Student Residences
QUT Kelvin Grove Campus
Conservation Management Plan
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1 Introduction

THE FORMER STUDENT RESIDENCES, situated on the QUT Kelvin Grove Campus, were erected in 1977 as accommodation for country residents undertaking short-term Technical and Further Education (TAFE) courses in Brisbane. The complex was designed by John Dalton, a widely respected Queensland architect who had won numerous awards, particularly for his domestic commission. The design departed from the institutional approach to student accommodation of dormitories or cellular planning with individual rooms and corridors. Instead, it created a domestic and village-type environment with maisonettes and winding paths.

The complex was sold to the Queensland University of Technology in 1993 for $4 million. The site was entered on the Queensland Heritage Register in 2000. As part of the redevelopment of the QUT Kelvin Grove Campus and the development of the Kelvin Grove Urban Village, three clusters of maisonettes were demolished in 2002.

QUT intend to adapt the complex for offices and as a conference centre. This Conservation Management Plan was commissioned to guide the planning and design of the adaptation of the complex for new uses.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the *Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*, the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992* and the publication *The Conservation Plan: a guide to the preparation of conservation plans for places of European Cultural Significance.*

THE STUDY TEAM

This report was researched and prepared by Thom Blake with assistance from Robert Riddel and Geoff Cook. Drawings were undertaken by Luke Blake.

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2 Historical overview

The Halls of Residence at the Kelvin Grove campus were constructed in 1977 to provide accommodation for apprentices to undertake short term training in Brisbane.

TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN QUEENSLAND

Throughout the 19th century the only avenue for technical education was the local school of arts. Courses in trades were part of a wider educational program conducted by school of arts committees in the larger centres. The quality and variety of instruction depended on the competence and enthusiasm of committee members.

In the early 1900s the state government began to take a more active interest in technical colleges. A Board of Technical Education was established in 1902 and three years later, a Technical Education Branch was created within the Department of Public Instruction. The Technical Instruction Act of 1908 empowered the government to take over existing technical colleges. The first colleges to be taken over were in Brisbane and were amalgamated to form the Central Technical College. Other technical colleges that had been administered by local committees gradually came under the control of the Department of Public Instruction. The government also established new colleges in several centres, including Maryborough, Bundaberg, Rockhampton and Mackay. During the 1920s technical education was combined with secondary education in various centres including Charters Towers, Rockhampton and Toowoomba.

Technical colleges and high schools remained intertwined until the 1950s when the Queensland government realised the need to upgrade and expand secondary education in the state.

The expansion of secondary education resulted in the separation of technical colleges from high schools. Technical and Further Education became a distinct and separate branch of the Department of Education. The Education Act of 1964 highlighted a renewed emphasis on the importance of technical education with the establishment of Technical Education Advisory Council. A separate Department of Technical and Further Education was created in 19?? A building program saw new colleges established and existing facilities upgraded including Yeronga, Coorparoo, Kangaroo Point, Toowoomba and Bundaberg.

Further changes occurred with technical education during the 1970s. The Commonwealth government took on a greater responsibility for funding
technical education and improving the quality of training. One significant
changed in the approach to technical education was the introduction of ‘block’
training.

The system of block training was introduced to provide intensive instruction
for apprentices over a seven week period rather than evening classes
throughout the year. To facilitate this approach, the Queensland government
decided in May 1973 to develop accommodation facilities for students
undertaking block training in certain centres. The first facility was established
in Maryborough when the Arkana North Motel was purchased and converted
into student accommodation. The government agreed to build facilities at
Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville, Cairns and Brisbane. Only the Brisbane
facility was ultimately constructed.

KELVIN GROVE HALL OF RESIDENCE

Planning for the Brisbane facility began in 1973. A site was selected at Chelmer
but major flooding of the Brisbane River in January 1974 abruptly altered those
plans. An alternative site at Kelvin Grove was chosen. This site, adjacent to the
Kelvin Grove Teachers College was previously part of the Gona Barracks
reserve. In the early 1970s, the northern part of the reserve was excised for two
purposes. The lower portion of the excised area was designated for a proposed
a north-west freeway. The northern part of the excised area, bounded by
Kelvin Grove Road and Blamey Street, was designated a reserve for technical
education.

