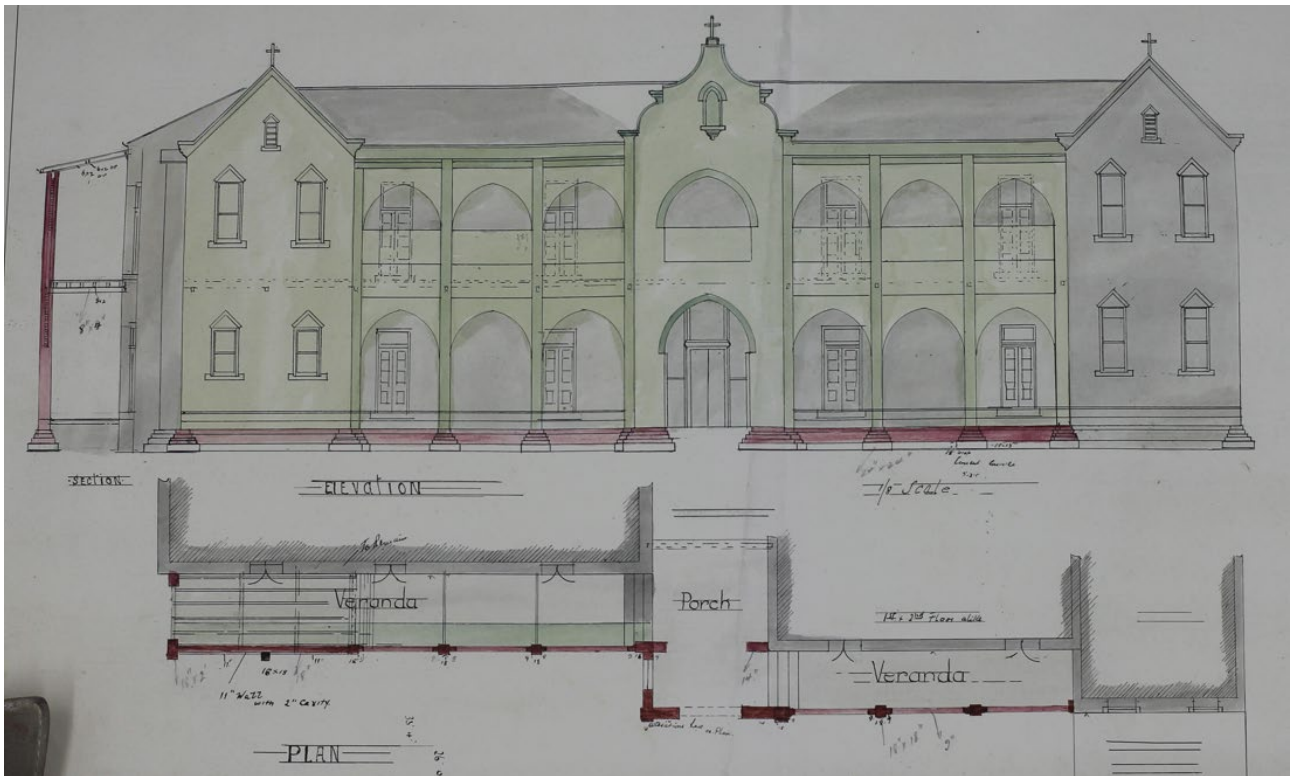


Figure 26 Drawings showing the screen treatment and connecting balcony to convent. 1929-33  
Source: VPRS 16127/P3, Public Record Office Victoria



Figure 27 Detail, oblique aerial view of the Sisters of Mercy complex, noting the screening treatment to Gold and Kennedy Residences, looking south east from Exhibition Building, c. 1931  
Source: State Library Victoria, H2014.1008

