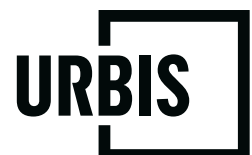




ST NICHOLAS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

Heritage Impact Statement-
Revised Further Issues

Prepared for
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
31 October 2025



PLANS AND DOCUMENTS
referred to in the PDA
DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL

Approval no: DEV2025/1641

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URBIS STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS REPORT WERE:

Associate Director	Scott Richards
Consultant	Lisa Flemwell
Project Code	P0047765
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We recognise that First Nations sovereignty was never ceded and respect First Nations peoples continuing connection to these lands, waterways and ecosystems for over 60,000 years.

We pay our respects to First Nations Elders, past and present.

The river is the symbol of the Dreaming and the journey of life. The circles and lines represent people meeting and connections across time and space. When we are working in different places, we can still be connected and work towards the same goal.

Title: Sacred River Dreaming
Artist Hayley Pigram
Darug Nation
Sydney, NSW

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Urbis Ltd (Urbis) has been engaged by the Russian Orthodox Church to prepare this Heritage Impact Statement report to support a Development Application (DA) lodged over the site of the St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral, and other sites in Vulture Street and Mark Lane to the north.

The DA has been lodged with Economic Development Queensland (EDQ) as assessment manager, as the site of the proposed development is in the Woolloongabba Priority Development Area (PDA). The applicant is the Russian Orthodox Church.

This report was initially prepared for lodgement of the original DA in June 2025. The report has been revised to address the Further Issues letter prepared by EDQ in August 2025. The Further Issues letter sought changes to the scheme, and requested an amended Heritage Impact Statement report to address the changes in the design. Therefore this report supersedes the previously issued report for this application.

The original DA as lodged was for the development of a new residential building to the west of the Cathedral site, changes to lot boundaries of the overall site and other adjoining lots to allow the subsequent development of the Cathedral site for a church 'campus', and the demolition of a pre-1911 building on Mark Lane. The revised DA has removed the demolition of the pre-1911 building from the proposed scope of work, but has retained all other components.

The DA is lodged over the sites of 320-350 Vulture Street and 52 Mark Lane, Kangaroo Point, which are as noted above located in the Woolloongabba PDA.

The St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral is located at 344 Vulture Street, Kangaroo Point, and is a State Heritage Place entered in the Queensland Heritage Register.

The proposed scheme the subject of this DA includes the development of a wider Cathedral campus type development associated with the current operations of the Russian Orthodox Cathedral. The scheme includes the following aspects:

- A proposed new residential building comprising:
 - Ground level: Community and teaching spaces;
 - Levels 1-3 residential apartments.
- Social space, play area and covered terraces within the courtyard areas.
- Deep planting and new landscaped areas.

The proposed development has been designed with full regard to and in consideration of the heritage provisions in section 4.3.5 in the Woolloongabba PDA Development Scheme. The scheme complies with the relevant heritage provisions of the Development Scheme.

No changes are proposed to the any of the fabric of the Russian Orthodox Cathedral, significant fabric or otherwise, as part of the proposed development. The proposed development will provide a range of new buildings in the spaces around the Russian Orthodox Cathedral and generally modify and improve these spaces around this focal point of the site.

The proposed development will encourage the ongoing use of the State Heritage Place of the Russian Orthodox Cathedral, and enhance the connection the community has with the Cathedral and the related church buildings with new and improved connecting pathways, outdoor areas, green spaces and a new playground. The residential development is proposed to be used primarily as residences for members of the Cathedral community.

The proposed development will be set back a reasonable distance from Vulture Street to align with the main setback of the Cathedral building (with the central entrance porch projecting forward of this line). Therefore this new building will not detract from the various views of the Cathedral, and specifically the church spire in the views from the street. The bulk and overall form of the new building has been designed to not dominate the built form of the Cathedral, or its setting, with the new building only four storeys in height including a flat roof, and below the height of the spire of the Cathedral. The construction materials proposed are modern, and will be compatible with the materials of the Cathedral and the other related buildings, with a distinct colour palette that does not detract from the bold colouring of the Cathedral building.

The scheme will maintain views to the Cathedral and the baptistry along Vulture Street by being designed in a manner that considers lines of sight to the cathedral spire, and the overall building footprints. From all publicly accessible vantage points and spaces (i.e., footpaths), the cathedral and spire will remain visible and remain the dominant component in the townscape.

The scheme will not detract from the appreciation or understanding of the Cathedral and its role in the development of the history of the wider suburb and Russian migrant community in Brisbane. The Cathedral, baptistry and hall will be continued to be used in their current functions. The proposed development will enhance the experience of the Russian Orthodox community by providing additional communal facilities, shading, seating and a playground for children.

The existing buildings that form part of the Cathedral campus will be retained, with no heritage features or fabric being altered as part of the proposed development. The proposed development can be seen as an extension of the existing church campus, by offering a connection between to the two sites.

The bulk of the works for the new scheme are not located within the State Heritage Place, but rather on the vacant lots adjacent to the State Heritage Place. The minor demolition works to remove the existing hardstand including the driveway and carpark will not have an impact on the significant fabric of the Cathedral, or the cultural significance of the site. The development of the basement carpark is proposed to be one level only, with access via Lahey Lane. The location of the basement carpark is a sufficient distance from the Cathedral footprint such that the vibrations from basement carpark excavations should not have any negative impacts on the building fabric of the Cathedral.

The proposed development is contemporary in design, but uses a colour palette and materials that are compatible with the heritage place, and does not imitate the built form of the Cathedral.

The proposed scheme will result in improved and enhanced use of the St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral State Heritage Place, and will maintain its cultural heritage significance. The scheme is recommended for approval in terms of heritage impacts.

1. INTRODUCTION

Urbis Ltd (Urbis) has been engaged by the Russian Orthodox Church to prepare this Heritage Impact Statement to support a Development Application (DA) lodged over the site of the St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral, and other sites in Vulture Street and Mark Lane to the north.

The DA is lodged over the sites of 320-350 Vulture Street and 52 Mark Lane, Kangaroo Point, which are located in the Woolloongabba Priority Development Area (PDA).

The St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral is located at 344 Vulture Street, Kangaroo Point, and is entered in the Queensland Heritage Register (QHR) as a State Heritage Place.

The DA has been lodged with Economic Development Queensland (EDQ) as assessment manager, as the site of the proposed development is in the Woolloongabba Priority Development Area (PDA). The applicant is the Russian Orthodox Church.

1.1. THE WOOLLOONGABBA PDA

Part of the Woolloongabba suburb was declared a PDA in association with the Woolloongabba Cross River Rail Station some years ago. The PDA was enlarged to create an expanded PDA area for the suburb in September 2023. The enlarged PDA covers an approximate area of 106 hectares, including the Gabba sporting ground, the Mater Hospital, the Woolloongabba busway and major roads such as Stanley Street, Ipswich and Annerley Roads (Figure 1).¹

The St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral is located near the northern boundary of the PDA, in Kangaroo Point (Figure 1).

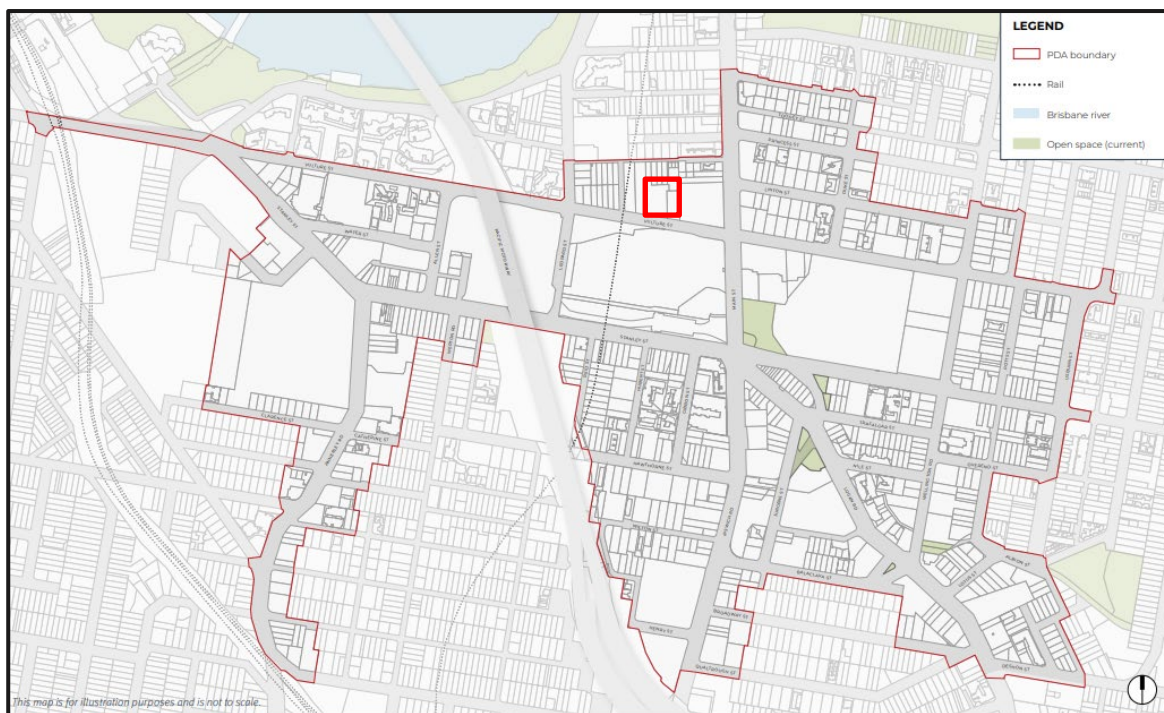


Figure 1 Woolloongabba PDA boundary, location of the St Nicholas Church outlined in red.