The Architectural branch within the Department of Works was responsible for
the design and construction of the new facility. Although the branch did
undertake the design of most government buildings, it adopted a practice in
the 1970s of occasionally engaging the services of a architectural practice. On this occasion, the branch engaged the services of John Dalton Architect and Associates.

The engagement of Dalton was primarily due to the efforts of a senior architect in the branch, Peter Prystupa. Ukrainan-born Prystupa had studied architecture in Vienna during the 1940s. He migrated to Queensland in 1949 and joined the Department of Works in 1953. As a senior architect, he recognised the value engaging the services of respected and innovative architects in private practice. Apart from John Dalton, Prystupa facilitated the engagement of Robin Gibson, James Birrell and Darvill Miller to undertake work for the Queensland government during the 1970s.

Dalton’s brief was to design a complex with accommodation for 120 students in the first stage and a second stage with a similar number of students. The project was funded in part by the Commonwealth government and a deadline of 30 June 1976 for commencement imposed a strict deadline on the design process. The complex was built by Hornick Construction for a cost of $1.3 m and it was completed by December 1978.
Dalton’s approach to the complex was to design buildings and spaces with a domestic scale as well as being responsive to the climate. Dalton described his intention with the complex.

Set in an older suburb on a steep site, these four units of four students per house, with tutor accommodation for four more - making an overall group of 20 teenagers of both sexes - resulted in a loose cluster of buildings.

Centrally the dining hall, recreation areas, and reception provide a visual focus for the complex, with the housing forming a relaxed and gentle configuration down the hillside. Subtle topographic emphasis is provided by the winding pathway to and from the accommodation.

Queensland’s domestic idiom was the reference for the character and detail of the buildings: large overhangs to protect against the sub tropical sun and the heavy rain in the wet season. The orientation to the north-east ensures that the prevailing summer breeze filters through the complex at all levels. Lattice screens on the ends of the verandah-shield areas from the strong sun, but permit air movement. Pitched corrugated metal roofs quickly removes rainwater and provide generous spaces to the interior. Extensive control sky glare, and deciduous creepers allow the penetration of warm winter sun and give dense green shading in summer. Creepers on the cool white painted brick walls provide a natural barrier to heat gain, and reduce surface temperature.

The broken profile of the roofs scattered over the steep slope, with the consequent changing perspective, visually excites the intermediate spaces, which are bathed in strong sunlight.¹

The complex took the first students in 1979. The planned second stage did not eventuate.

**SUBSEQUENT CHANGES TO THE COMPLEX**
Few changes occurred on the site in the first decade of operation. Throughout the 1980s, it provided accommodation for country students undertaking block training in Brisbane.

By the end of the 1980s, the complex had become redundant because of changes in the system of block training. In 1987 the Technical Further Education Branch within the Department of Education was transferred to the new formed Department of Employment, Vocational Education and Training. This department decided to dispose of the Kelvin Grove complex. After considerable negotiation the site was purchased by the Queensland University of Technology in 1993 for $3 million.

QUT undertook refurbishment of the maisonettes in 1996.

In 2002, the three clusters of maisonettes on the east and north-eastern section of the site were demolished. The remaining buildings are currently unoccupied except for one former unit which is used as offices.

**THE SITE TODAY**
Community services building (top); Tutors units (middle); Lower level units (below).
3 Significance of site

On first appearances, the student residences do not appear to be a candidate for inclusion on a heritage register. They are clearly relatively modern buildings, situated in the midst of a rapidly changing environment with the development of the Kelvin Grove Urban Village. Heritage values are not limited merely to ‘old’ buildings but can be structures built thirty or forty years ago.

Assessing Cultural Heritage Significance

What makes a place special or of cultural heritage significance? Places can possess a range of values and be important for different reasons to different individuals or groups. The *Queensland Heritage Act 1992* defines cultural heritage significance of a place or object as its aesthetic, architectural, historical, scientific, social or technological significance to the present generation or past or future generations.