## SCHOOL LIFE

The student population at the Academy comprised a number of distinct groups: the day students and the boarders, as well as the separate schools which operated within the broader institute. Likewise, in the nineteenth century there was a distinction between each of the schools at the Academy, allowing the Sisters to demonstrate to parents of 'students at the select or boarding school that their daughters would be educated quite separately from children of lower classes.'<sup>101</sup> Through the twentieth century students were drawn from a variety of backgrounds, and public transport and the availability of senior Catholic education across Melbourne were often influencing factors, with many travelling to Fitzroy from as far afield as Werribee, Thomastown and Preston.<sup>102</sup> Likewise, the school often reflected migration patterns, with post-war Italian families and late twentieth century Vietnamese families sending their children to the school.<sup>103</sup>

The boarders in particular were a distinct group, spending most of their time on the campus, and these students had more interaction with the sisters. There

were two dormitories, for junior and senior girls, with girls as young as six staying at the site. The senior dormitory was on the third floor of the Palmer Street building.<sup>104</sup> The boarding school students were heavily supervised, and were 'never left without a Sister' keeping an eye on them.<sup>105</sup> The location of the site was used as a drawcard; its elevated position would reportedly ensure the health of the boarder, although in truth, many suffered from the cold in the buildings.<sup>106</sup> An illustrated advertisement in the *Advocate* in 1907, entitled 'An Ideal College', observed that the school was 'the oldest boarding school in Victoria, yet [was] most modern in its achievements'.<sup>107</sup> Students were educated in English, history, geography, mathematics, art, music and a variety of instruments, physical culture, and dress-making, among other subjects.<sup>108</sup>

The school site was relatively cramped, with the quadrangle between Kennedy's residence and the Palmer Street school building the main play area for students (Figure 28). The Palmer Street building accommodated the Sacred Heart School, which educated primary school aged students.