Source: Woolloongabba Plan Development Scheme, 2024

Any proposed development within the Woolloongabba PDA is subject to the provisions of the Woolloongabba PDA Development Scheme.

¹ Economic Development Queensland, 2024, The Woolloongabba Plan Development Scheme Woolloongabba Priority development Area. https://www.edq.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0028/96193/Woolloongabba-PDA-Development-Scheme.pdf.

1.2. THE SUBJECT SITE

The lots that are included in the subject site of this application are identified in the table below.

Table 1 The Subject Site

Address	Real Property Description	Total Size Area
320 Vulture Street	Lot 10 on RP114612	8,025m ²
324 Vulture Street	Lot 9 on RP114612	
344 Vulture Street (St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church)	Lot 1 on SP226094	
350 Vulture Street	Lot 2 on RP11188	
52 Mark Lane	Lot 1 on RP99746	

The St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral is located between Vulture Street and Mark Lane with access from both streets. The adjoining lots of 320 and 324 Vulture Street are currently vacant lots, with the northern portions of the lots used for temporary carparking. The sites of 350 Vulture Street and 52 Mark Lane are currently occupied by residential buildings. The 350 Vulture Street site is owned by the Russian Orthodox Church and the building thereon is used by the church community for pastoral reasons.



Figure 2 The subject site of this DA

Source: Queensland Globe 2025

1.3. HERITAGE STATUS

Part of the subject site of the DA is entered in the QHR as a State Heritage Place, and is referred to as the St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral (QHR ID #600358). The Cathedral site is also included in the Heritage Overlay of the Brisbane City Plan 2014 (the planning scheme) in the State Heritage Place and Local Heritage Place sub-categories.

The Cathedral site of 344 Vulture Street is formally described as Lot 1 on SP226094, and extends from Vulture Street through to Mark Lane. Only part of the cadastral lot of the Cathedral site is entered in the QHR

and subject to the heritage entry. While the registered site includes the Russian Orthodox Cathedral and the two modern buildings to the west and the north, the Cathedral is the only building of cultural significance at the site. Indeed the other two buildings were developed and constructed after the site was entered in the QHR.

The site is significant for containing one of the first purpose-built Russian Orthodox churches in Australia, with the church building constructed in 1935-1936.



Figure 3 Aerial photograph of the cathedral lot (red outline) and the heritage curtilage of the State Heritage Place.

Source: Brisbane City Council, City Plan 2014

1.4. PDA-WIDE CRITERIA

The PDA-wide criteria supports the delivery of the PDA vision.

Given that the site of 344 Vulture Street, Kangaroo Point, is a State and Local heritage place Section 4.3.5 Heritage and Character – 4.3.5.1 of the Woolloongabba PDA Development Scheme applies to the assessment of the proposed scheme.

1.5. THE PROPOSAL

The proposed schemes includes the development of a cathedral “campus” associated with the current operations of the Russian Orthodox Cathedral, that will include the following:

- A proposed new residential building comprising:
Ground level: Community and teaching spaces;
Levels 1-3 residential apartments.
- Social space, play area and covered terraces within the courtyard areas.
- Deep planting and new landscaped areas.

The original DA as lodged was for the development of a new residential building to the west of the Cathedral site, and changes to lot boundaries of the cathedral site and other adjoining lots, to allow the subsequent development of the Cathedral site for a church 'campus', and the demolition of a pre-1911 building on Mark Lane. The revised DA has removed the demolition of the pre-1911 building from the proposed scope of work, but has retained all other components.

1.6. THIS REPORT

This report accompanies the DA to be lodged with the Economic Development Queensland (EDQ) seeking approval for the proposed development of the Cathedral campus and the new residential building on that part of the subject site adjoining the heritage place.

This report acts as a Heritage Impact Statement report for the DA, and examines the history of the construction of the Cathedral building within the heritage place, and the development from that time to the current day as required.

The report examines the documentary and physical evidence of the site and building and provides an assessment of their cultural heritage significance as a heritage place within the Woolloongabba PDA. The potential impact of the proposed development on the culturally significant values of the existing cathedral building is then described and analysed.

1.6.1. Further Issues and Revised Report

The DA has been lodged with Economic Development Queensland (EDQ) as assessment manager, as the site of the proposed development is in the Woolloongabba Priority Development Area (PDA).

As noted earlier heritage report was prepared for the original lodgement of the DA in June 2025. This report has been revised to address the Further Issues letter prepared by EDQ in August 2025, that sought changes to the scheme and requested an amended Heritage Impact Statement report to address the changes in the design.

The EDQ Further Issues requested the following, among other items:

1. Design Matters

(a) Provide amended architectural drawings that:

i. consider the design of the Multiple dwelling building to Vulture Street providing greater articulation and variation in architectural form and detailing to provide visual interest to this street frontage.

ii. consider relocating the residential and visitor bicycle parking to an area where it can be conveniently accessed from the main entrance/s and for this area to provide additional planting/greening to the street frontage.

Note – the design should also address the request for a corner truncation as set out in Item 1 above.

(b) Provide an amended Heritage Impact Statement from a suitable qualified heritage expert, outlining how the development responds to the physical characteristics of the Heritage Place, while also creating distinctive architectural form, providing vertical and horizontal breaks, and avoiding the creation of large uniform areas, as per sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.5 of the Woolloongabba PDA Development Scheme. The outcomes of the heritage expert's statement should also be considered and reflected in the architectural plans.

This revised report takes into account the changes made to the scheme and addresses these in the context of the nominated sections of the Woolloongabba PDA Development Scheme.

2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

This section provides a brief historical overview of the site, and the background to the construction and development of the St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral as part of the local community, from its original construction to the present day.

Most of the historical information is taken from existing material and reports where available and as suitable. Some additional historical research has been undertaken to enhance the understanding of the site and the buildings within and adjoining the heritage boundary.

2.1. THE SUBURB OF WOOLLOONGABBA

The name Woolloongabba is thought to be derived from an Aboriginal word that has various meanings (depending on the language) such as fighting place, wallaby, or whirling waters.² The area had several waterholes that regularly became inundated and flooded, the water flowed westerly from the present day Gabba and ended at the present intersection at Stanley Street and Annerley Road. Prior to European settlement the area was known to be a 'Wattle-scented grove' with rocky water holes, and abundant with fauna and bird life.³ After European settlement the area was called 'One Mile Swamp' this was due to the water holes that stretched for one mile. By the 1860s the waterholes were drained, and the suburb was renamed 'Woolloongabba'.⁴

Woolloongabba is one of Brisbane's oldest suburbs. In 1859, when Queensland was made a separate colony from New South Wales, the road between Brisbane and Ipswich (Ipswich Road) was one of the best roads in the town of Brisbane. During the 1880s and 1890s the Woolloongabba area was developed as one of the major shopping districts in Brisbane.⁵ The shopping district was known as the Gabba Fiveways that was named after the intersection of Ipswich Road, Logan Road and Stanley Street.



Picture 1 Fiveways at Woolloongabba, 1900

Source: State Library Queensland (SLQ), John Oxley Library. Image Negative number 16323

In the 1880s Woolloongabba developed quickly, together with the adjoining suburbs of East Brisbane, Buranda and Stones Corner, following the expansion of the railway and tramway systems and the growth of associated commerce and light industry. In 1881 a dry dock was established at South Brisbane and the

² Queensland Places 2018, Woolloongabba, University of Queensland, <https://www.queenslandplaces.com.au/woolloongabba>.

³ *Brisbane Courier*, 20 February 1915, p.12.

⁴ DETSI, 2025, 'Woolloongabba Police Station (former) – 601382, Queensland Heritage Register. <https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/heritage-register/detail/?id=601382>.

⁵ DETSI 2025, 'Woolloongabba Post Office (former) – 600357' Queensland Heritage Register. <https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/heritage-register/detail/?id=600357>.

nearby coal wharves were linked to a railway goods yard at Woolloongabba in 1884. The first horse drawn trams in Brisbane ran between Woolloongabba and Newstead in 1885 and had extended to Buranda by 1887.