The Act also contains criteria for more specifically evaluating the cultural heritage significance of a place. The criteria are:

(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 heritage;
(c) the place has 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.
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The entry in the Queensland Heritage Register states:

The former Hall of Residence at the QUT Campus at Kelvin Grove demonstrates the pattern of development of the provision of improved facilities for Technical and Further Education in Queensland. It also provides evidence of the development of a climatically responsive architecture.

The project is an uncommon and intact example of a public commission by the architect John Dalton. It exhibits the principal characteristics of his work in the 1970s and demonstrates the successful adaptation and continuity of the themes that he had developed in his body of residential work into the public realm - the marked differentiation between the contained and more open parts of buildings achieved by changes in materials and contrasts between solid core of white painted masonry and the brown stained timbers of verandahs and pergolas, and angled white walls and pitched roof forms projected at various angles in a distinctive response to the Queensland climate.

The former Hall of Residence at Kelvin Grove is an innovative example of student residential accommodation with a distinctive, relaxed and informal composition, and the complex is of recognised quality and interest which has won architectural awards, been widely published and exhibited internationally.

The complex is an important example of a public commission by the Queensland architect John Dalton who was a pre-eminent Australian architect of the 1960s and 1970s renowned for his residential work and innovation in climatic design.

DISCUSSION OF SIGNIFICANCE

John Dalton

John Dalton is regarded as one of Queensland’s leading architects in the post-war period.

The building won awards from the RAIA for meritorious architecture in 1979 and for civic design in 1982.

Example of student accommodation in 1970s

**
### Schedule – Elements of Significance

Elements are assessed as follows:

- **A** high significance
- **B** considerable significance
- **C** some significance
- **D** minimal or neutral
- **Int** intrusive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Spatial arrangements and siting of buildings</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounds and landscaping</td>
<td>Mature vegetation (original 1977 or earlier)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soft landscaping areas</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Original concrete paths</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recent concrete walls, paths and landscape fronting Blamey Street</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concrete block retaining wall adjacent to maisonette on southwest corner</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outdoor timber and concrete benches</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community building</td>
<td>Exterior walls - finishes</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timber pergola/ balustrading (original)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Later timber pergolas and verandah awnings</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning - open spaces /external openings</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exposed timber trusses</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Original internal joinery, including ?? Wall system</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Original floor finishes</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fire place - common room</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal stairs - joinery and finishes</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Light fittings -</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Element</td>
<td>Level</td>
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<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fluorescent strip lighting below timber trusses</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ceiling fans</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Later partitions on lower level</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Later finishes on lower level</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BBQ - lower level</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>External service kitchen lift</td>
<td>Int</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metal deck awing rear adjacent to service dock</td>
<td>Int</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kitchen fit-out</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maisonettes</td>
<td>External finishes</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Original internal finishes</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Original internal fittings and signage</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1992 built-in furniture</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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4 Conservation policies

The previous chapter outlined why the former residences are of cultural heritage significance. The complex served its original purpose effectively, albeit for a limited period. This chapter examines how the significance of the site can be conserved while adapting it for new uses.

The Burra Charter

The Burra Charter is the short name for a document entitled Charter for the conservation of places of cultural significance. This document was prepared by Australia ICOMOS (the Australia National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites) to guide how places of cultural significance should be cared for. The charter spells out the processes and principles of conservation, rather than rigid rules. It emphasises the importance of a logical and disciplined approached to conservation.

The basic principles in the Charter are

- the place itself is important
- understand the significance of the place
- understand the fabric
- significance should guide decisions
- do as much as necessary, as little as possible
- keep records
- do everything in a logical order

This conservation plan is part of the process and the above principles should form the basis for the ongoing management of the site.

Policy 1: Burra Charter

That the conservation and management of the QUT Student Residences should be undertaken in accordance with the principles of the Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Significance.
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SITE

As discussed in the previous chapter, the site is significant for various reasons. It is important not simply to recognise or acknowledge that the place is significant but that action should be taken to maintain its significance.