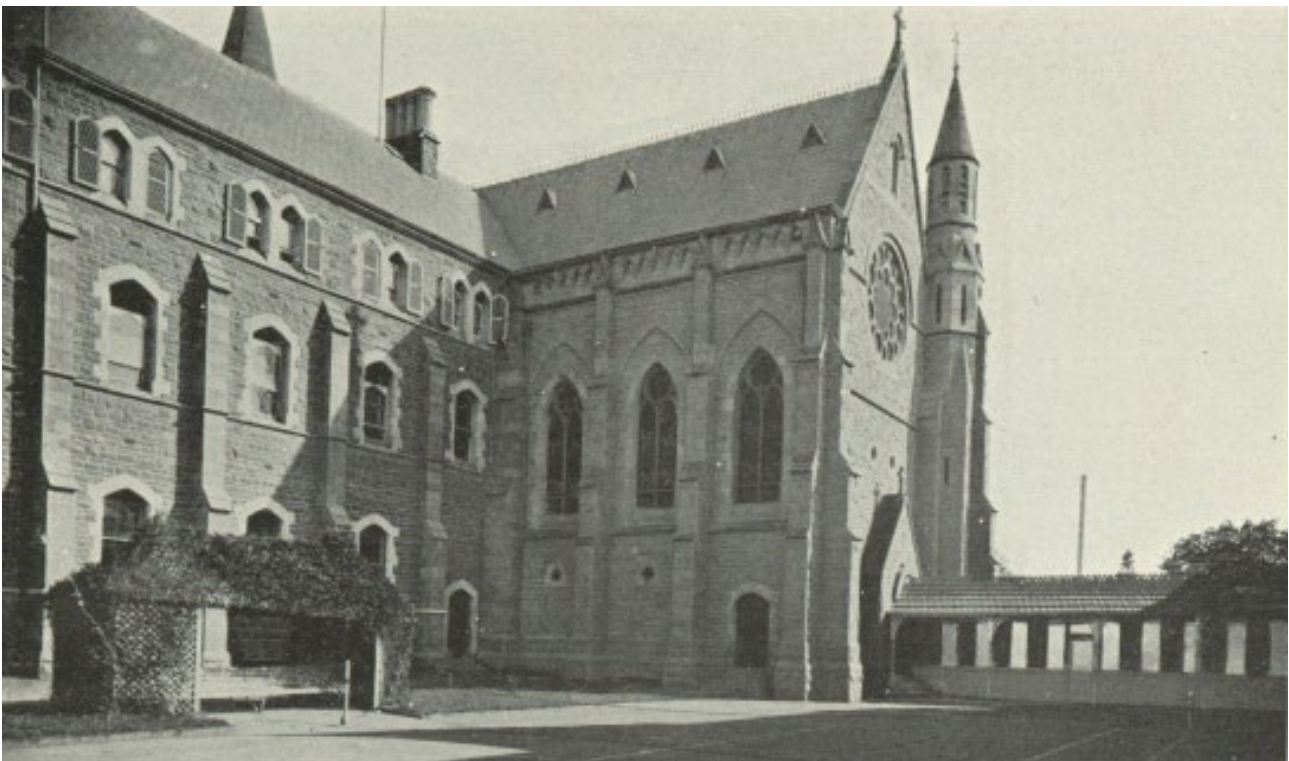


Figure 28 Quadrangle, viewed from the east, 1909  
Source: *The Academian*, 1909, provided by Academy of Mary Immaculate archives

### 3.5 1950s-70s: Further development

This 30-year period saw numerous alterations and additional modern buildings erected within the school complex and convent grounds to accommodate the increasing requirements of the oldest Catholic school in Victoria. The two nineteenth century residences at the corner of Palmer Street and Little Fleet Street were acquired, and later demolished (c. 1960s and 1980s).