South Brisbane and Woolloongabba were amalgamated to form the City of South Brisbane in 1888 and in the following year the first Post Office opened in Woolloongabba, the mail in and out came via the tram.⁶ In 1889 the Cleveland Railway terminated at Woolloongabba, from the Woolloongabba passengers continuing north and south were transferred to horse drawn trams, this made the Woolloongabba a main throughfare and busy area. Lots of land around the Woolloongabba for business or residential purposes were available for purchase in 1889.



Figure 4 1889 Lewis Estate advertisement for subdivisions available for auction

Source: SLQ, JOL, Record number 998553524702061

In the 1880s Woolloongabba boomed as both a working class residential district and as a commercial centre, due principally to construction of the rail link from the Ipswich line at Corinda [South Brisbane Junction] to South Brisbane, which opened in June 1884. The main purpose of this line was to bring coal from West Moreton to the ships at South Brisbane, terminating, via a tunnel at Lower River Terrace, in Stanley Street,

⁶ DETSI 2025, 'Woolloongabba Post Office (former) – 600357' Queensland Heritage Register. <https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/heritage-register/detail/?id=600357>.

near the dry dock. However, the main goods yard and passenger terminus was at the western end of the former water reserve at One Mile Swamp, near Main Street between Stanley Street East and Vulture Street [now the site of the Woolloongabba Busway Station]. The railway looped across Logan Road through suburban portion 165 to reach the goods yards and passenger station.

In addition, from 1887 a horse-drawn tram service linked South Brisbane to Mount Gravatt via Logan Road and the Woolloongabba Fiveways, and from November 1889 the newly opened Cleveland Railway terminated at Woolloongabba. From here passengers continuing on to North and South Brisbane transferred to horse trams.

These improvements to passenger and goods transportation stimulated commercial development at the Woolloongabba Fiveways.



Picture 2 Woolloongabba to Breakfast Creek Tram, 1886

Source: SLQ, JOL, Negative Number 60180

In 1890 the economic boom of the 1880s finished and Queensland, along with the rest of the world, entered a period of widespread economic depression. In addition, the extension of the railway to Melbourne Street, which opened in December 1891, by-passed Woolloongabba station, diverting passenger traffic on the South Coast, Cleveland and South Brisbane Junction lines to South Brisbane. The Woolloongabba passenger station closed, but the railyard remained the south side's principal goods yard and locomotive depot until the line was closed in 1969.

By the 1920s, Woolloongabba flourished as a shopping centre, servicing the rapidly expanding eastern and southern suburbs of Balmoral, Hawthorne, East Brisbane, Coorparoo, Stone's Corner, Greenslopes, Holland Park and Annerley, all of which had electric tram access to North and South Brisbane via the Woolloongabba Fiveways. As a result of the expansion of the rail and electric tram lines into the Woolloongabba, by the 1890s the area became one of the major shopping districts in Brisbane, alongside Queen Street, Fortitude Valley and South Brisbane.

A map from 1892 shows that prior to there being a railway station in the Woolloongabba there was a park and a water reserve in the area that is currently the Gabba stadium (Figure 4). A map from 1895 shows that a section of the Woolloongabba Park/reserve had been used for the Woolloongabba Station, and the lots adjacent to the railway station had started to be subdivided (Figure 5). The Fiveways was developed into a major hub that extended down to Stanley Street towards South Brisbane, the allotments facing Stanley

Street, Logan Road and Ipswich Road (the Fiveways) started being developed into commercial and retail spaces.

The new line as well as the 1890s economic depression led to the Woolloongabba passenger station to close, however the railyard was still used as a goods yard and locomotive depot until 1969.

By 1892 the Woolloongabba area was planned out with many of the present-day streets existing in 1892 including Mark Lane, adjacent to the Woolloongabba Park and Water reserve.



Figure 5 1892 Pugh's map showing the street names in a portion of the Woolloongabba including Mark Lane

Source: Brisbane City Council Archives

After the difficult years of the 1890s economic depression Woolloongabba started to grow once again, with the creation of the Brisbane Cricket Ground at Woolloongabba which became a major centre for sports in Queensland. The post office was constructed in 1899 and mail was carried to and from the Post Office via the tramway. The first baby health clinic in Brisbane opened in the Woolloongabba in 1918, opposite a crèche and kindergarten.⁷

⁷ Queensland Place, Woolloongabba.



Picture 3 The Woolloongabba Cricket Ground in 1906

Source: SLQ, JOL, Image record number 99101433402061

2.2. RUSSIAN MIGRATION

In the nineteenth century emigration of Russian citizens from the northern hemisphere to Queensland was slow, with numbers increasing from the 1880s.⁸ At the time the Queensland government favoured Russian immigrants, as it was considered they assimilated into the dominant society quickly.⁹ In 1909 a group representing families still in Russia agreed to emigrate to Queensland on the provision that they would be granted land and given free passage. It was aimed at Russians who were 'dissatisfied' with the hard conditions of Russia and would consider emigrating to Queensland.¹⁰

By 1911 Russians were the fourth largest ethnic group in Brisbane, congregating in South Brisbane and in particular Woolloongabba. This time was the start of the largest immigration into Queensland of Russian citizens. The Russian immigrants came into Queensland via Manchuria or Serbia.¹¹ At the time Mr. Thomas in the Representatives claimed that Queensland was 'full up' of Russian immigrants, but this statement was proven to be incorrect with no Russians being turned away from settlement in Queensland.¹² By 1912 it was reported the flow of Russian immigrants into Queensland was steady, with a reported 28 settlers arriving via Nikko Maru.¹³ Many of the Russians emigrating to Queensland were those seeking asylum from tsarist political repression, and Russians Jews escaping state-inspired pogroms.¹⁴

During World War I the Allies supported Imperial Russia in the hopes that it would remain in the war. However in 1917, the initial February revolution saw Tsar Nicholas abdicate, and then the October revolution saw the Bolsheviks overthrow the provisional government. These major events led to Russia's withdrawal from the war.¹⁵ The Allied nations felt the new Soviet regime was hostile and proceeded to change existing Russian policies. Russian immigration to Australia and Queensland ceased between 1918–1922.

Due to pressures and requests from White Russians (monarchists and anti-communists) who were fleeing Soviet Russia the Queensland government relaxed these immigration restrictions that had been imposed in 1918. In the early 1920s Russians began arriving in Queensland, carrying letters from the Commonwealth

⁸ DETSI, 2025, 'St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral – 600358', Queensland Heritage Register. <https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/heritage-register/detail/?id=600358>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ *The Argus*, 'Queensland – Russian Immigrants', 16 December 1909, p.8.

¹¹ *Ballarat Star*, 'Russian Immigration', 21 November 1911, p.6.

¹² *Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser*, 'Immigration – Russian Immigrants in Queensland', 21 November 1911, p.4

¹³ *The Daily Telegraph*, 'Russian Immigrants for Queensland', 27 June 1912, p.10.

¹⁴ Queensland Heritage Register, St Nicholas Orthodox Church.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Trade Commissioner with the promise of being given land, or given the opportunity to secure any position that suits them.¹⁶ From this point immigration into Queensland continued at a steady pace for many years. By 1925 it was reported that the immigrants coming into Queensland were Russian and Polish, traveling on Japanese vessels.¹⁷

2.3. ST NICHOLAS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

With the influx of Russian migrants into Queensland from the 1920s, the majority of whom settled in the South Brisbane area. As a result, there was a strong desire to establish a Russian Orthodox Church. Father Alexander Shabasheff, who had fled Russia and arrived in Brisbane in 1923, helped to establish the church, with the assistance of Canon David Garland of the local Church of England. The first Russian Orthodox parish used the St Thomas' Church of England for worship.¹⁸

The Russian community raised funds to establish a Russian Orthodox Church in the locality. An amount of £1,000 was raised to allow the purchase of an area of land in Vulture Street (the current cathedral site), that contained an existing building. A loan was also obtained to assist the venture.¹⁹ The existing building on the site of 330 Vulture Street, Woolloongabba was modified to suit, and the church opened in August 1926.²⁰ Archpriest Father Alexander Shabasheff and Reverend F. Shaverin consecrated the church, while members of the Anglican Church were also in attendance including Canon David Garland, Reverend J. Lee-Warner, and Mr. A. Shirley.²¹



Picture 4 A 1936 luncheon, showing the interior of the cottage converted into the first church

Source: SLQ, JOL, Negative number 128789

The existing building on the acquired site was a small cottage, that was adapted to serve as the church. It was described as:

¹⁶ *The Brisbane Courier*, 'Russian Immigrants' 17 July 1923, p.4.

¹⁷ *Advocate*, 'Russian Immigrants' 5 December 1925, p.5.

¹⁸ Queensland Heritage Register, St Nicholas Orthodox Church.

¹⁹ *The Brisbane Courier*, 'New Russian Church' 13 August 1926, p.8.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *The Daily Mail*, 'Martyr Nation – Refuge in Australia New Russian Church', 23 August 1926, p.9.

