

Under delegation from the Chief Executive, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, and under the provisions of s.44 of the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992*, I:

Recommend to Enter this place in the Queensland Heritage Register as a State Heritage Place



Recommendation Date: 12-Nov-2025

Delegate of the Chief Executive



Figure 1: War Memorial Church of St Matthew's (Queensland Government, 2025)



Figure 2: Proposed Queensland heritage register boundary (Queensland Government, 2025) (See attached map) (see attached map)

Place name	War Memorial Church of St Matthew's		
Address	cnr Bowen Road and Queens Road, HERMIT PARK, 4812		
LGA	TOWNSVILLE CITY COUNCIL		
RPD	43 RP703476	44 RP703476	67 RP703476

Queensland Theme(s)

08.01 Creating social and cultural institutions: Worshipping and religious institutions

Statement of Significance

<p>Criterion A</p> <p>The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of Queensland's history</p>	<p>The War Memorial Church of St Matthew's (1957) is important in demonstrating the evolution of church architecture in Queensland in the post-World War II (WWII) period. As a substantially intact Modernist church incorporating traditional elements built under the Diocese of North Queensland's 'Anglican Building Crusade', the place is an important representative example of the major period of church construction in Queensland and transition in church design across Christian denominations in the 1950s and 1960s, demonstrated in its form, scale, room layout, spatial qualities, materials, and details.</p>
<p>Criterion D</p> <p>The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class of cultural places</p>	<p>The War Memorial Church of St Matthew's is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a post-WWII Christian church in Queensland. Substantially intact and an exceptional, award-winning example of the class of cultural place designed by Ford, Hutton and Newell, one of the period's most prolific church architects, these characteristics include its:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cohesive design, featuring simplified building forms, fine detailing, dominant roof, expressed 'rational' structural system, restrained material palette of robust finishes emphasising 'raw' or 'natural' qualities, and boldly over-scaled or amplified building features; • traditional spaces and layout, including nave, chancel, sanctuary, chapel, and vestry; • garden church yard; • cohesive decorative scheme, including surface finishes, lighting, and furniture; and • traditional church features, including pews, pulpit, hymn board, chancel and sanctuary platform, communion rail, baptismal font, and altar tables. <p>Although most of its spire has been lost, the retained spire base illustrates its location and former form.</p>
<p>Criterion E</p> <p>The place is important because of its aesthetic significance</p>	<p>The War Memorial Church of St Matthew's is important for its aesthetic significance as a substantially intact, architect-designed church possessing beautiful attributes. This is attained through its:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bold Modernist architectural style; • well-composed, simplified building forms and fine architectural detailing; • restrained materials palette; • climate-responsive design features and abundant natural ventilation of the interior; • large, lofty nave; • cohesive decorative scheme including original furniture; and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• manipulation of light through the 'hidden' windows of the east end wall.
<p>Criterion F</p> <p>The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period</p>	<p>The War Memorial Church of St Matthew's is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative achievement for its architectural excellence. Substantially intact in its original form, spatial qualities, details, and furnishings, its design excellence is evidenced by its: winning the 1960 Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) Queensland Chapter Award for Meritorious Architecture; recognition in Australian architecture journals and publications of the period; and continued high regard in more recent academic literature.</p>

History

The War Memorial Church of St Matthew's (1957), in the suburb of Hermit Park (formerly in Mundingburra), Townsville, is a highly intact Modernist church designed by Ford, Hutton and Newell. The 1950s church replaced a 1903 timber church and was the first parish in North Queensland to fund the construction of a church under Bishop Shevill's Anglican Building Crusade. At the time of its construction, the design of the church was innovative, both aesthetically and in its response to the great need for ventilation and shade in Townsville's tropical climate. In 1960, it was awarded a Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA), Queensland Chapter's award for Meritorious Architecture for its innovative design. St Matthew's continues to be an important part of the Anglican community in Townsville.

Townsville is sited on the traditional lands of the Gurambilbarra Wulgurukaba People. The town of Townsville was established in 1864 as a service centre and port for pastoral settlers in the region. As Europeans expanded into the area, local Aboriginal peoples were violently dispossessed of their lands, driven to the fringes of settlements, and later forcibly removed to reserves including Palm Island (Bwgcolman).[1] Located on the western shore of Cleveland Bay on the banks of Ross Creek, the settlement was ideally situated for trade to and from its hinterland. The port of Townsville was proclaimed a 'Port of Entry and Clearance' in 1865 and a small customs service established there. The first sale of Townsville allotments occurred in 1865 and the settlement was proclaimed a town in 1866. Flinders Street, near the early wharves, became the principal commercial street of the settlement.[2]

Townsville continued to grow during the remainder of the 19th century, becoming the major commercial, social, ecclesiastical, legal, medical and education centre for the entire region of North Queensland from Bowen to Cape York, and was declared a city in 1902. A series of factors during the 19th century stimulated Townsville's continued development and population growth. These were: discovery of gold in Townsville's hinterland at Cape River (1867), Ravenswood (1868) and later at Charters Towers (1871); the establishment of a railway (commenced in 1879) from Townsville to Charters Towers (1882), Hughenden (1887), and ultimately to Mount Isa (1929); and the development of an artificial outer harbour to overcome the shallow depth of the port by 1900. The construction of the Victoria Bridge (QHR 600928), between 1887 and 1889, linking both sides of Ross Creek, also led to the extension westward of the town's commercial activity along Flinders Street towards the Townsville Railway Station (QHR 600906) at the turn of the 20th century.[3]

The Townsville suburb of Mundingburra, located approximately 4km southwest of the Central Business Centre, was first settled by non-indigenous people in 1875 when the estate of Robert Towns (early North Queensland pastoralist) was first subdivided following his death. This part of Townsville was soon a prestigious area, with wealthy Townsville residents establishing fine homes on what was then the outskirts of town. The Rising Sun Hotel was opened in 1875 on Charters Towers Road, the main highway thoroughfare, and subsequently a small township grew, with businesses such as a blacksmiths and a butcher's shop providing services to the residents. The Mundingburra State School was established in 1885.[4]