**KEY**

- - - CURRENT PROPERTY BOUNDARY
- - - 1950s-1970s SITE BOUNDARY

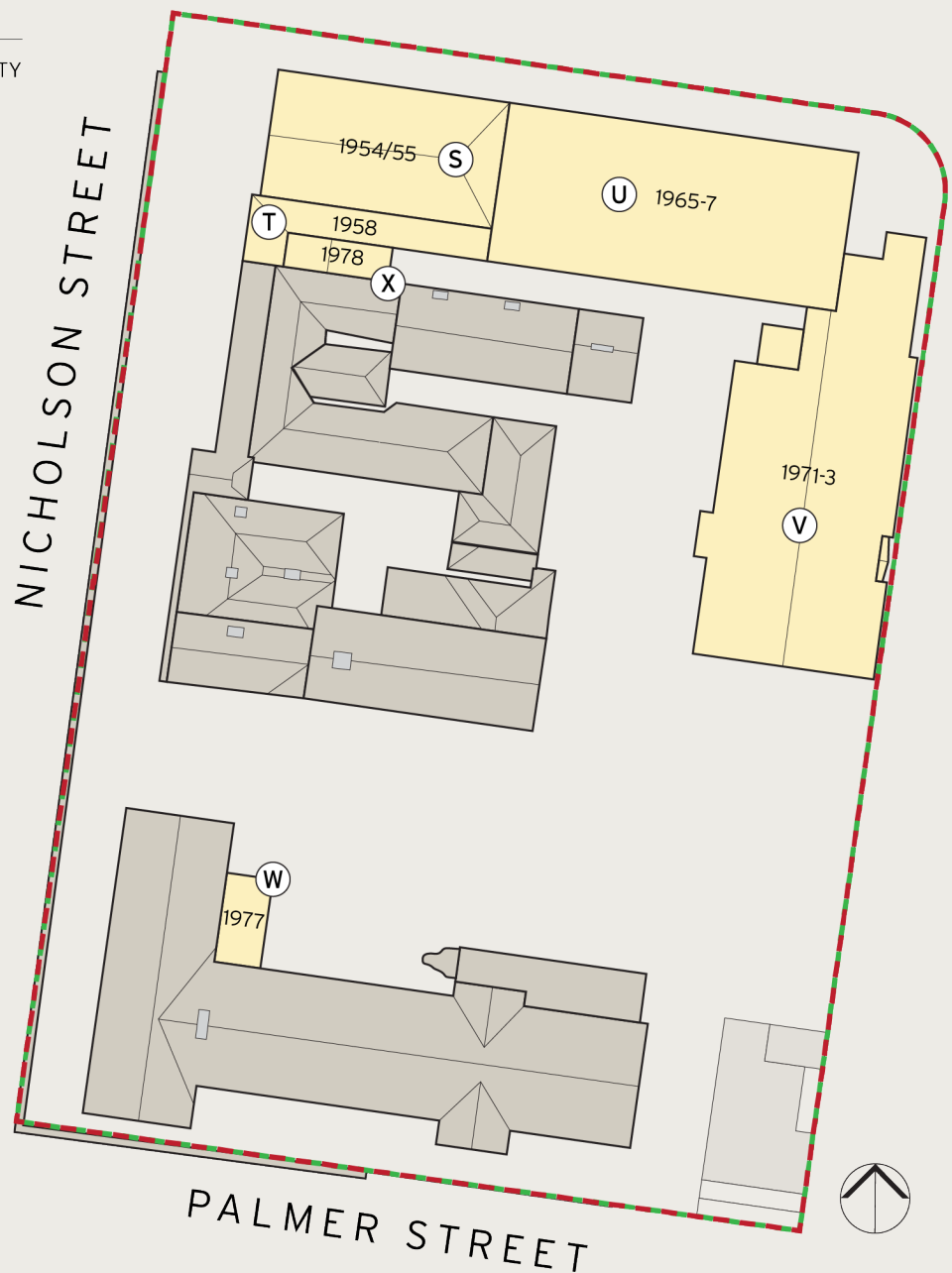


Figure 29 Site development, post-war period



1954

The two-storey Walsh building (S) was constructed on the northern section of the campus (Figure 30 and Figure 31).<sup>109</sup> This was the first substantial building constructed on the Academy of Mary Immaculate campus in 60 years. The building comprised a classroom block, lecture room a tiered lecture room, a laboratory room, arts and crafts rooms and an additional room for visiting retreat priests.<sup>110</sup>

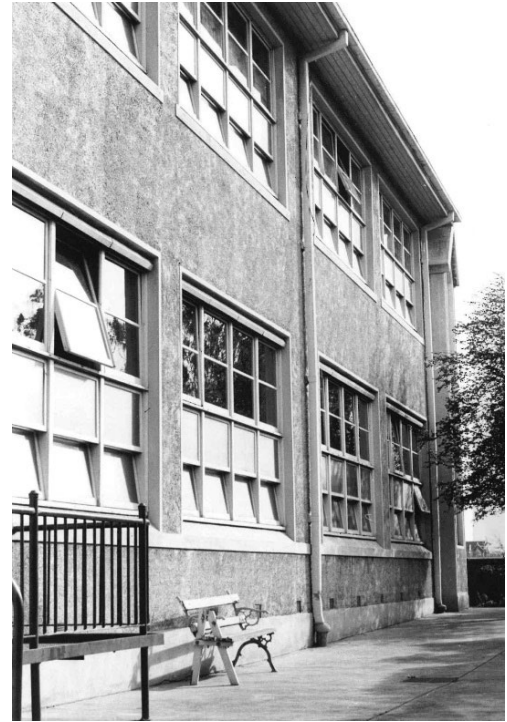
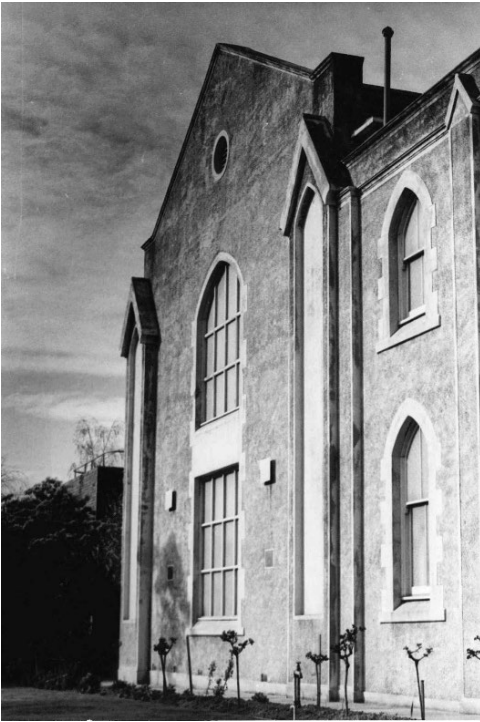