*The little wooden church of St. Nicholas, as it stands just off the road with a plain white cross at either end of the roof, is a visible testimony to much love and sacrifice for the sake of religion.....the first impression on entering is the fine effect produced by simplicity of construction, clean paint, bright religious pictures, and glowing tapers. The best features are some of the ikons, precious treasures brought from Russia.*²²

The parish was officially registered in 1930 as 'St Nicholas Orthodox Church'. During the Great Depression many of the Russian congregation moved to rural areas in search of work. Working in rural places made many members of the Russian community to feel isolated, and many returned to Brisbane in the mid-1930s to rejoin the parish.²³

In 1933 the parish of St Nicholas had a new priest Father Valentine Antonieff, and at this time fundraising for a new church began. The plan was for a new church to be built on the site of the existing church, that would serve as a memorial to late Russian Tsar Nicholas II. A parishioner, and engineer, Gregory Mechonoshin drew up the plans for the construction of the church. Cavanagh & Cavanagh were the architects who were commissioned to draw up the formal plans for the church. Tenders went out in 1935 for the construction of the church, for the construction of a new church to be built of timber and stucco.²⁴



Picture 5 Father Antonieff performing a liturgy at St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church.

Source: SLQ, JOL, Image negative number 146447

The construction of the new building began in 1935, with the cupola designed by another parishioner Mr Golovzin. It was decided in order to make way for the new church that the existing church building was moved to the rear of the site. The church was understood to be completed in early 1936, however it was not

²² Ibid.

²³ Queensland Heritage Register, St Nicholas Orthodox Church.

²⁴ *The Courier-Mail*, 'To Builders' 25 June 1935, P.1.

consecrated until October 1936 by the Greek Orthodox Archbishop Timothy of Brisbane. The church was not consecrated by a member of the Russian Orthodox Church until November 1948.



Picture 6 The founding parishioners of the Russian Orthodox Church, 1937

Source: SLQ, JOL, Image negative number 62026

The iconostasis and royal gates were constructed and decorated by the Russian parishioners. Interior elements such as moveable icons and chandeliers were of Russian or Chinese origin and were donated by a widow of a priest. Interiors included a shrine to Tsar Nicholas II, and a Maltese Cross on the front of the tower.²⁵ In 1939 the front fence was constructed to replace the early picket fence. In 1950 the church was extended at each side.

²⁵ Queensland Heritage Register, St Nicholas Orthodox Church.



Picture 7 The new St Nicholas Church completed in 1936

Source: SLQ, JOL, Image negative number 125727

By 1946 there was only two Russian Orthodox churches in Australia – the first was the subject St Nicholas Orthodox Church in Woolloongabba with the second St Vladimir's in Sydney (1938). By the 1960s two more Russian Orthodox parishes were established in Brisbane, namely St Seraphim's in Hawthorne Street Woolloongabba, and the Parish of the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God in Rocklea.²⁶

In 1951 the subject site of the cathedral comprised the cathedral and a hall (the former church building) to the rear of the cathedral. On either side of the cathedral and hall were single dwellings. These adjoining sites

²⁶

Ibid.

were progressively acquired by the church community and are now part of the Church campus in the present day. The original residential building to the east remains in-situ, but raised and modified, while the early residential building to the west has been demolished and a new building constructed to operate as the baptistery for the Cathedral.

Between December 2014 and April 2015, the hall behind the cathedral (the original church building) was demolished. Construction of the current building on the site began in July 2015, along with a new driveway and car park associated with the church. The new hall was completed in early 2016, the same year that the baptistery was replaced. The small timber dwelling on the site, that had been acquired by the church community many years earlier, was demolished, and a new building with a similar footprint was developed on the site to serve as the baptistery.



Picture 8 Aerial photo from 1961 of the cathedral (indicated by the red square), and the hall to the rear

Source: QImagery, Film QAP107, Frame 4035



Picture 9 Aerial photo from 1967 of the cathedral and the other buildings on the wider site

Source: QImagery, Film QAP107, Frame 4035



Picture 10 Aerial image of the church showing the demolished hall to the rear of the site in July 2015

Source: Nearmap 2025



Picture 11 Aerial image of the site in July 2016 and the new baptistery is in the process of being constructed

Source: Nearmap 2025



Picture 12 The original baptistry building (and former dwelling) in March 2016

Source: Google Street View, 2025



Picture 13 The new baptistry in March 2017

Source: Google Street View, 2025

3. PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The following section has been reproduced from the register entry for the St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral site from the QHR.

3.1. THE CATHEDRAL

The cathedral building is the central, commanding building in the group of buildings. With its white finished walls resembling masonry, symmetrical façade and distinctive towers, the church stands quite tall and contributes significantly to the streetscape in this part of Vulture Street.

In plan, the church is a simple rectangle, with a square attached tower over the front entry and an attached rectangular aisle at each long side. There are three symmetrically placed entry porches at the front Vulture Street façade, with roof forms and bargeboards shaped to the profile of a cupola and surmounted by ball and cross finials. A three-sided apse is centrally located at the rear.

The square tower houses a choir space directly above the main entry, and a belfry above that, accessed by a series of simple timber ladders. Above the altar and centrally placed in the main roof is a smaller six-sided tower and cupola.

Constructed on a rendered masonry base, the building is timber framed with a roughcast rendered fibre cement sheeting exterior, save for the western aisle which has been built in rendered masonry subsequent to 1950. The main roof is sheeted in corrugated galvanised iron, and the cupolas and tapering roof to the square tower are made up of flat and curved pieces of galvanised sheeting.

Rendered masonry steps provide access to each of the three front entry doors, which have two leaves in a round-headed opening.

A path runs from the central entry to a metal gate, centrally placed in a rendered masonry fence along the street frontage. This fence comprises pillars with incised crosses and ball finials, between which are masonry panels and steel tube and wire infill panels.

The interior has a wooden floor and a ceiling which follows the line of the rafters, lined with fibro and VJ boards.

In this building the simple geometric forms, crowned with cupolas and punctuated with tall round-headed windows, are an expression of the canon of Russian religious architecture that dates from Byzantium and that has been constructed here in response to local materials, time and place.

3.2. PHOTOGRAPHS



Picture 14 Facing north-east towards the church complex as seen from the Lahey Lane

Source: Urbis 2025



Picture 15 The baptistry as seen from Vulture Street footpath

Source: Urbis 2025



Picture 16 The church hall in the background, and baptistry to the right

Source: Urbis 2025



Picture 17 Rear elevations of the baptistry and cathedral

Source: Urbis 2025



Picture 18 Looking towards the vacant lots from the church complex

Source: Urbis 2025



Picture 19 The church complex as seen from Mark Lane

Source: Urbis 2025



Picture 20 Row of residential dwellings along Mark Lane directly behind the church complex

Source: Urbis 2025



Picture 21 Rear elevation of the cathedral

Source: Urbis 2025



Picture 22 The hall built in 2015

Source: Urbis 2025



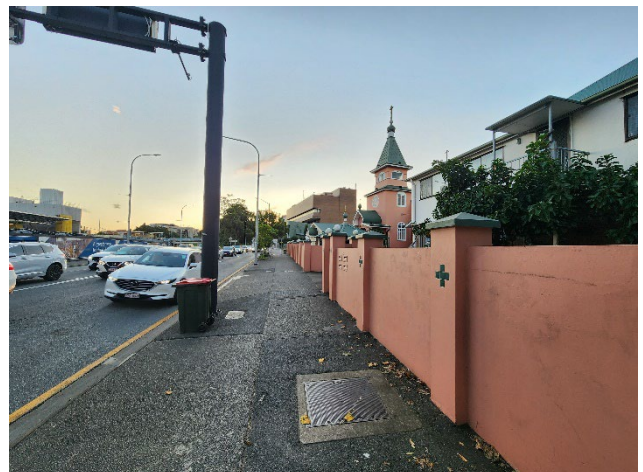
Picture 23 The primary elevation of the cathedral

Source: Urbis 2025



Picture 24 The primary façade as seen from Vulture Street footpath

Source: Urbis 2025



Picture 25 The cathedral from Vulture Street footpath

Source: Urbis 2025

4. CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Cultural significance is the term used to embrace the range of qualities that make some places especially important to the community, over and above their basic utilitarian function. These places are usually those that help understand the past, enrich the present, and that will be of value to future generations.

4.1. DEFINITIONS

The Burra Charter defines cultural significance as *aesthetic, historic, scientific, or social value for past, present, and future generations.*

There are a range of heritage criteria that are used by different authorities which explain and expand on the above areas of cultural significance in the Burra Charter, which are broadly consistent with one another.

The *Queensland Heritage Act 1992* defines the cultural heritage significance of a place or feature of a place as

...its aesthetic, architectural, historical, scientific, social, or other significance, to the present generation or past or future generations,

The planning scheme does not have its own definition of cultural significance.

