

Grand Dame gets a facelift

New meets old at All Hallows' Girls School in Brisbane, **ET Staff**



refurbishment has revitalised the tired spaces and made them fit for 21st century learning practices while maintaining the integrity of the school's original identity.

Queensland recently reclassified Year 7 as a secondary year, which means that rather than one class having one teacher, students have several teachers for their subjects and move between classes. That demanded ample space, user friendliness, lockers and an eye on logistics from the Mary Place build.

Mary Place occupies an area that had been dedicated to a tennis court and a swimming pool, both largely unused. It offered a tired, unattractive view of what had become one of the school's major elevations. The extension gives All Hallows a smart new alternative point for pick up and drop off, and has beautified the facade facing Kemp Place.

The nuns were famously unable to throw anything away and that holds true for the school's buildings. Since the 1900s, layer has been built on layer – there's even a floor between floors that has to be accessed via a secret stairwell.

The school's buildings are much like an onion, revealing another layer of history as you peel each away. Project architect, Phillip Lukin, from Wilson Architects, says that they approached the design of the new building as being another layer of the school's history.

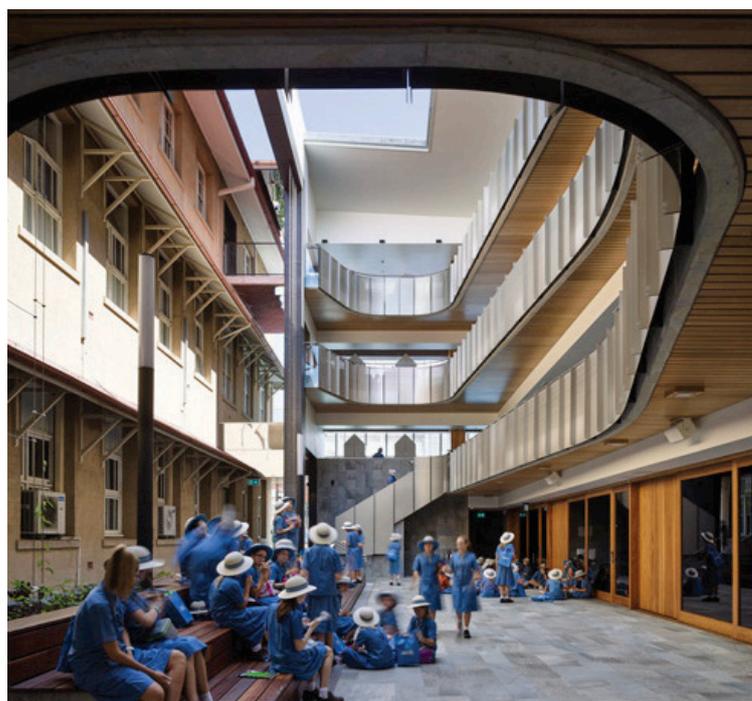
All Hallows is heritage listed, which meant a

If you want history you can't go past All Hallows' School in Brisbane. The venerable old building has occupied an elevated spot on Duncan's Hill just down the way from the city's CBD since the Sisters of Mercy opened the doors in 1863. It's one of the oldest school buildings in Queensland and a stunning example of Brisbane's colonial architecture; some of the best to be found anywhere.

The site has seen a lot, as well as being a school

and a convent, it also served as the command headquarters for Supreme Commander Allied Powers in the Pacific, Douglas MacArthur, during the Second World War.

Over time, the demands of a thriving girls' school has meant that new facilities have been added progressively. Early in 2015, the school opened its latest facility, Mary Place, a five-storey extension to the back of the campus to house Year 7 students. Wilson Architects' sensitive





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specialist heritage architect, Michael Kennedy, was engaged by the school to work in consultation with Mr Lukin, helping to get the project approved by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection Queensland. The process involved presentations of extensive 3D modelling prior to the project being green-lighted.

The result is a functional modern building that sits comfortably among the rest of the school's facades, featuring subtle references to All Hallows' and the local area's past. Mary Place is a substantial construction, housing 15 classrooms over five stories, but its size is downplayed by a two storey high garden screen. The nuns often used screens to provide security and privacy, and the screen, which faces Kemp Place to the school's rear, references that.

The colour of the screen is a mixture of aluminium, golds, browns and silvers which, when mixed together, complement the original buildings. Bright blue battens reference the colour of the school uniform and provide a bright counterpoint.

The large trellis structure on Kemp Place amplifies the existing landscape and stone wall at the school's periphery. The trellis is made from standard galvanised reinforcement mesh suspended and double layered creating a moiré effect. Lady Bowen Creeper planted at the base of the trellis will soon become a bright green wall resplendent with bright orange blossom.

Space between the new classrooms and the rear of the existing building now forms a covered courtyard area. Classrooms at ground level can be thrown open to host events and the space has already been put to use hosting a parent teacher night.

Architect Phillip Lukin has two daughters at the school and when designing the space he dedicated a lot of thought to how girls would use the area. Because of that, the courtyard has quickly become a comfortable airy place in which to sit and talk.

"Research has shown us that girls and boys use public spaces differently. Boys will tend to sit on rows looking outwards while girls will tend to form circular groups looking inwards.

"The courtyard space has become a meeting area both during and between classes. Teachers will often have the students organise themselves into groups and go into the courtyard to discuss what's been presented in class," he says.

Mary Place's classrooms have spectacular views to the north east down Fortitude Valley all the way out into Moreton Bay and word is that both students and teachers are enjoying their new bright and airy environs, a contrast to the classrooms in the original buildings.

The classrooms are designed to support a variety of social and active learning modes with the longer walls carrying huge whiteboards that the students use extensively in lessons.

Sustainable low-cost systems that will adapt to the school's changing needs over the long term were a core consideration of the project. A large CHW tank in the basement car park uses existing cooling infrastructure to store cold water during off peak power. It has been sized so that eventually the existing school buildings can be connected to the cooling system and exterior air conditioning systems removed.

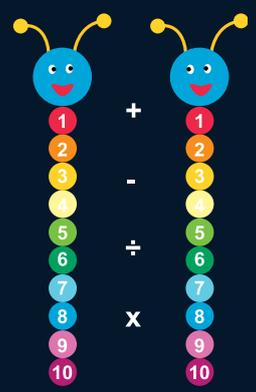
The total spend on the building was \$10.6 million, which calculates to a surprisingly low per metre cost, while using quality materials and providing a modern, attractive environment for the students and teachers for years to come. **ET**



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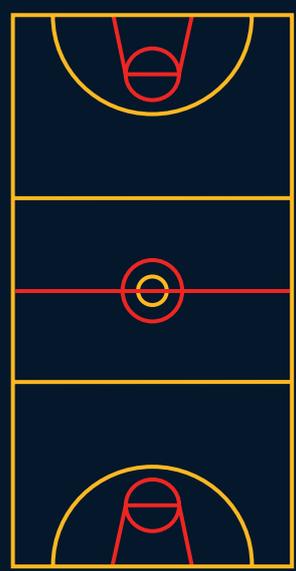
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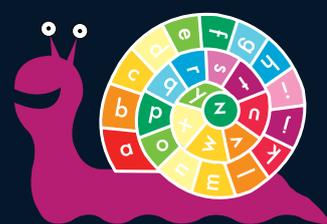
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