Figure 30 Walsh building as connected via the façade treatment to Goold's Residence (left) and as viewed from north (right)  
Source: Kenneth Ko & Frank Wu, History Thesis of the Convent of Mercy Nicholson Street, Fitzroy, 1968

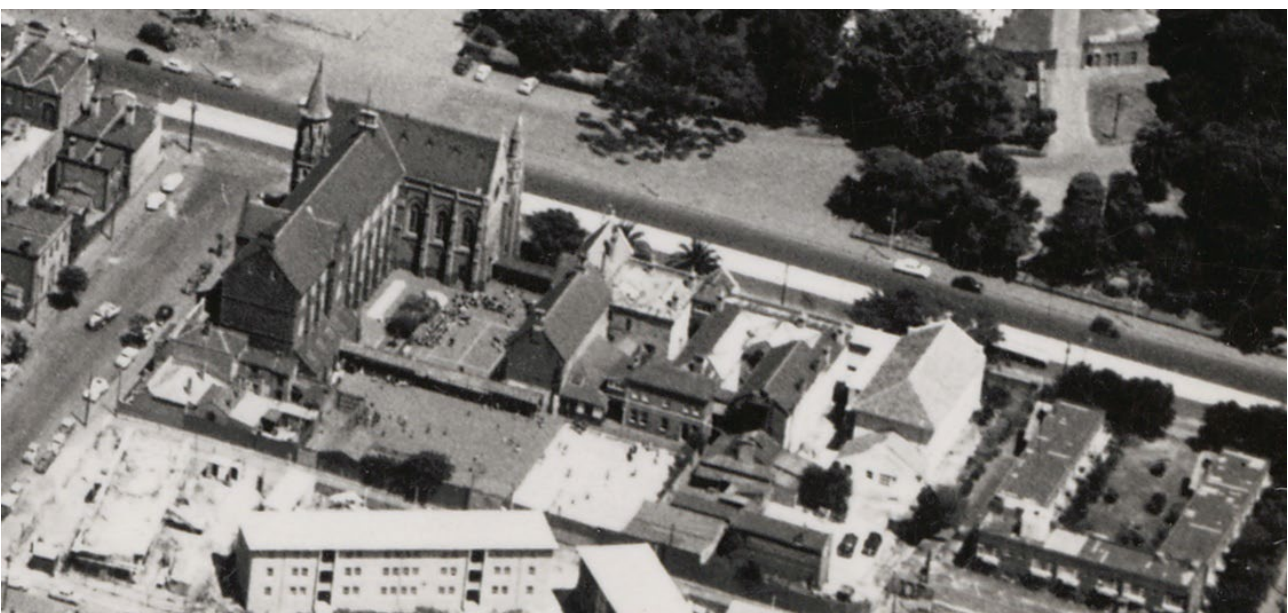


Figure 31 Detail, oblique aerial view of the campus looking west, note the Walsh building and various c. 1920s and 1930s insertions  
Source: State Library Victoria, H2016.33

- 1956 ● Alterations undertaken to the bathroom within the Goold Residence.<sup>111</sup>
- 1958 ● The school office extension (T) was added between the recently completed Walsh building and Goold's Residence.<sup>112</sup> A number of weatherboard outbuildings to the rear of the Goold's Residence were also demolished at this time.<sup>113</sup>
- 1965-67 ● The Perpetua Wing (U), containing a hall and science block, was added to the east of the Walsh building.<sup>114</sup>
- 1971-73 ● The McKenna Building (V) was constructed at the east of the complex, along the Little Fleet Street boundary (Figure 32).<sup>115</sup>
- Sisters of Mercy closed the Academy of Mary Immaculate boarding school, due to decreasing demands in boarder numbers.<sup>116</sup>