4.2. CRITERIA OF SIGNIFICANCE

Part 4 of the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992* covers the registration of places in the QHR. Section 35 of the Act states that a place may be entered in the register as a State Heritage Place, if it satisfies one or more of the following eight criteria of cultural heritage significance:

- (a) *The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of Queensland's history;*
- (b) *The place demonstrates rare, uncommon, or endangered aspects of Queensland's cultural history;*
- (c) *The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Queensland's history;*
- (d) *The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class of cultural places;*
- (e) *The place is important because of its aesthetic significance;*
- (f) *The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period;*
- (g) *The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural, or spiritual reasons;*
- (h) *The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group, or organisation of importance in Queensland's history.*

A place can be entered in the QHR if it satisfies one or more of the above heritage criteria.

4.3. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The following statement of significance is taken from the QHR entry for the St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church prepared by DETSI officers when the site was initially entered in the QHR:

The Russian Orthodox Cathedral of St Nicholas at Woolloongabba, erected 1935-36, was the first purpose-built Russian Orthodox church in Australia, and was consecrated in 1948 as the first Russian Orthodox cathedral in Australia. From St Nicholas Cathedral, the Russian Orthodox Diocese of Australia and New Zealand was administered from late 1948 to early 1950.

The establishment of St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church in Brisbane can be contextualised within the wider pattern of Russian emigration following the Bolshevik coup of 1917, and the establishment of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, and remains an important link between Queensland and the

most significant political upheaval of the 20th century. (Criterion A – The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of Queensland's history).

Its simple geometric forms, crowned with cupolas and punctuated with tall round-headed windows, and the interior arrangement of liturgical elements, including the iconostasis and royal gates, are an expression of the canon of Russian religious architecture that dates from Byzantium and that has been constructed here in response to local materials, time and place. (Criterion D – The place is important in demonstration the principal characteristics of a particular class of cultural places)

With its distinctive towers, the church contributes significantly to the streetscape in this part of Vulture Street. (Criterion E – The place is important because of its aesthetic significance).

St Nicholas Cathedral has had a close association with the maintenance of Russian cultural identity and tradition in both Brisbane and Queensland, and is important in illustrating the pluralism of 20th century Queensland/Brisbane society. (Criterion G - The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons).

This report does not seek to challenge or dispute this statement of significance. This is not the role of this report.

4.3.1. Discussion

The above statement of significance is based primarily around the Cathedral building itself.

While the identified heritage curtilage for the site includes the other two buildings on the site (the hall and baptistery) the history and evolution of the cathedral site as part of the Russian community in this part of the city clearly demonstrates that these are modern buildings. While the *use* of these buildings may be significant in terms of the overall use of the wider site for pastoral reasons, the fabric of these buildings is modern and therefore not of cultural significance in terms of accepted heritage values.

For the consideration of the proposed development of the Cathedral site and the adjoining sites, it is noted that the statement of significance in the QHR register entry confirms that the site is culturally significant for aesthetic reasons and makes a significant contribution to the streetscape of this part of Vulture Street due to distinctive towers of the building and the overall design of this religious building.

5. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed works to the Cathedral campus are primarily focused on the vacant lot adjacent to the existing church complex to the west. The proposed development is associated with St Nicholas Russian Cathedral and the Russian Orthodox community and will provide additional facilities to this community and an improved ground plane at the site.

5.1. THE SCHEME

The proposed scheme involves the following components.

A four storey residential apartment building with a flat roof will be developed as the major component of the scheme to the west of the Cathedral and baptistry. The new building will be set back behind the line of the central entrance porch and spire of the adjoining Cathedral. The scheme involves a single level of basement carparking beneath the new building.

There will be communal spaces on the ground floor of the new building, and the wider site will have deep planting and gardens with sub-tropical plantings. New play areas will be provided as part of the proposed development.

There will be layered screening to attenuate privacy, ventilation and daylight.

The new building will feature modern but compatible materials that will complement the existing Cathedral building, the baptistry and the hall.

5.1.1. The Proposal Plans

The proposed development is illustrated in the architectural plans prepared by Chalmers Partners Architects as follows:

- A-100 COVER SHEET & LOCALITY PLAN Rev 4;
- A-111 EXISTING & DEMOLITION - FLOOR PLAN Rev 4;
- A-112 EXISTING & DEMOLITION - LOT 1 Rev 2;
- A-120 BASEMENT 1 FLOOR PLAN Rev 4;
- A-121 GROUND FLOOR PLAN Rev 5;
- A-122 TYPICAL APARTMENT LEVELS Rev 4;
- A-124 ROOF PLAN Rev 4;
- A-201 ELEVATIONS Rev 4;
- A-202 ELEVATIONS Rev 4;
- A-301 SECTIONS Rev 4;
- A-302 SECTIONS Rev 4;
- A-701 SHADOW DIAGRAMS Rev 4;
- A-901 AREA PLANS - GFA Rev 4;
- A-902 AREA PLANS - LANDSCAPE Rev 4.

5.1.2. Design Considerations

The façade design of the revised building will provide greater articulation and variation in form than the scheme that was lodged. It is considered that there is depth and space in the main elevation with the verandahs to the eastern side, and a variation in the bulk of the built form with the western side of the new building of a slightly different appearance to the street, picking up from the scheme that was lodged. The design and form of the Cathedral building is perhaps bespoke, and it may be somewhat difficult to design a new building to respond to these characteristics in the manner that new buildings generally respond to a heritage building (patterns of fenestration, building bays, cornice lines and details, bulk and scale, etc).

The overall height of the new building will be acceptable. The spire of the Cathedral remains the taller element in the view, and the separation of the new building from the church is sufficient to not dominate or “crowd” the view of the church in the streetscape. The baptistery is a modern building (less than 10 years old) and while within the curtilage of the heritage place there is less of a need to consider this building in these terms (separation, crowding, views etc).

The new building will have a similar colour finish as the baptistery building. The salmon colour of the Cathedral building is a modern colour scheme and is understood to not be a historic scheme for this building. Ther church building was a yellow/ochre colour in 2009, as was the front fence.

A new masonry fence will be constructed at the street frontage of Vulture Street as part of the proposed development, similar to but not the same as the existing and detailed masonry fence to the church and baptistery.

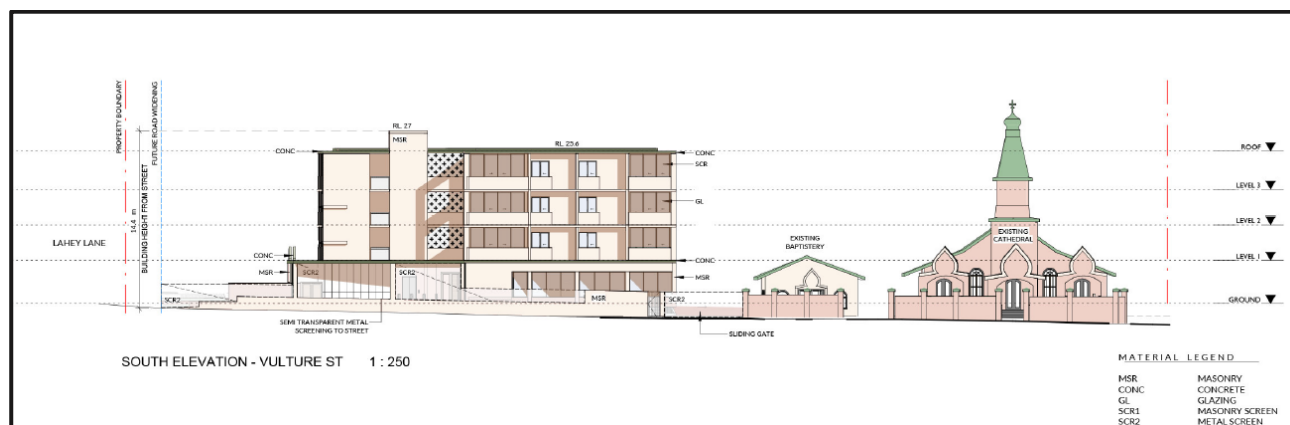


Figure 6 The southern elevation of the proposed development in relation to the Cathedral and baptistery.

Source: Chalmers Partners Architects 2025, Drawing no. A-202 Rev 4.

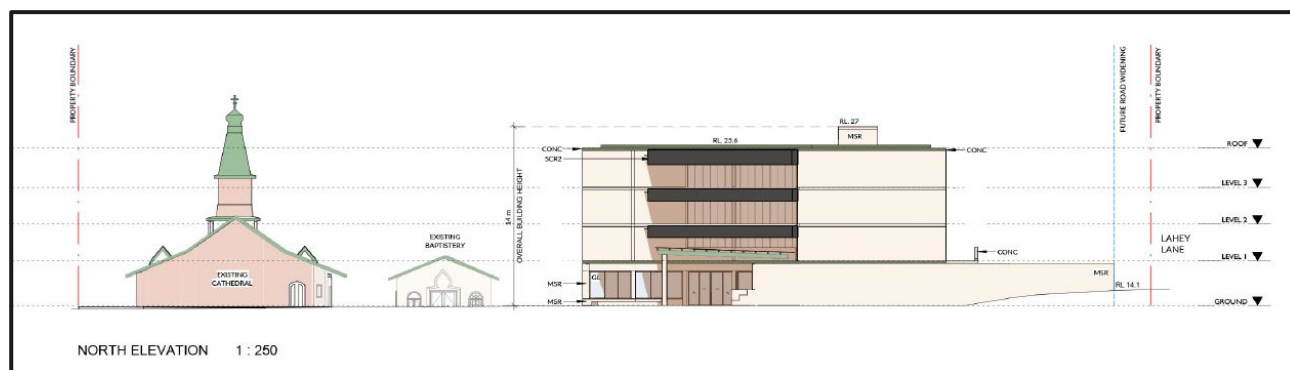


Figure 7 The northern elevation of the proposed development in relation to the Cathedral and baptistery.