Policy 2: Maintaining the significance of the site
The significance of the QUT Student Residences should be maintained and enhanced in any adaptation or change of use by ensuring
- that the significant fabric and furnishings as contained in the schedule of significant elements (pages 10 – 11) are conserved in accordance with the Burra Charter
- that any development or changes to the site do not diminish the significance of the buildings and the site
- that the significant landscape elements and setting of the site are retained.

QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

The repair of significant fabric frequently demands specialist skills and experience. Work to fabric that is not appropriate could result in damage, and create greater problems in the long term. Equally important, the design of new elements requires special skills to ensure compatibility and that they are distinct from the earlier fabric.

Policy 3: Qualified personnel
Any documentation and repairs of historic fabric should be undertaken by persons with relevant experience and skills.

The design and documentation of any new work should either undertaken or reviewed a by suitably qualified heritage architect skilled in providing adaptive re–use solutions for sites of cultural heritage significance.

MATERIALS AND METHOD OF REPAIR

In the repair of the building, the use of correct materials is important not merely to retain the significance of the place, but is usually the most cost effective in the long term. The use of inappropriate materials and incorrect methods of repair can result in irreversible damage to fabric and additional expense.

Policy 4: Specification of materials and methods of repair
When materials are required for repair to significant fabric, they should be the same or similar to that used in the construction of buildings. Original specifications should be used where possible and expert advice should be sought as to methods of repair.

REMOVAL OF FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

The removal of significant fixtures and fittings may be necessary for several reasons. The situation may arise where the replacement or repair of a damaged item of value is not immediately possible. An option is the removal of the item and the insertion of a temporary replacement. The existing item should be stored and properly catalogued.
Policy 5: Removal of significant fixtures and fittings
When significant fixtures and fittings are removed, they should be stored in a secure location and catalogued.

Interpretation

An important part of the conservation process is to educate both users and visitors as to the significance of the place. The form of interpretation could be achieved by the publication of a booklet/pamphlet or interpretive panel/s examining the history of the building and its significance.

Policy 6: Interpretation
The history and significance of the building should be made readily accessible to the users and visitors.

Planning and spatial relationships

The siting and orientation of the buildings was an integral part of the design philosophy. They reflected the priority given to providing a domestic scale to the complex and addressing climatic considerations.

Policy 7: Planning and spatial relationships
Planning of new works on the site should respect the spatial relationships between the buildings.

Community building – main entrance

The main entrance to the community centre is on the western elevation. This entrance, is somewhat concealed and not accented by any particular architectural device. Access from Blamey Street is via pathways between residences and it intentionally designed to be ‘discovered’. This sense of discovery should be retained in any redevelopment of the site.

Policy 8: Community centre - main entrance
The main entrance to the community should be retained as the principal entry point to the building.

Community building – additions and alterations

The building’s external form remains substantially unaltered with the exception of a service lift and metal awning at the rear adjacent to the loading dock.

Policy 9: Additions to exterior – Community building
Additions or alterations should only be undertaken to the exterior if necessary to meet current BCA requirements.

Policy 10: New openings
New openings in the community building should only be considered if necessary for a lift to meet equitable access requirements or enhance natural lighting to spaces on the lower level.

Community building – internal spaces and planning

The original planning of the Community building is still clearly evident. Only limited changes have been made including the insertion of some partitions on
the ground floor and lower level.

**Policy 11: Planning**
The original planning should be retained and reinstated where changes have been made.

**Policy 12: Removal of later walls and partitions**
Later walls and partitions may be removed if required.

**Policy 13: New partitions**
New partitions could be inserted provided that they are as transparent as possible and distinguished from the original fabric.

**COMMUNITY BUILDING – DOORS AND DOOR FURNITURE**

Most of the doors, both external and internal, are original and intact.

**Policy 14: Doors and door furniture**
Keep original doors and door furniture. Repair if necessary. Replace only as a last resort.

**COMMUNITY BUILDING – PAINTING**

Except for recent painting of some rooms on the lower level, the original colour scheme remains.

**Policy 15: Painting**
Painting of the exterior and interior should continue to be based on the original colour scheme of white for the main surfaces and dark brown for trim, and external timber work.