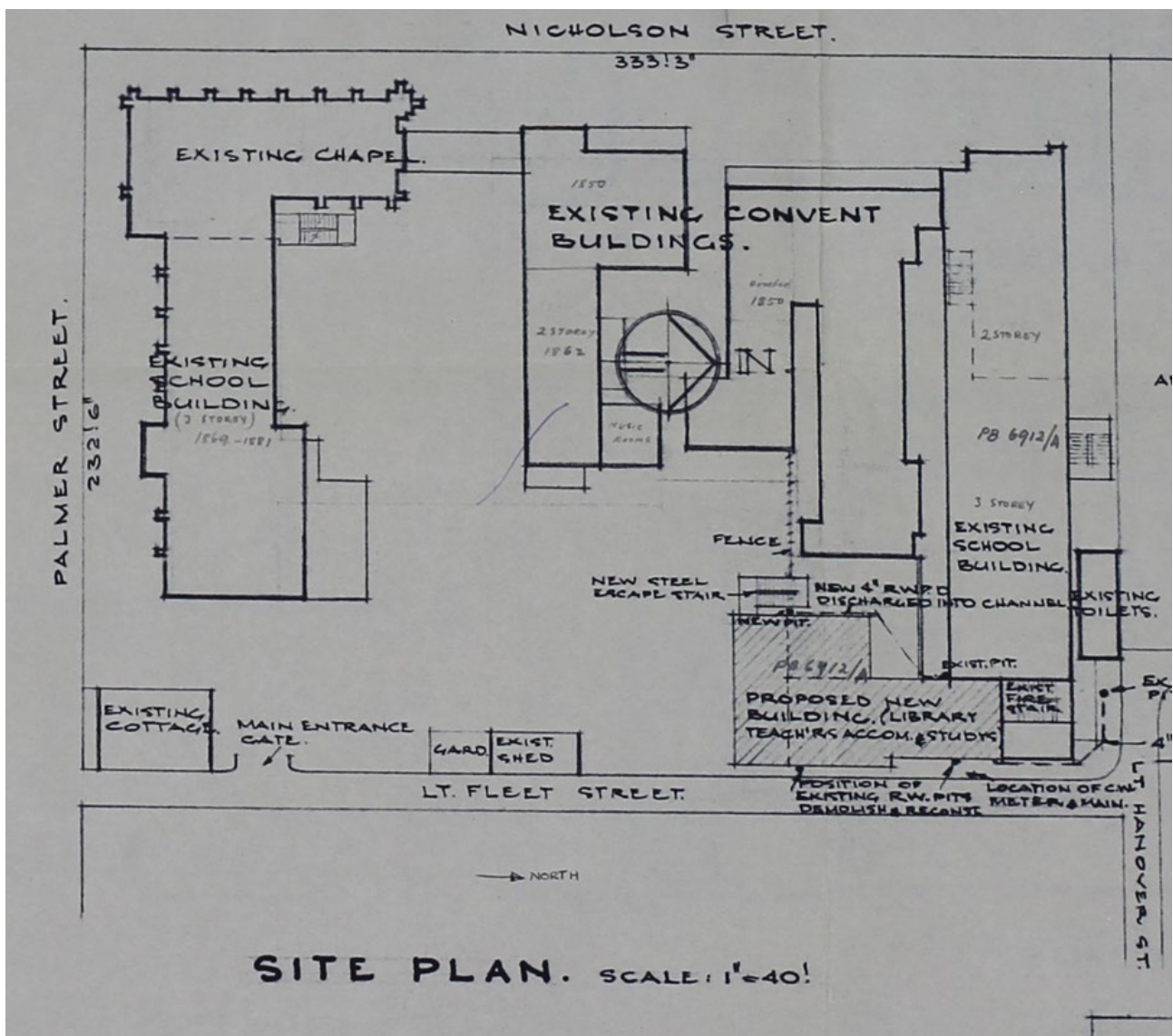


Figure 32 Site plan showing the location of the proposed McKenna building, c. 1971  
Source: Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 7882, P0001