The Church of England established a presence early in Townsville and opened St James' Church in Cleveland Terrace, Townsville, in 1871. At this time the district was part of the Diocese of Sydney. The Diocese of North Queensland was formed in 1878, when North Queensland's mineral fields and grazing industry were flourishing. The Rev. George Henry Stanton was consecrated the first Bishop of the new Diocese, arriving in Townsville in May 1879 and establishing his seat at St James' Church (which became the pro-Cathedral (QHR 600887)). Stanton proved very popular and was adept at attracting overseas funding for the

new Diocese. As Townsville expanded during the early 1880s, he assisted his parishioners to establish new churches at West End in 1883 (opened as St James' Mission Church and renamed St Peter's in 1884) and at Ross Island (St John's Anglican Church) in 1884.[5]

In 1902 the Diocese Synod of North Queensland purchased 2 roods, 21 perches (approximately 2134m²) in Mundingburra for the establishment of a new Anglican parish for North Queensland. By September a timber church had been constructed. Described at the time as 'Gothic' in its design, the new church was opened by the Anglican Bishop of North Queensland and the parish named St Matthew's.[6]

On 9 March 1903, Cyclone Leonta struck Townsville. Damaging winds and flying debris caused substantial damage to many of Townsville's buildings. The new church of St Matthew's was destroyed with newspapers reporting that 'at Mundingburra, they found several houses levelled to the ground; the Anglican Church of St Matthews was demolished, and the Rising Sun Hotel has ceased to exist'.[7]

By June 1903, however, a replacement timber church had been constructed at St Matthew's, with the Diocese license stating: 'the said Church ... has been rebuilt and has been decently furnished with all things possible for public worship'.[8] In the mid-1920s a hall was built on a site across the road from the church (no longer extant) and in the 1930s a rectory was built; also at this time two wings and a vestry were added to the church.[9]

After World War II (WWII) the numbers of parishioners at St Matthew's increased as the population of the district expanded. It was recognised as early as 1945 that a larger church would be needed and the rector at the time, Fr Johnston, who had just returned from serving in the Royal Australian Airforce (RAAF) as a chaplain, began a War Memorial Building Fund in August 1945. Fundraising efforts were made, including catering for Townsville events and functions such as balls and race days. However, by the early 1950s there were still not enough funds to build a new church.[10]

The concept of a church as a war memorial was related to a debate on the nature of commemoration which had occurred in Australia after World War I (WWI). WWI memorials took a variety of forms in Australia, including honour boards, stone monuments and tree-lined memorial avenues, as well as utilitarian (useful) structures such as gates, halls, clocks, and swimming pools. Most Australian localities decided on a monumental approach (60%), with only 22% choosing utilitarian buildings (mostly halls) and 18% choosing the compromise position of utilitarian monuments – including a clock on a cenotaph, for example. From 1927 to 1973, gifts of more than £1 for public war memorials were tax deductible, which assisted fundraising for memorials.[11]

The argument over whether the local war memorial should be monumental or useful was repeated all over Australia after WWI. Some communities solved the problem by building two memorials: one utilitarian, and one monumental.[12] When it was time to commemorate WWII, utilitarian memorials were more popular, and were supported by the Returned Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia (RSSAILA). Such memorials included halls, libraries, meeting rooms, council chambers, lawn bowls clubs, playgrounds, hospitals, and kindergartens. Townsville has several forms of memorials to WWI and WWII including Anzac Memorial Park (QHR 600934) and the Tobruk Memorial Baths (QHR 601575), both situated on the Strand.[13]

In early August 1945, with plans of a new St Matthew's church being drafted, calls for gifts to the church from parishioners were invited, as 'the Church is to be our War Memorial it is felt that some of our people will want to make their gift in the form of a memorial'.[14] A generous gift was given to the parish by Mr and Mrs George V Roberts - the elaborate wrought iron pillars and gates that would become the entrance to the front drive of the church. The Roberts' family lived close by in a large house named 'Kenilworth'. George

Vivian Roberts was a successful Townsville solicitor in the firm of Roberts, Leu and North. During the war two of their sons saw active service. The youngest son, Graham, who served in the RAAF, was pronounced missing in action after his plane was shot down over Denmark in September 1942. He survived the crash and was captured by the Nazis, then spent the remainder of the war in a prisoner of war camp. Both brothers survived the war.[15]

The *Northern Churchman* (the Diocese newsletter) reported the Roberts' generous donation of the gates and pillars and stated '[r]ecently we received as a gift from Mr and Mrs Roberts the 'Kenilworth' gates. We appreciate this gift and they will be used for the main entrance to the church and will be known as the 'Kenilworth Memorial Gates'.'. [16] By November 1945 the gates and pillars had been installed at St Matthew's, and the construction of a brick fence (no longer extant) was underway, '[the] first section of the brick fence at St Matthew's has been built, and the Kenilworth Memorial Gates are in position'. [17] In the 1990s the gates were stolen, leaving its iron pillars and wrought iron fence in place. The congregation went to great effort to make accurate replicas of the gates, which were installed following the robbery.[18]

The 1950s was a period of substantial change and reform within Anglican and other Christian denominations throughout Australia, as they sought to become more relevant to contemporary society. Developments in religious theology and liturgy, coupled with an expansionary building program, led to a radical departure from established architectural traditions. Reflecting international trends, church designs moved away from historical revival styles and became increasingly influenced by Modernism. However, it was expected that a church would still be recognisable as such, resulting in a wide range of variations combining traditional church elements, symbols, and functions with new construction techniques, materials, and forms.[19]

A particular advocate of constructing churches in a Modern idiom was Bishop Ian Shevill, the sixth Anglican Bishop of North Queensland (enthroned in 1953), who began a campaign to provide a permanent church in every parish. Having travelled to the United States of America to learn new methods of fundraising, Shevill implemented the Anglican Building Crusade (ABC), which raised £145,000 for buildings. Of the amount raised by each parish, half was retained, and half went to the diocese.[20]