Source: Chalmers Partners Architects 2025, Drawing no. A-202 Rev 4.

5.2. PROPOSED DEMOLITION

As part of the proposed works some elements are proposed for demolition. The demolition works do not involve any existing building fabric of the Cathedral, or any of the buildings at the site more widely.

The following items are proposed for demolition.

- Removal of the existing billboard on Lot 9 RP114612 (324 Vulture Street).
- Removal of the existing concrete slabs on Lots 9 & 10 RP114612 (320 and 324 Vulture Street).
- Removal of trees, driveway and carparking facility on adjoining the church complex.
- Removal of two existing crossovers one at Lahey Lane and another at Vulture Street.

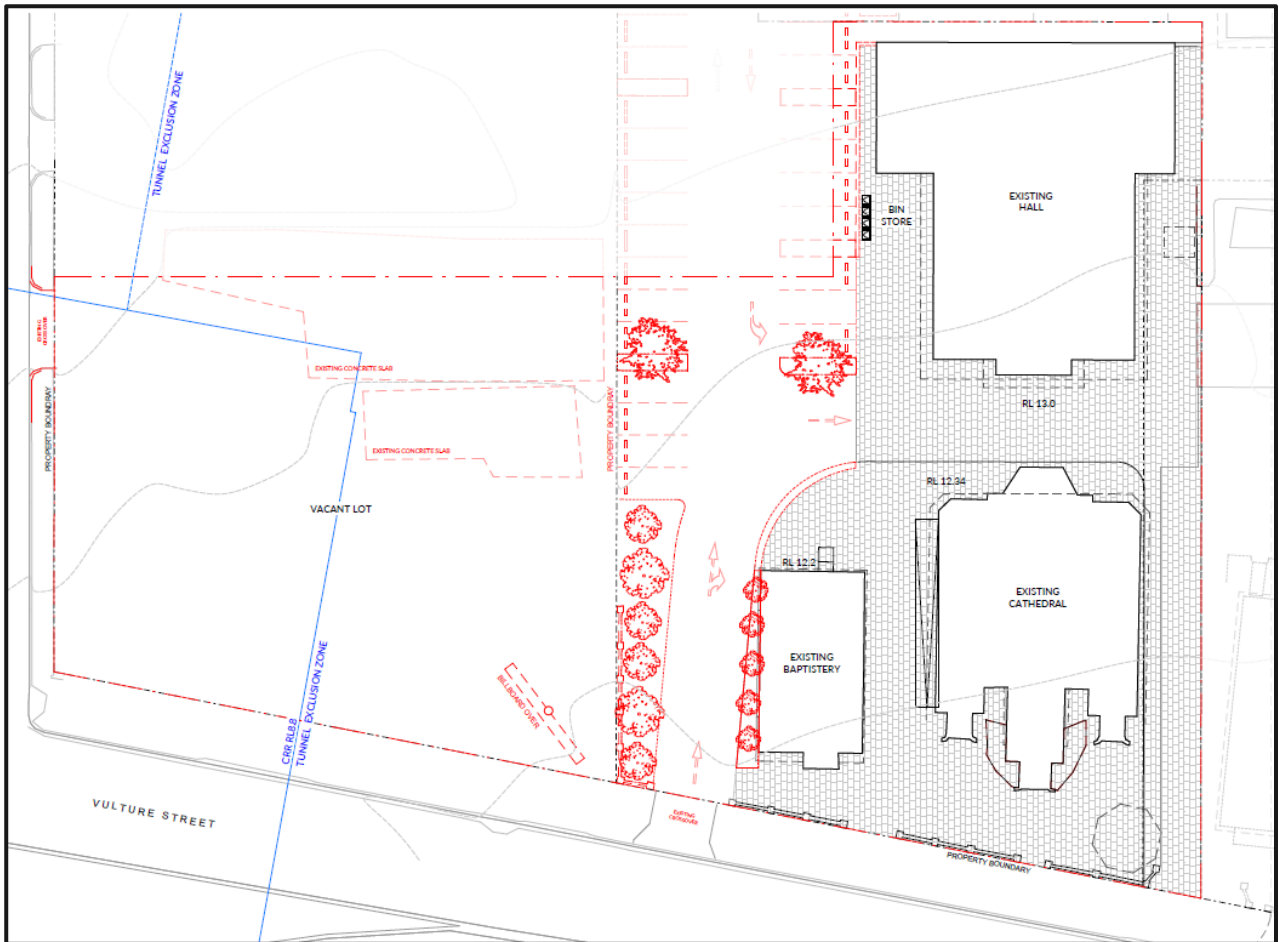


Figure 8 Existing and demolition floor plans

Source: Chalmers Partners Architects 2025, Drawing no. A-111 Rev 4.

6. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

6.1. WOOLLOONGABBA PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT AREA

The vision of the of the Woolloongabba PDA will capitalise on the once-in-a-lifetime opportunities presented by unprecedented investment in major infrastructure occurring in the area, such as the Cross River Rail, Brisbane Metro and the Kangaroo Point Green Bridge transport infrastructure and leverage the major cultural and sporting destinations such as South Bank and Kangaroo Point Cliffs. Creating more engaging public realm spaces anchored by a new central park, the Creek to Cliffs Green Corridor, and substantial enhancements to major movement corridors such as Stanley Street, providing opportunities for people to move more comfortably within streetscapes.

The vision notes '*The PDA's diverse places of cultural significance, heritage and character are celebrated and reinvigorated to provide continued meaning to the area.*'²⁷ Any development in the PDA relating to heritage needs to include the following:

14. Provides for the conservation and successful integration of heritage places, including through adaptive re-use and heritage sensitive design responses to buildings within and adjoining the PDA.

Similar to other Development Schemes for PDAs in Queensland, the PDA development requirements and development criteria apply across the whole PDA. The development criteria are to be taken into account in the preparation and assessment of PDA development applications.

The criteria relevant to development on or adjoining a heritage place is found in Section 4.3.5 Heritage. The assessment for the proposed works to the subject site against the development provisions in the PDA are in the table below.

Table 2 Woolloongabba PDA Development on or adjoining Heritage Provisions

PDA Assessment	Assessment of proposed development
1. Maintains views to the heritage places within or adjoining the PDA, including along Stanley Street, Vulture Street, Logan Road, Main Street, Wellington Road and Annerley Road as key landmarks of the PDA.	The proposed development maintains the significant views of the Cathedral building along Vulture Street, by being designed in a way that factors in the line of sight to the cathedral spire. The proposed residential development will be well separate from the Cathedral footprint, and will be set back behind the line of the Cathedral spire, that is the most dominant feature of the Cathedral building. The cathedral and its spire will remain dominant and distinctive elements in the Vulture Street streetscape, anchoring the view of the building and the wider religious and community precinct.
2. Provides for the conservation and adaptive re-use of heritage places within the PDA in a way which:	
a. Is compatible with their cultural heritage significance and does not detract from their interpretation and appreciation, while allowing for the functional requirements of new uses	The proposed development will not detract from the interpretation or appreciation of the Cathedral. The Cathedral, baptistry and hall will be continued to be used in their existing functions, and indeed this use will be enhanced with the proposed development. The proposed development will enhance the

²⁷ Woolloongabba PDA, p.17.

PDA Assessment	Assessment of proposed development
	experience of the Russian Orthodox community by providing additional communal facilities, shading, seating and a playground for children.
b. maintains or enhances the historic built form, character, place features, and setting of the heritage place	The existing buildings as part of the church campus will be retained are not affected by the proposed development No heritage features or fabric will be modified or compromised as part of the proposed development. The proposed development can be seen as an extension of the existing church campus, by offering connection between to the two sites.
c. does not compromise the building fabric or structural integrity, including protecting building fabric during construction	The main development is not located on the State Heritage Place but rather on the vacant lots adjacent to the State Heritage Place. The minor demolition works to remove the existing hardstand that is the driveway, and carpark will not impact the fabric of the Cathedral or the significance of the site. The development of the basement carpark is proposed to be one level only, with access via Lahey Lane. The location of the basement carpark is a sufficient distance from the Cathedral footprint that the vibrations from basement carpark excavations should not impact on the building fabric of the Cathedral.
3. successfully integrates with elements of heritage significance through context and site-specific responses that:	
a. enable the heritage place to be a prominent feature that is able to be interpreted and appreciated when viewed from publicly accessible spaces	The proposed development has been set back from Vulture Street and has been designed at a certain height and bulk to not block views to the church spire. From publicly accessible spaces (i.e., footpaths) the cathedral and spire will still be visible and will remain a dominant and distinctive element in the Vulture Street streetscape, anchoring the view of the building and the wider religious and community precinct.
b. complement the design and physical characteristics of the heritage place through development siting, scale, proportions, architectural detailing, landscaping treatment or other such features	The residential development has been designed to not exceed the height of the Cathedral, the proposed materiality has been selected to be compatible with the church buildings, and a compatible colour palette and choice of fabric that is consistent with the smooth rendered finish of the Cathedral building, and the modern baptistry and hall buildings.