- 1976** ● The covered way connecting the Palmer Street classrooms to the rear grounds of the convent was demolished to allow for construction of the three-level fire escape (W) to the Ursula Frayne Chapel.<sup>117</sup> This was constructed in 1977.<sup>118</sup>
- 1978** ● The school office rooms (X) to the Walsh Building were further extended.<sup>119</sup>
- 1979-80** ● Formal recognition of the heritage significance of the site takes place. The 1979 South Fitzroy Conservation Study recommended the complex be added to the Historic Buildings Register, the precursor to the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR), due to the importance of its collection of early residential, school and convent buildings. The study also recommended it be included in the Register of the National Estate, a non-statutory database which is no longer maintained. The Convent of Mercy was classified by the Victorian branch of the National Trust in this period.
- 1982** ● Following the recommendations of the South Fitzroy Conservation Study and the National Trust's classification, the Historic Buildings Council undertook an assessment of the site. As a result, the nineteenth century buildings at the Academy of Mary Immaculate site were included in the Historic Buildings Register.<sup>120</sup> Following this assessment, it was also recommended that the Health Authority inspect the convent with a view to preparing an assessment that required the convent's internal facilities to be refurbished.<sup>121</sup>
- 1985** ● The residence on the corner of Palmer and Little Fleet streets was demolished.<sup>122</sup>
- 1989** ● Funded by a Catholic Capital Grant, the administrative building (Goold's Residence) was restored internally and refurbished.<sup>123</sup>

## THE SISTERS AND THE SCHOOL

Although the school and the convent were ostensibly separate entities, there was an important relationship between the two, and interaction between the students, the Sisters and the teaching staff. The proportion of teaching Sisters and lay staff shifted over time, with the latter increasing through the twentieth century. Although the nuns made up less of the formal teaching staff, they were still heavily involved in the operation of the school and support of the students. This included running clubs and groups, such as knitting groups, which acted as informal pastoral care, as well as funding raising and support for students who did not have the same financial means as their peers. The sisters were important attendees at formal events at the school, and were a deeply valued presence at the campus, as role models of older lives and 'exemplars of lived mercy'. By 2006, there were 15 sisters remaining at the convent, and in 2020, when the last sisters departed the site, they were farewelled by a guard of honour.<sup>124</sup>

### 3.6 1990s-present: Refurbishment and closure of convent

This period saw the development of the south-east of the site, resulting in built form in the remaining vacant areas in the densely developed site, along with internal refurbishment works to existing buildings. With the departure of the sisters from the convent in 2019, the school now occupies the whole of the site.