In order to encourage construction of Modern rather than pseudo-Gothic style churches, the bishop compiled a set of canonical principles of church architecture, which were a set of rules ensuring certain aspects of Anglican church designs remained constant while allowing architects to exercise their creativity. These principles prescribed such things as setting aside a third of the church for the sanctuary and two thirds for the nave, the proportions of steps leading up to the altar, and that furnishings be designed by the architect. All new Anglican churches were to be individual and contemporary in design, for, as Shevill himself put it, 'God is no museum piece and He should be worshipped by modern people in modern buildings which are aesthetically pleasing and cool.' By 1958, six new permanent Anglican churches and a chapel had been completed according to these principles.[21]

The Mundingburra parish of St Matthew's was the first to participate in the ABC in North Queensland, with the *Northern Churchman* reporting the parish's participation in the new scheme in early April 1953, the 'ABC is well underway in the parish and shortly after receiving the third letter all will be contacted personally and given a chance to become Crusaders. It is a thing we are proud of. We ought to remember that being the first we do set a standard for the rest. Let us act accordingly'. [22] By August 1955 the parish of St Matthew's had pledged £11,000 and had raised £1769.[23]

In early October 1955 the *Northern Churchman* noted that the architectural firm of Ford, Hutton and Newell had been chosen and was drawing the design for the new church, initially by architect Ian Black who worked in the firm's Townsville office.[24] The June 1956 edition

of the *Northern Churchman* featured a sketch of the newly designed church on the cover, with the caption stating that work on the new church has begun.[25] As part of this work, the old timber church was moved to the parish of St Barnabus in the nearby suburb of Pimlico.[26] During the construction of the new church, parish services continued in the church hall.[27]

Operating between 1951 and c1958, Ford, Hutton and Newell comprised principals Eric Ford, Theodore Hutton, and Peter Newell. The firm had evolved from Chambers and Ford (1920-35), which had designed churches in various architectural styles in the interwar period. Soon after Ford, Hutton and Newell formed, it gained commissions to design many churches throughout Queensland, becoming known for its innovative ecclesiastical designs. Between the mid-1950s and mid-1960s, Ford, Hutton and Newell and its successor firms, working for five different denominations, produced more ecclesiastical designs than any other firm in Queensland.[28] The firm has been credited with influencing the Modernist architecture movement in Queensland.[29]

Many Modernist Christian churches were built in Queensland during the 1950s and 1960s. Although they tended to be experimental in design, this group of buildings shared principal characteristics, expressed in individual ways by their various architects. The churches were typically in a Modernist style with simplified building forms, and utilised new or modern-for-the-time structural systems, such as large concrete slabs on the ground, and steel portal frames with large spans, often exposed or visually expressed. The churches typically had a restrained palette of 'natural' materials with an emphasis on the 'raw' qualities and textures of materials. This included unpainted brick, concrete, or stone, metal sheet or concrete tile roof cladding, aluminium, and clear-finished timber. Traditional Christian church spaces and layouts were incorporated, such as a (nominally) 'west door' and 'east end' sanctuary, foyer, nave, choir stalls, chancel, chapels, and vestries. Modern 'crying rooms' with windows into the nave and AV systems were occasionally included, reflecting the baby boom era. Additionally, they included traditional features designed by the architect to be cohesive with the new building, such as pews, pulpit, hymn boards, chancel and sanctuary platforms, communion rails, baptismal fonts, flower or plant stands/urns, and altars. The churches were typically freestanding in a garden church yard, with flowers grown to decorate the church interior, and car access provided to the front of the church for weddings or funerals.[30]

At least 28 churches were designed by Ford, Hutton and Newell/Lund, Hutton, Newell, Black and Paulsen and built between 1955 and 1967. Many of them were Anglican and most were within north Queensland. All but one survive in 2025 and most are substantially intact.[31] The firm's work shares similarities with other prolific church architects of the period, such as Frank Cullen & Partners, Karl Langer, Cross & Bain, and Ian Ferrier, but as one of the most prolific, their work largely defines the principal characteristics of the period overall.[32] Notable amongst their peers, their work is straightforward, at the time occasionally called 'unpretentious'[33] or having reference to older, simpler buildings[34], confident, with an emphasis on simplified building forms and fine detailing. They typically have a dominant roof, and a 'rational' structural system, often in a grid and exposed visually. Their work features boldly over-scaled or amplified building features, such as structural frames, spires, or crosses. Their decorative schemes were all encompassing, including surface finishes, lighting, and furniture, but did not usually extend to designing the church yard beyond visualising expanses of lawn and feature trees, probably due to the scope of the design brief.[35]

The 18 churches built in the northern areas of Queensland, likely produced out of the Townsville (and later Cairns) office, shared common characteristics with those of the Brisbane office, but responded to the greater need for ventilation and shade with an expressive emphasis on climate appropriate design.[36] This typically included broad and dominant gable roofs oversailing the walls to shelter wide verandahs, louvres and other

vents incorporated as features, and a lofty, open interior with minimal decoration and smooth, pale-coloured walls giving a cooling effect. The northern churches initially incorporated local stone prominently, such as at entrances, spires, and altars, before moving to raw off-form concrete for these features by the early 1960s.[37]

On 19 August 1956 the foundation stone at the new St Matthew's was set and blessed by Bishop Shevill. The ceremony was attended by most of the Diocese's clergy, as well as many parishioners. The occasion was celebrated for being the first tangible stage of a particular church's construction as part of the ABC.[38] By January 1957 it was reported that the church was almost complete and 'the general result is going to be very attractive with a happy combination of modern features while keeping a sufficient proportion of traditional ... the Sanctuary is as wide as the nave and the front pew is only a few feet from the altar rail making it a real fact that the people of God 'stand around' the altar to offer the Holy Sacrifice'.[39]

The War Memorial Church of Saint Matthew's was dedicated by Bishop Shevill on 9 March 1957, exactly 54 years after the original church's destruction by Cyclone Leonta. The dedication ceremony was attended by approximately 500 people which included church and civic dignitaries from throughout the region, as well as Townsville's new Greek Orthodox Priest, Father Zographakis.[40] In his address to the congregation, the bishop stated that the new church is Australian architecture for Australians, and it was described as being:

constructed of cement [concrete] and Townsville granite; the polished timbers for the ceiling and furniture come from the Atherton Tablelands; while the Altar is made from stones found on the local beaches. The architect is Townsville man, Mr I Black of Ford, Hutton and Newell ... Standing at the crossroads at the entrance to Townsville, the church witnesses to the faith and points the way to God. This pointing to God is expressed by the 80 feet aluminium spire tapering gradually to a point on top of which is an orb and a 9 feet aluminium cross.[41]