PDA Assessment	Assessment of proposed development
	The façade design of the revised building will provide greater articulation and variation in form than the scheme that was lodged. It is considered that there is depth and space in the main elevation with the verandahs to the eastern side and the middle of the building on the upper levels, and a variation in the bulk of the built form with the western side of the new building of a slightly different appearance to the street, picking up from the scheme that was lodged. The design and form of the Cathedral building is perhaps bespoke, and it may be somewhat difficult to design a new building to respond to these characteristics in the manner that new buildings generally respond to a heritage building (patterns of fenestration, building bays, cornice lines and details, bulk and scale, etc). In any event it is considered that the design of the proposed development will complement the design and physical characteristics of the St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral in terms of its proposed siting and distance from the church building, the overall scale of the new building, its materiality and detailing.
c. are contemporary in design, and avoid imitation design elements	The proposed development is contemporary in design but uses a colour palette and materials that are compatible with the heritage place, but does not imitate the details of the Cathedral building.

6.2. DISCUSSION

The proposed development for a residential dwelling on the current vacant lots adjacent to the St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral has the intended purpose of being well utilised by the Russian Orthodox community.

The proposed scheme has been designed with due regard to the heritage provisions in section 4.3.5 in the Woolloongabba PDA and the cultural significance of the St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral State Heritage Place.

The proposed development encourages the ongoing use of the heritage place as the Russian Orthodox Cathedral. The proposed development enhances the connection the community has with the Cathedral and related buildings by having connecting pathways, outdoor areas, green spaces and a playground. The residential development is proposed to be used by primarily as residence for the members of the community.

The proposed location, footprint, placement and overall design of the proposed scheme has been considered with respect of the St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral. The new building will be set back from Vulture Street a sufficient distance so that that new building will not detract from the view of the Cathedral, or the spire from Vulture Street. The bulk and form of the building has been designed to not dominate the setting, with the building only being four storeys in height including a flat roof. The choice of materiality is modern, but compatible with the materials of the cathedral and other buildings, with a muted colour palette that does not detract from bold colouring of the church.

The façade design of the revised building will provide greater articulation and variation in form than the scheme that was lodged. It is considered that there is depth and space in the main elevation with the verandahs to the eastern side, and a variation in the bulk of the built form with the western side of the new building of a slightly different appearance to the street, picking up from the scheme that was lodged. The design and form of the Cathedral building is perhaps bespoke, and it may be somewhat difficult to design a new building to respond to these characteristics in the manner that new buildings generally respond to a heritage building (patterns of fenestration, building bays, cornice lines and details, bulk and scale, etc).

DISCLAIMER

This report is dated 31 October 2025 and incorporates information and events up to that date only and excludes any information arising, or event occurring, after that date which may affect the validity of Urbis Ltd (**Urbis**) opinion in this report. Urbis prepared this report on the instructions, and for the benefit only, of Russian Orthodox Church (**Instructing Party**) for the purpose of a Heritage Impact Statement (**Purpose**) and not for any other purpose or use. To the extent permitted by applicable law, Urbis expressly disclaims all liability, whether direct or indirect, to the Instructing Party which relies or purports to rely on this report for any purpose other than the Purpose, and to any other person which relies or purports to rely on this report for any purpose whatsoever (including the Purpose).

In preparing this report, Urbis was required to make judgements which may be affected by unforeseen future events, the likelihood and effects of which are not capable of precise assessment.

All surveys, forecasts, projections and recommendations contained in or associated with this report are made in good faith and on the basis of information supplied to Urbis at the date of this report, and upon which Urbis relied. Achievement of the projections and budgets set out in this report will depend, among other things, on the actions of others over which Urbis has no control.

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Whilst Urbis has made all reasonable inquiries it believes necessary in preparing this report, it is not responsible for determining the completeness or accuracy of information provided to it. Urbis (including its officers and personnel) is not liable for any errors or omissions, including in information provided by the Instructing Party or another person or upon which Urbis relies, provided that such errors or omissions are not made by Urbis recklessly or in bad faith.

This report has been prepared with due care and diligence by Urbis and the statements and opinions given by Urbis in this report are given in good faith and in the reasonable belief that they are correct and not misleading, subject to the limitations above.

APPENDIX A

QHR REGISTER ENTRY



Queensland Government home >For Queenslanders >Environment, land and water >
Land, housing and property >Heritage places >Queensland Heritage Register >Search the register >
St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral

St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral

- Place ID: 600358
- 330-334B Vulture Street, Kangaroo Point

General



[More images...](#)

Classification

State Heritage

Register status

Entered

Date entered

21 October 1992

Type

Religion/worship: Cathedral

Themes

1.2 Peopling places: Migration from outside and within

8.1 Creating social and cultural institutions: Worshipping and religious institutions

Architect

Mechonoshin, Gregory

Builder

Robinson, B

Construction period

1935–1950, St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral (1935 - 1950s)

Historical period

1919–1930s Interwar period

Location

Address

330-334B Vulture Street, Kangaroo Point

LGA

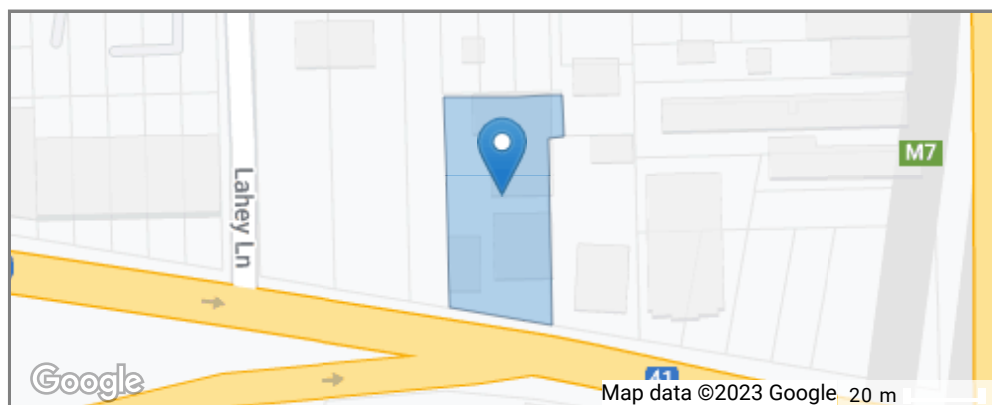
Brisbane City Council

Coordinates

-27.48395972, 153.03454271

Map

- [Enlarge map](#)



Street view



Photography is provided by Google Street View and may include third-party images. Images show the vicinity of the heritage place which may not be visible.

Request a boundary map

A printable boundary map report can be emailed to you.

Email

Significance

Criterion A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of Queensland's history.

The Russian Orthodox Cathedral of St Nicholas at Woolloongabba, erected 1935-36, was the first purpose-built Russian Orthodox church in Australia, and was consecrated in 1948 as the first Russian Orthodox cathedral in Australia. From St Nicholas Cathedral, the Russian Orthodox Diocese of Australia and New Zealand was administered from late 1948 to early 1950.

The establishment of St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church in Brisbane can be contextualised within the wider pattern of Russian emigration following the Bolshevik coup of 1917, and the establishment of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, and remains an important link between Queensland and the most significant political upheaval of the 20th century

Criterion B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of Queensland's cultural heritage.

(Criterion under review)

Criterion D

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

Its simple geometric forms, crowned with cupolas and punctuated with tall round-headed windows, and the interior arrangement of liturgical elements, including the iconostasis and royal gates, are an expression of the canon of Russian religious architecture that dates from Byzantium and that has been constructed here in response to local materials, time and place.

Criterion E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance.

With its distinctive towers, the church contributes significantly to the streetscape in this part of Vulture Street.

Criterion G

The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

St Nicholas Cathedral has had a close association with the maintenance of Russian cultural identity and tradition in both Brisbane and Queensland, and is important in illustrating the pluralism of 20th century Queensland/Brisbane society.

History

The Russian Orthodox Cathedral of St Nicholas was erected in 1935-36. It was the first purpose-built Russian Orthodox church in Australia, and one of the earlier parishes established in the post-1917 Russian Diaspora, yet its construction came comparatively late in the history of Russian emigration to Queensland.

A trickle of Russian emigration to Queensland had been sustained through the 19th century, with numbers increasing substantially from the 1880s. These immigrants were popular with the Queensland government, assimilating rapidly. Most moved into rural occupations, and those who remained in Brisbane gained employment principally in the railways, meatworks and factories. By 1911, Russians comprised the fourth largest ethnic group in Brisbane, congregating in South Brisbane-Woolloongabba.