- The original colour scheme should be re-introduced in the lower level spaces.
- Existing clear finishes on internal timber should be maintained.

**COMMUNITY BUILDING – LIGHTING**

Most of the original light fittings survive in the Community building. The main lighting comprised fluorescent strips below the timber trusses. Spotlights provided additional lighting.

**Policy 16: Light fittings**
Original light fittings should be retained where possible, even if not functional. Fluorescent strip lighting below the main trusses should only be removed if necessary for the insertion of new partitions.

- A co-ordinated approach to new lighting throughout the building should be developed using a family of fittings appropriate to the character of the spaces and their functions.

**COMMUNITY BUILDING – CABLING**

Most original cabling survives and is either concealed in wall cavities or if exposed, has been fixed to be unobtrusive as possible.
Policy 17: Electrical and communications cabling
The original approach to concealing electrical and communications cabling in wall cavities or fixing to be unobtrusive as possible should be continued with any new cabling.

COMMUNITY BUILDING – MECHANICAL SERVICES

The Community building was built without mechanical services and designed to use passive methods of temperature control. Air conditioning has been introduced to some parts of the building. Several wall units have been installed on the lower level.

Policy 18: Mechanical services
AC units should be located to be as unobtrusive as possible.

COMMUNITY BUILDING – EXTERNAL TIMBER

The external timber pergolas and balustrading is in fair to poor condition. Replacement or repairs will be necessary.

Policy 19: External timber
Repairs and replacement of external timber should be according to the original specification.

MAISONETTES – ALTERATIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

New uses proposed for the maisonettes include office accommodation. This change can be achieved with some intervention in the fabric, principally the removal of the walls between two bedrooms. The removal of these walls would not have a major impact on the significance of the buildings.

Policy 20: Maisonettes – internal alterations
Internal walls may be removed in the maisonettes provided that at least one unit is retained as an example of the original planning.

Policy 21: Maisonettes – additions
No additions to the exterior of the maisonettes should be considered.

Policy 22: Maisonettes – furniture and fittings
Original internal fittings and fixtures should be retained wherever possible. The 1992 built-in bedroom furniture could be removed.

MAISONETTES – COLOUR SCHEME

The original colour scheme of white for main surfaces and dark brown for trim and timber work for the Community centre was adopted for the Maisonettes

Policy 23: Maisonettes – colour scheme
Painting of the both the exterior and interior should continue to be based on the original colour scheme of white for the main surfaces and dark brown for trim, and external timber work.
MAISONETTES - EXTERNAL TIMBER

The external timber work on the maisonettes is in poor condition. Repairs and replacement will be required in the short term.

Policy 24: Maisonettes – external timber
Repairs and replacement of external timber should be according to the original specification.

SIGNAGE

The buildings on the site contain a range of signs that reflect a 1970s style. These signs are important and should be retained wherever possible. New signage will be required and it is important that careful consideration is given to both the style and location.

Policy 25: Existing signage
Existing original signs should be retained wherever possible.

Policy 26: New signage
New signage should be discrete and in a contemporary style.

GROUNDS AND LANDSCAPING

The landscaping of the site was an important part of the planning and design. Existing eucalypts were retained on the site where possible when the complex was constructed. The intention was to create a relaxed informal environment. Deciduous creepers were planted to provide shade in summer and allow penetration of sunlight in winter.

Policy 27: Landscape management plan
A landscape management plan should be commissioned to guide both maintenance, new plantings, and replacement plantings.

Policy 28: Existing mature vegetation
Existing mature trees should be retained. Pruning of mature trees should only be considered to safeguard possible damage to buildings.

The hard landscaping elements are an important part of the significance of the site. They included the concrete paths and concrete blocks walls.

Policy 29: Paths
The original paths and pathways should be retained. Alterations or changes to existing paths should only be considered to meet BCA requirements.

On-site carparking is currently limited to three parking bays. It may be necessary to develop additional spaces and the most suitable location is on the southern end of the site.

Policy 30: Car parking
Additional car-parking should be confined to the southern end of the site.