The new church cost £19,000 and at the time of its completion half had been raised. The church was featured in *Architecture in Australia's* April-June 1958 edition, where it was stated that 'this church is one of those rare buildings which seem to possess a native character. It is roofed with deep corrugated asbestos cement. The spire is aluminium. Most interior walls are grey and the reredos is in blue with gold crosses. The altar carpet is also blue'.[42] In the December 1964 edition of *Building Ideas*, St Matthew's was featured as an innovative design for a tropical climate:

It is built of stone-faced reinforced concrete on a concrete slab on ground. The steel portal framed roof is sheeted with corrugated asbestos cement, with boarded ceilings. Planned to seat approximately 200, the building achieves maximum ventilation by sliding doors on both sides under deep, low overhangs forming an external colonnade. The spire is steel framed and sheeted with aluminium.[43]

All furnishings within the church were designed by Ford, Hutton and Newell, as well as the altar which was an experimental design using stones gathered by the bishop and the then rector, Brian Kugelman, and his wife, Margaret, who remembered:

Bishop Shevill, Brian and I gathered all the stones from the Military Beach at Kissing Point – we had to get permission to go there. A wooden frame was made and laid on the ground. A thick layer of mud was put in the bottom and the stones carefully laid on the mud. The cement was put behind this...when set and tipped out, the mud was washed off.[44]

As a war memorial church, the use of the stones taken from an important military base in Townsville (QHR 601129) that had played a critical role in the defence of North Queensland during WWII, was symbolic, and a form of commemoration for those who had served in the war. Additionally, in the south side of the altar two stones donated by Mrs Kugelman from historic religious sites in the United Kingdom (UK) were set. [45] The six silver candlesticks

on the altar were replicas of those used in St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle (UK).[46] Many of the items within the church were donated by parish members, including the 1903 Moore Memorial stained-glass window, which was originally in the 1903 church, as well as a 1950s oil painting named 'Face of Christ Amid the Ruins', gifted to the church by Bishop Shevill.[47]

When completed, the War Memorial Church of St Matthew's was commended by Australia's architectural community for its innovative architecture, both the aesthetic qualities and the response to the tropical climate. In the University of Melbourne's Department of Architecture journal, *Cross Section*, published in 1957, highlighting the newest architecture in Australia at the time, the opening of the church was featured and the church described as 'pointedly independent of irrelevant influence, old or overseas ... so it should not remain an isolated example'.[48]

In the RAI, Queensland Chapter's 1959 publication, *Buildings of Queensland*, a photograph of St Matthew's was included in the section explaining the design of modern churches in the mid-late 1950s and stated:

A few enlightened clergymen are supporting their architects, with the result that the first worthwhile examples of contemporary church design are emerging. These buildings demonstrate an intelligent use of materials and an appreciation of climatic influences. An indigenous ecclesiastical architecture has arrived![49]

In 1960, the War Memorial Church of St Matthew's was given a RAI, Queensland Chapter award for Meritorious Architecture in the 'country' (outside Brisbane) category. The six-member jury consisting of four architects, a member of the public with interests in art, and a representative from a public art institute, decided that the design of St Matthew's 'made it a welcome haven in a humid climate'[50]. In 2025, the award is displayed within the church with the inscription stating:

Award for Meritorious Architecture.

In appreciation of the merits of a fine building erected in Queensland during the five years ended December 1960. This diploma is awarded to Lund, Hutton, Newell, Black & Paulsen by the Queensland Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in recognition of the excellence in design of St Matthews Church of England, Mundingburra.[51]

St Matthew's was mentioned in *Art and Australia* in 1963 as being an excellent example of architecture in tropical climates:

In Queensland the value of natural ventilation and shade is now properly appreciated, notably in St. Matthew's Church of England in Mundingburra, near Townsville, by Ford, Hutton and Newell (1957). This was constructed with columns and walls of in-situ concrete, the steep pitched asbestos cement-clad roof sweeping down in the best Pacific Islands tradition and supported by encased steel portal frames. As a link with the district, red granite from the local quarry was used to veneer two walls seen from the road to Charters Towers. Although an inexpensive building it possesses an unpretentious dignity and was awarded the R.A.I.A. Queensland Chapter's 1960 award for Meritorious Architecture.[52]

In 1968 the church and its architects were included in *Architecture in Australia: A History* for its modern design that reflected North Queensland's tropical character:

Another noteworthy church of the period was erected at Mundingburra, Townsville, in Queensland in 1957 by Ford, Hutton and Newell. Despite the slim aluminium needle-like spire and the corrugated asbestos cement roofing there was a strong influence of Robin Dods in the form of the heavy gable roof sweeping down to the verandah supported on thick plain square posts. As a result St Matthew's Church of England was a rare example of architects capturing a native vernacular in a type of building which had never been touched

with it in all Australia's history.[53]

In *Australian Architecture Since 1960*, St Matthew's was included as an early example of the exemplary work by Ford, Hutton and Newell.[54]

After many years of fund-raising efforts, the church's debt was finally paid by 1967. On Sunday 17 September 1967 the then Archbishop of Brisbane, Bishop Strong, consecrated the War Memorial Church of St Matthew's with a High Mass.[55]

Since its construction was completed, very few changes have been made to the church. However, when Cyclone Althea hit Townsville in December 1971, the tall spire was destroyed and as it was going to be too costly to re-construct, it was not replaced. The spire's concrete base was retained, and a small bell stand with cupola and cross was added to it. The 1920s church hall across the road was also destroyed by this cyclone.[56] In the 1950s, St Matthew's was in the suburb of Mundingburra and in 2025, due to changes in suburb borders, is in the suburb of Hermit Park.

The War Memorial Church of St Matthew's remains highly intact and is an excellent example of the design work of Ford, Hutton and Newell. The 1957 Modernist church was given a RAI, Queensland Chapter award for Meritorious Architecture in 1960 for its innovative design and response to the great need for effective ventilation and shade in the tropical climate. This was achieved through its expressive emphasis on climate appropriate design. As the first parish to fund the construction of a modern church under Bishop Shevill's Anglican Building Crusade, and as a community funded war memorial church, St Matthew's continues to be an important place of worship and community centre for the Anglican parish in Mundingburra and Hermit Park.