Queensland's largest intake of Russian immigrants took place in the years 1911-1914. Many were radicals and revolutionaries seeking asylum from tsarist political repression in the final chaotic years of the Russian Empire; considerable numbers were Jews escaping state-inspired pogroms. They had fled Russia via Siberia and Northern China, most making their way to Harbin, in Manchuria, then taking passage from the port of Darien to Townsville or Brisbane, the first Australian ports of call.

Partly because they were scattered throughout the state, and partly because many pre-1920s immigrants associated Russian Orthodoxy with the tsarist system they were fleeing, no formal Russian Orthodox parish was established in Queensland during this period.

Queensland's encouragement of Russian immigration ceased in 1918. During the First World War (1914-18) Australia was allied with Imperial Russia, and although the Russian Empire collapsed in March 1917, Australia, like most Western nations, supported the provisional government, in an attempt to keep Russia engaged in the war. Following the Bolshevik coup of October 1917 and Russia's withdrawal from the war, however, capitalist nations reversed their Russian policies, regarding the new Soviet regime with hostility. From mid-1918 to 1922, a period of violent civil war in Russia, almost all Russian immigration to Queensland was prohibited.

With large numbers of White Russians (monarchists and anti-communists) fleeing the Soviet Union during this period and applying to emigrate to Australia, the Queensland government was forced to relax its immigration restrictions. Along with this influx of White Russian émigrés to Brisbane in the early 1920s, the city's first Russian Orthodox parish was established. Father Alexander Shabasheff, who had fled Russia via China, arrived in Brisbane in 1923, and through the assistance of Canon David Garland of the Church of England, obtained the use of St Thomas' Church of England, at the corner of Grey Street and Fish Lane, South Brisbane, where Russian Orthodox immigrants could worship. From this beginning

in 1923 a Russian Orthodox parish was created at South Brisbane in 1925, and in 1925-26 a cottage at 330 Vulture Street, Woolloongabba (site of the present cathedral) was purchased by the parish and converted into a church. In 1926, Father Shabasheff was appointed officially to the parish, by the Administration of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. In 1930, the parish was registered as St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church.

Most of the White Russian emigrés who arrived in Brisbane in the 1920s had moved immediately to rural areas in search of work. By the mid-1930s, despite the depression, many had made sufficient money to enable them to return to Brisbane, where they were less isolated, and where Russian culture was sustained by the local emigré community. The construction of a purpose-designed Russian Orthodox church became a priority for Brisbane's Russian community. With the appointment in 1933 of Father Valentine Antonieff to the parish of St Nicholas, fund raising for a new church commenced. It was to be erected on the site of the existing church, and would be a memorial to the last Russian tsar, Nicholas II.

Engineer and local parishioner Gregory Mechonoshin drew up a basic plan for the new church. This was approved by the parish council, who then commissioned architects Cavanagh & Cavanagh, of Brisbane and Perth, to prepare formal plans. Tenders were called in mid-1935, and the contract was let to builder B Robinson. Assistance in the technical construction of the cupola was given by another parishioner and engineer, Mr Golovznin. Construction commenced in 1935, and when finished (probably early in 1936), the building was consecrated with lesser rites by the local priest. On 4 October 1936, the church was consecrated with full rites by Greek Orthodox Archbishop Timothy of Brisbane, there being no Russian Orthodox bishop yet appointed in Australia.

The iconostasis (timber screen separating the sanctuary from the nave) and royal gates were constructed and decorated by local Russian immigrants. The movable icons and chandelier are of Russian or Chinese origin, and were donated by the widow of Father Tourchinsky. Interior fittings included a shrine to Tsar Nicholas II. The Maltese Cross on the front tower of the building was incorporated not for liturgical reasons, but because it formed part of the Queensland state emblem.

The front fence, extant by May 1939, was constructed a few years after the new church was erected, replacing an earlier picket fence. The work was financed by Alexander Bardin, who had a cattle property near Roma, as a memorial to his wife and parents. It was constructed by local parishioner Michael Zakrjevsky.

The Diocese of Australia was established in December 1946, with Bishop Theodore (Rafalsky) appointed as its head. At the time there were only two Russian Orthodox parishes in Australia, St Nicholas in Brisbane, established in 1925, and St Vladimir's in Sydney, established in 1938. As St Vladimir's Church was only a converted house, and St Nicholas Church had been purpose-built, Bishop Theodore was to be located in Brisbane. After immigration delays, the bishop finally arrived in Brisbane in late 1948, and consecrated St Nicholas Church at Woolloongabba as Australia's first Russian Orthodox Cathedral, on 5 November 1948. The seat of Russian Orthodoxy in Australia remained in Brisbane only a short time. In 1950, Bishop Theodore was appointed Archbishop of Australia and New Zealand, and relocated to Sydney, which was geographically more central to the diocese, and contained a larger post-Second

World War Russian immigrant population than Brisbane. Several vicar bishops occupied the Brisbane bishopric between 1950 and 1976, but the position has remained vacant since.

At some time after 1950, the building was extended at each side.

The Russian Orthodox Cathedral of St Nicholas remains integral to the survival of Russian culture and religion in Brisbane, despite the more recent establishment of two other Russian Orthodox parishes: St Seraphim's at Woolloongabba (1950s) and a church at Rocklea (1960s). Services are conducted in the liturgical language, Church Slavonic, although every two months an English-language service is held as well, and for many years the church has maintained an important library of Russian works. A large part of Russian cultural identity in Brisbane remains bound with the traditions of Russian Orthodoxy and St Nicholas Cathedral.

Description

St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral is situated with its main face to Vulture Street, in a setting of tall mature trees.

On the site which rises gently from Vulture Street, and flanked to each side and to the rear by high-set single storey timber buildings of domestic scale, the church building is the central, commanding building in the group. With its white finished walls resembling masonry, symmetrical facade and distinctive towers, the church stands quite tall and contributes significantly to the streetscape in this part of Vulture Street.

In plan, the church is a simple rectangle, with a square attached tower over the front entry and an attached rectangular aisle at each long side.

There are three symmetrically placed entry porches at the front Vulture Street facade, with roof forms and bargeboards shaped to the profile of a cupola and surmounted by ball and cross finials. A three-sided apse is centrally located at the rear.

The square tower houses a choir space directly above the main entry, and a belfry above that, accessed by a series of simple timber ladders.

Above the altar and centrally placed in the main roof is a smaller six-sided tower and cupola.

Constructed on a rendered masonry base, the building is timber framed with a roughcast rendered fibro exterior, save for the western aisle which has been built in rendered masonry subsequent to 1950. The main roof is sheeted in corrugated galvanised iron, and the cupolas and tapering roof to the square tower are made up of flat and curved pieces of galvanised sheeting.

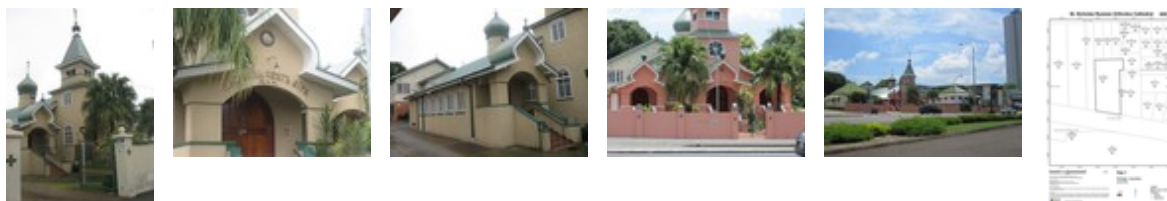
Rendered masonry steps provide access to each of the three front entry doors, which have two leaves in a round-headed opening.

A path runs from the central entry to a metal gate, centrally placed in a rendered masonry fence along the street frontage. This fence comprises pillars with incised crosses and ball finials, between which are masonry panels and steel tube and wire infill panels.

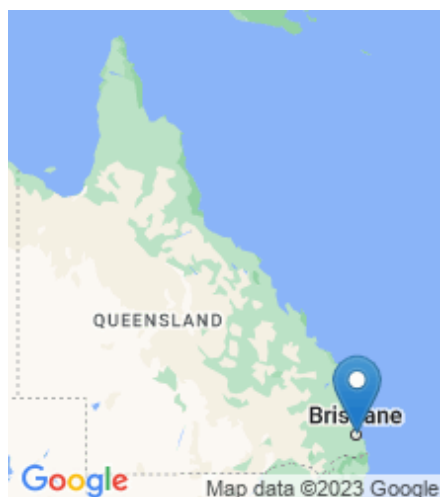
The interior has a wooden floor and a ceiling which follows the line of the rafters, lined with fibro and VJ boards.

In this building the simple geometric forms, crowned with cupolas and punctuated with tall round-headed windows, are an expression of the canon of Russian religious architecture that dates from Byzantium and that has been constructed here in response to local materials, time and place.

Image gallery



Location



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