**KEY**

- CURRENT PROPERTY BOUNDARY
- 1990s-PRESENT SITE BOUNDARY

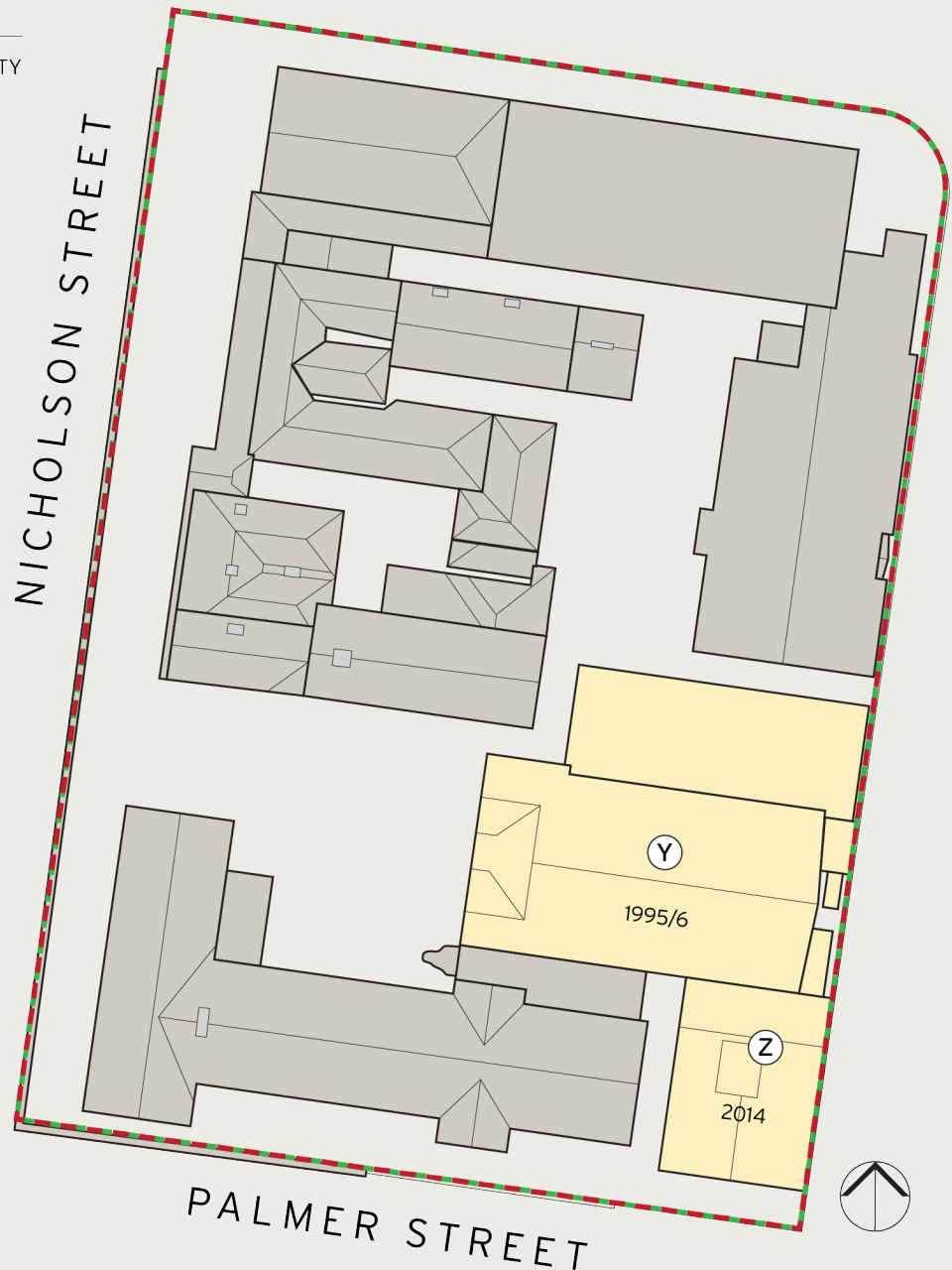


Figure 33 Site development, 1990s-present



1990s

A number of internal alterations and refurbishments were undertaken in the twentieth century buildings, including classroom and science room refurbishments, and the extension of the McKenna Building, and upgrade of fire services to the site.<sup>125</sup>

Works undertaken to the Palmer Street building, including the renovation of the library and installation of computer laboratories. Extensive internal restoration works to the Ursula Frayne Chapel, including painting, removal of carpet, and upgrade of electrical system.<sup>126</sup>

1995-96

The Dillon Centre (Y) constructed at the eastern end of the quadrangle to the length of the Little Fleet Street boundary, containing a performing arts complex and gymnasium.<sup>127</sup>

1998

Conservation works undertaken to the stonework of the Ursula Frayne Chapel.<sup>128</sup>

2000s

Further works to school buildings including internal refurbishments to Palmer Street classrooms, hall, Careers Centre McKenna Building, and the Visual Arts facilities. The courtyard was remodelled in 2007.<sup>129</sup>

2014

McAllen Science Centre (Z, Figure 34) constructed at the south-east of the campus, at the corner of Palmer and Little Fleet streets. The Administration offices were refurbished, and the Palmer Street buildings were repainted internally, including the library.<sup>130</sup>

2020

Due to a variety of reasons, including age, the last of the Sisters of Mercy nuns depart the convent, and for the first time the whole site is wholly occupied by the school. The Sisters of Mercy grant the school the occupation of the convent building.

2020s

Master planning works for entire site undertaken.



Figure 34  
McAllen Science Centre,  
viewed from Palmer Street

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- 130 *AMI Archives: Building Timeline of Academy of Mary Immaculate*, provided by Academy of Mary Immaculate archives.



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