Description

The War Memorial Church of St Matthew's stands at the intersection of two major highways, Charters Towers/Bowen Road and Ross River Road in Mundingburra/Hermit Park, 4km southwest of the centre of Townsville. The place comprises a freestanding Modernist church (1957) facing northwest, positioned toward the northern end of a roughly-triangular church yard. The remnant base of a demolished church spire (1957) stands near the church's front western corner, close to the intersection. Associated buildings that are not of state-level cultural heritage significance stand behind the rear of the church (to the southeast) facing and accessed from a small rear road.

Features of the place of state-level cultural heritage significance are the:

- Church (1957);
- Spire Base (1957); and
- Church Yard, including Kenilworth Memorial Gates (re-erected here in 1945).

Church (1957)

The Church is a highly intact, single-storey, Modernist building with a large prow gable roof over a rectangular nave, forming the main body of the building. A smaller block with a

projecting prow gable is attached to the rear corner (southwestern side) of the main body, accommodating a chapel and a vestry.

The building structure for the main body of the building is formed by concrete encased steel portal frame trusses, evenly spaced into modules. The walls are smooth-rendered concrete infilling between the portal frames. The main roof projects far beyond the nave walls, forming a verandah ambulatory on both sides of the nave, and returning along the front (northwestern side) of the chapel and vestry block. The northeastern verandah has a small toilet enclosure at its southeastern end.

The front comprises a tall, concrete gable end wall clad with stone. It has a large aluminium cross with concealed lighting, metal name plate, and foundation stone. The gable end wall of the chapel and vestry block is also clad with stone, while the church's other walls are smooth render. The roof is clad with corrugated cement tiles, and the verandah ceilings and eaves are lined with planks, spaced to vent the roof cavity.

The 'west door' main entry is via wide double doors on either side behind the front wall leading into a small foyer. The foyer is separated from the nave by an original decorative metal screen. The nave is a single, large, rectangular space with a high raked ceiling, seating approximately 200 people on pews facing the chancel and sanctuary at the 'east end'. The nave is well ventilated through a series of wide, sliding double doors on each side that have a low panel of fixed timber louvres, as well as a long, vented duct mounted along the apex of the ceiling that vents through to the roof space. Original glass louvred windows above the sliding doors in the nave have been replaced with stained-glass windows (date unknown) which are not of state significance.

Across the east end of the nave are the stepped chancel and sanctuary platforms, separated from the nave by a communion/chancel rail. A timber pulpit carved with a figure of Jesus stands on the northern side of the chancel, facing the nave. The main altar stands at the centre of the sanctuary platform, framed by the east end wall. This wall is articulated into tall, angled blades that overlap, concealing slit windows that permit soft glowing light into the room, as if from a hidden source.

An opening beside the chancel leads to the side chapel, one of two small rooms within the chapel and vestry block projecting from the side of the nave. The chapel has a stained-glass window (Moore memorial window) and a timber altar. Accessed only from the verandah, the vestry is a single room with a built-in timber cupboard. The chapel and vestry both have full-height louvred windows of glass and aluminium blades onto the verandah – the vestry also has casement windows in its rear wall.

The building retains a substantial level of original fixtures, fittings, and finishes, including pews, pulpit, hymn board, communion rail, baptismal font, altar tables, lights, and finishes scheme, including pale blue, 'anti-actinic' window glass, and clear-finished timber.

The building has fine architectural details that are understated, imperceptible, or hidden from view. This includes secret gutters, recessed 'skirting', a floor recess around the main altar, the absence of typical trims to conceal construction joints, and use of quality materials and finishes that display high levels of design and craft.

Features of the Church of state-level cultural heritage significance include:

- structure:
 - concrete slab floors (interior and exterior), walls, and columns;
 - concrete-encased steel portal frames; and
 - timber roof frames;
- smooth rendering to walls generally, and random stone facing to gable ends (front and

- chapel and vestry block);
- roofs:
 - prow gable forms;
 - corrugated, concrete roof tiles (paint finish is not significant – tiles were originally unpainted);
 - timber fascias; and
 - secret (hidden/in-built) gutters and round downpipes;
- front wall:
 - random stone-faced concrete wall;
 - foundation stone;
 - large aluminium cross with concealed back lighting; and
 - wrought iron name letters 'ST. MATTHEW'S';
- verandah ambulatories:
 - continuous, open-sided form along nave sides, returning along the side of chapel and vestry block;
 - raw concrete floors with joints in a square pattern;
 - round concrete columns (originally unpainted);
 - smooth rendered concrete walls; and
 - ceilings lined with ventilated (spaced) timber boards;
- toilet enclosure on northern verandah (exterior features only, all interior features are not of state significance):
 - smooth rendered concrete exterior walls;
 - hit-and-miss, concrete brick, airlock wall section;
 - timber-framed, glazed, boarded door into enclosure; and
 - aluminium-framed glass louvre windows;
- layout and spatial relationships between foyer, nave, chapel, and vestry;
- foyer:
 - concrete floor (originally exposed, later carpet laid over is not significant);
 - smooth rendered walls and skirting;
 - clear-finished timber board ceiling;
 - front doors ('west door') – wide, timber, panelled French doors into church;
 - decorative wrought iron screen between foyer and nave and its inbuilt planters;
 - metal wall-mounted consecration plaque (1957) 'ST. MATTHEW'S WAR MEMORIAL CHURCH' consecrated 'IN MEMORY OF THE FALLEN 1939-45'; and
 - wall-mounted, clear-finished timber board 'HONOUR ROLL' (designed by Ford, Hutton and Newell) listing those people of 'HOLY ORDERS, 'COMMUNITIES & BROTHERHOOD', and 'MISSION FIELD';
- nave:
 - concrete floor with blue carpet on central aisle only;
 - smooth rendered walls and skirting;
 - clear-finished timber board ceiling, laid in alternating diagonal patterns;
 - clear-finished timber pews;
 - vented ceiling duct lined with clear-finished timber boards;

- timber-framed doors on sides of nave – single doors and wide sliding double doors, original pale blue glazing, fixed timber louvres, and timber pelmets;
- chancel and sanctuary:
 - concrete stepped floor platforms, including recess in sanctuary platform for main altar (originally, blue carpet formed a central strip only, later carpets are not of state significance);
 - smooth rendered walls, normal skirting, and recessed skirting on 'east end' wall;
 - original furniture and fittings designed by Ford, Hutton and Newell, including baptismal font and clear-finished timber chancel/communion rail, wall-mounted hymn board, lectern, chairs, stools, and pulpit;
 - clear-finished timber board ceiling, laid in alternating diagonal patterns;
 - main altar and its stone facing, marble top, and metal insignia mounted to front;
 - pendant lamp near altar;
 - vented ceiling duct lined with clear-finished timber boards; and
 - vertical, timber-framed, 'hidden' windows 'east end' wall comprising fixed, louvred, and pivoting sashes, their original hardware, original pale blue glazing, and original metal spotlights;
- chapel:
 - concrete stepped floor platform (originally exposed, later carpet laid over is not significant);
 - smooth rendered walls and skirting;
 - clear-finished timber board ceiling;
 - door into chapel – single door, pale blue glazing, and fixed timber louvres;
 - full-height glass and aluminium louvre windows and original pale blue glazing;
 - clear-finished timber altar (possibly from earlier church); and
 - Moore Memorial stained-glass window (1892) in chapel (other stained-glass windows are not of state significance); and
 - oil painting 'Face of Christ Amidst the Ruins', c1957;
- vestry:
 - raw concrete floor (originally exposed, later lino laid over is not significant);
 - smooth rendered walls and skirting;
 - clear-finished timber board ceilings;
 - door into vestry – single door, pale blue glazing, and fixed timber louvres;
 - timber-framed casement windows, Georgian wired glazing, original chrome hardware, and timber architraves;
 - full-height glass and aluminium louvre windows and original pale blue glazing;
 - enamelled corner handwashing basin; and
 - clear-finished timber, built-in cupboard (has been extended above and on western end using darker timber, later extensions are not significant);
- provision of abundant ventilation of interiors via: open space around church; broad eaves; verandah ceiling ventilated boards; door and window louvres; and bare concrete floors and walls; and
- unified Modernist architecture style, detailing, and decorative scheme, including original

finishes scheme (paint and clear finishes, decorative treatments) and original finishes hidden under later finishes.

Features of the Church not of state-level cultural heritage significance include:

- non-original stained-glass windows above sliding doors of nave (replaced original glass louvres here);
- all interior features of toilet on northern verandah, including partitions, fixtures, and fittings;
- modern services, fixtures, and fittings, including carpets, lights, fans, cables, AV equipment, projector screens, air-conditioners, noticeboards (including modern board mounted to front external wall of church), pool fence enclosure on northern verandah, security screens, and acrylic sheets over louvres in doors;
- non-original paint schemes;
- wall hangings; and
- non-original shelves attached to blue 'east end' wall (behind altar).

Spire Base (1957)

The Spire Base is the remnant of a former 80ft (approx. 24m) tall, steel-framed, aluminium-sheet-clad freestanding spire. Located at the northwestern front corner of the church, it comprises a stepped concrete slab base on a rectangular concrete apron slab that connects the Spire Base to the church. The base is oriented at 45-degrees to the church building. A later bell stand with cupola has been added onto the concrete base that is not of state-level cultural heritage significance.

Features of the Spire Base of state-level cultural heritage significance include:

- stepped concrete base;
- concrete apron slab connecting to the church; and
- location adjacent to church's southwestern corner, adjacent to the highway intersection.

Features of the Spire Base not of state-level cultural heritage significance include:

- all features and alterations post-1957, including later bell stand with cupola and its cross.

Church Yard, including Kenilworth Memorial Gates (re-erected here in 1945)

The Church Yard comprises an open landscaped garden surrounding the church, providing abundant natural ventilation and daylighting to the church. At the main entrance into the Church Yard from Queens Road (to the north) stands the Kenilworth Memorial Gates. From here curves an early concrete driveway that passes in front of the church and exiting onto Bowen Road (west). The Church Yard vegetation is modern and not of state significance.

Features of the Church Yard of state-level cultural heritage significance include:

- open space on all sides of the church, permitting abundant natural ventilation and daylighting of the nave interior, particularly the morning sunlight to the rear wall of the church;
- Kenilworth Memorial Gates (re-erected here in 1945 from the earlier house 'Kenilworth', and part-remade in the 1990s to replace stolen sections), including: fretwork iron pillars and short lengths of flanking iron bar palisade fence on either side (these are likely the remaining sections of the memorial gate re-erected here in 1945 that were not stolen

and remade); and wrought iron gates (likely the sections stolen and remade in the 1990s); and

- concrete driveway (c1959).

Features of the Church Yard not of state-level cultural heritage significance include:

- columbarium wall (1990);
- all vegetation, trees, garden beds, lawns, gravel areas, and hardstand areas;
- all other fences and gates not previously mentioned;
- all other structures including rear buildings (former rectory), ramps, signs, sheds, flagpole, and shade structures; and
- all surface and underground services and related infrastructure.

Illustrations



Figure 3: War Memorial Church of St Matthew's, front from west (Queensland Government, 2025)



Figure 4: Kenilworth Memorial Gates at front driveway entrance (Queensland Government, 2025)



Figure 5: Rear (east) wall of church (Queensland Government, 2025)



Figure 6: Chapel and Vestry block on southern side (Queensland Government)



Figure 7: Spire Base (Queensland Government, 2025)



Figure 8: Nave interior looking to east end (Queensland Government, 2025)

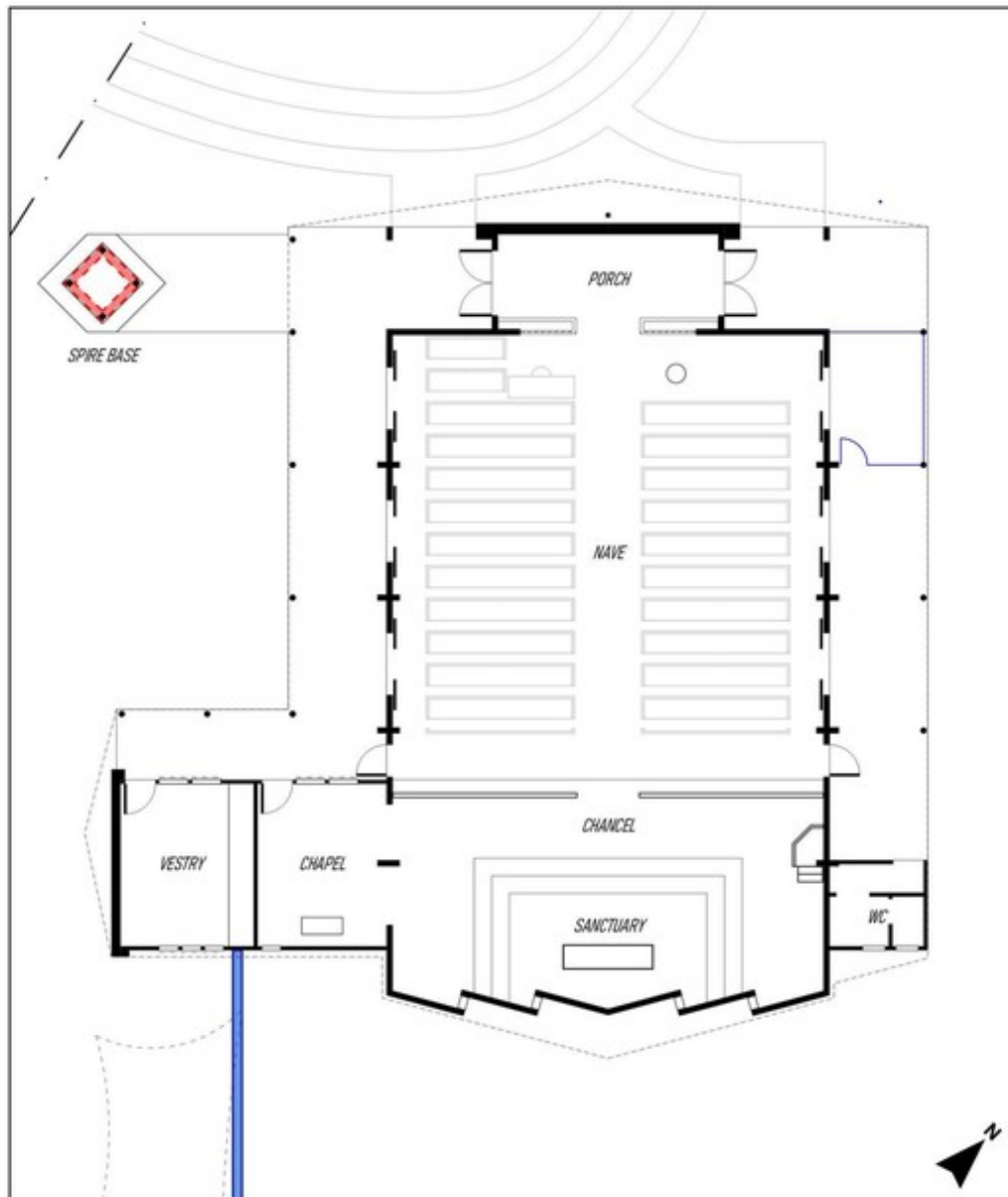


Figure 9: Church furniture and baptismal font (Queensland Government, 2025)



Figure 10: Chapel with altar and Moore memorial stained-glass window (Queensland Government, 2025)

Plans



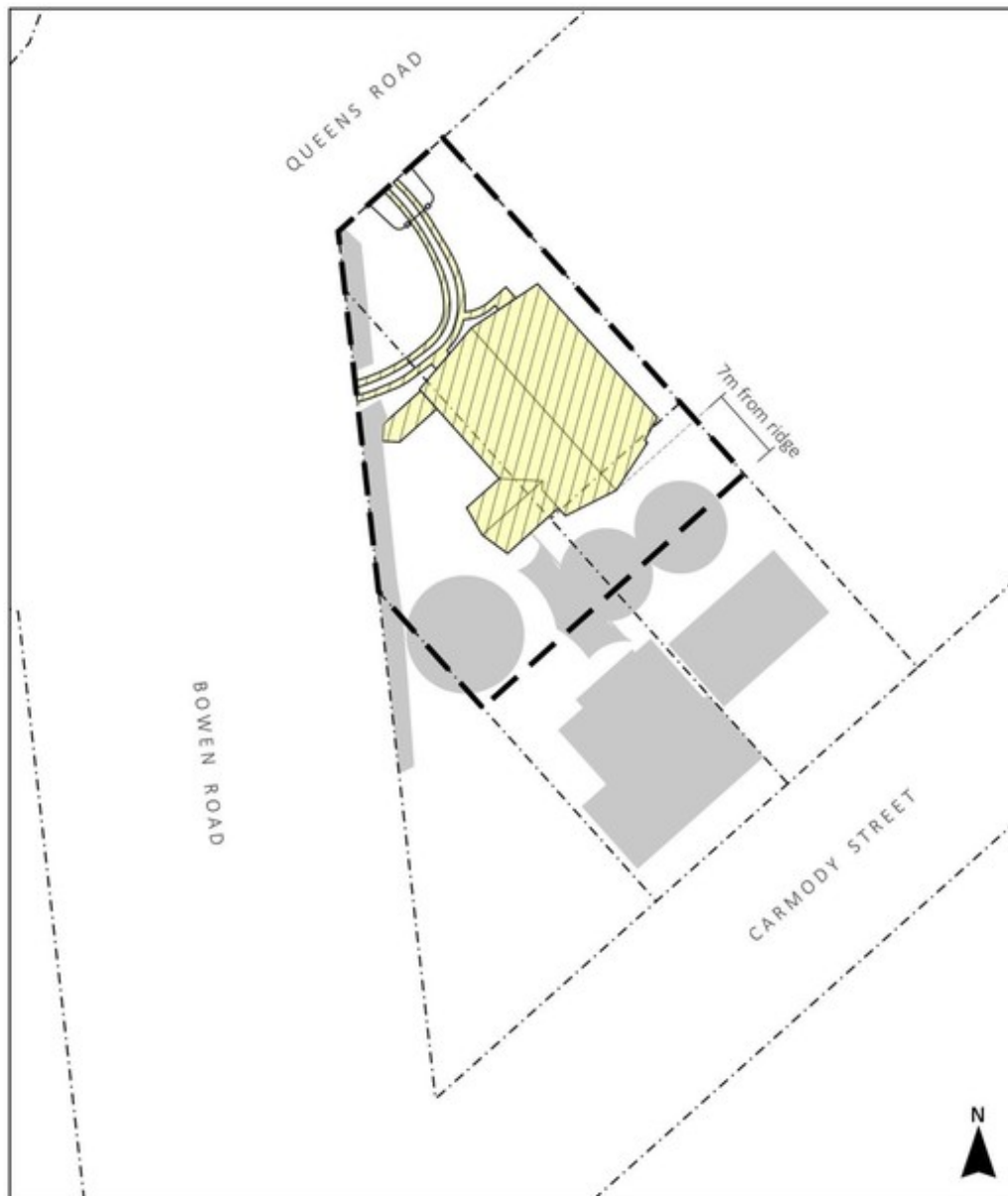
War Memorial Church of St Matthew's 650287 Floor Plan

Date created: September 2025
© The State of Queensland, 2025

Legend

- Features of state level significance
- Demolished original features
- Features not of state level significance

Figure 11: Indicative Floor Plan, 2025 (Queensland Government, 2025)



**War Memorial Church of St Matthew's
650287
Site Plan**

Date created: September 2025
© The State of Queensland, 2025

Legend




-  Queensland Heritage Register
-  Features of state level significance
-  Features not of state level significance

Figure 12: Site plan, 2025 (Queensland Government, 2025)

Proposed heritage register boundary

The heritage register boundary contains all of Lot 44 RP703476, and parts of Lot 43 RP703476 and Lot 67 RP703476. The heritage boundary follows the lot boundary for its south-western, western, north-western, and north-eastern extents, and is offset 7m from the church's roof ridge for its south-eastern extent.

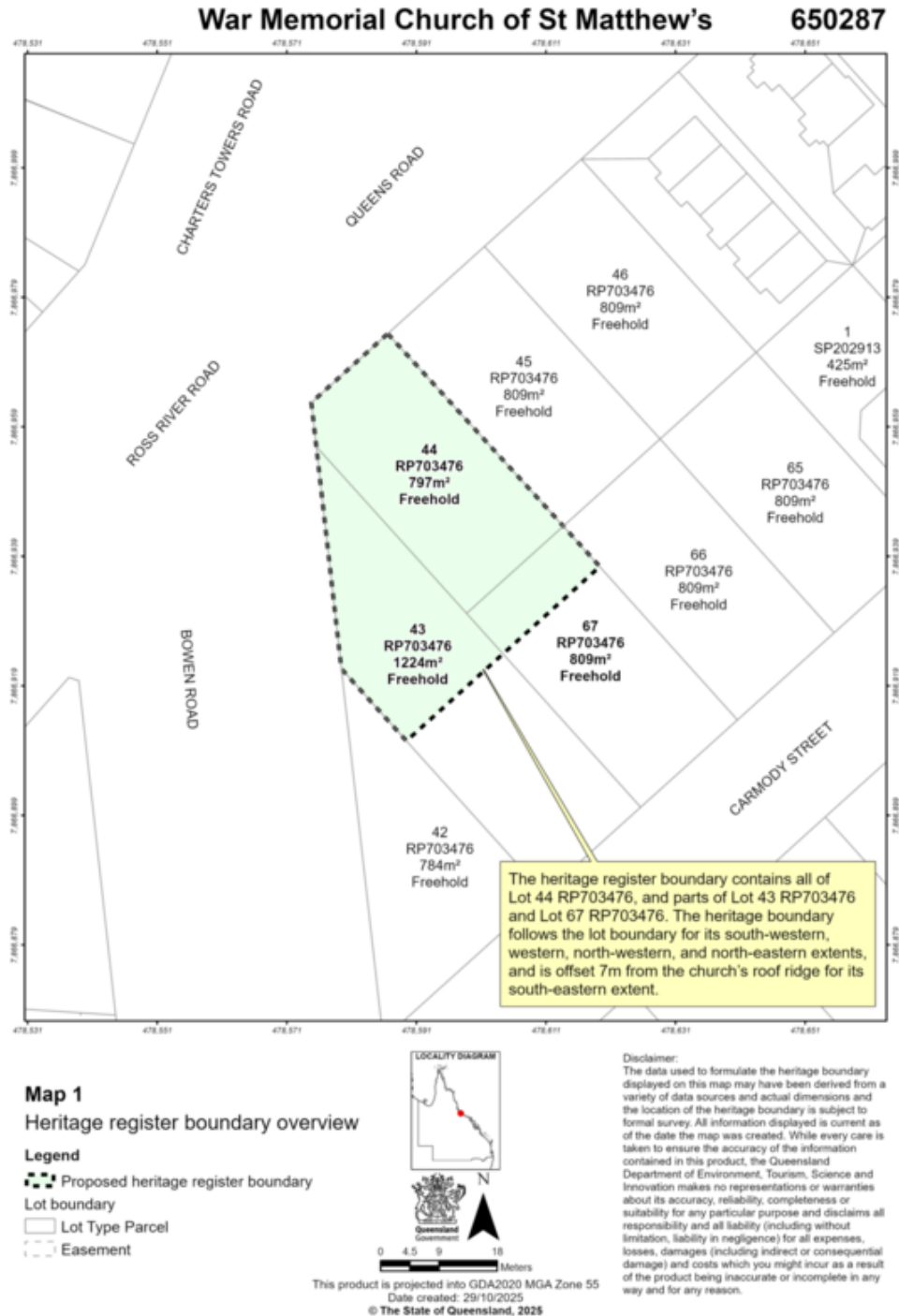


Figure 13: Proposed heritage boundary, Map 1 (Queensland Government, 2025)

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