



Case Study 03

St Bernard's Older Persons Housing

Moonee Ponds VIC

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St Bernard's Christian Brothers College was located deep in the heart of Everage territory overlooking the delightful Queens Park. The site became vacant some years back when the school followed the population movement to the outer suburbs.



After a number of false starts the derelict site was purchased by Victoria's Department of Human Services for older persons accommodation. Peter Crone of Crone Ross Architects saw the potential of the unique location: "It's a corner site with the opportunity for an outlook over the park." After examining "a huge number of options" it was finally decided to raze the school buildings.

The two wings of the new building describe a vee, straddling the block diagonally and pointing to the park. Each of the outer units has a balcony offering uninterrupted park views. The inner units also have balconies overlooking a delightful, landscaped, north-facing courtyard.

The structure is a blend of loadbearing masonry and concrete framing. There are sixty four single-bedroom units over three levels, with largely repetitive floor plans. Unusually for public housing, 10 of the units are currently being offered for private sale.

Being located in a residential area, there were some design sensitivities. "Because there were to be so many units on the site the local council wanted the appearance of the building to be broken up a bit," explains Peter Crone. "That's why we introduced two tones of brick, to create different scales: the dark brick is the base and the lighter brick sits over the top, reducing the visual impact. The rhythm of the balconies breaks it down further, almost like terraces. That satisfied the council."

All external units have a park view thanks to clever orientation and balcony placement. The balconies and contrasting panels modulate the facade and reduce the building's impact to the street.



The inner units look out over the landscaped, north-facing courtyard. The structure is predominantly loadbearing with clay bricks in the outer leaf.



(Left) The project's design architect Peter Crone contrasted blue bricks in the base with red bricks in recesses. "It's just a matter of creating different layers around the building," he says.



(Far left) The darker base brickwork contrasts with panels of red brickwork in recesses and at upper levels. The 64 single bedroom, older persons units have a largely repetitive floor plan.



The blue semi-glazed bricks highlight and contrast with the red bricks. "In recessed areas under balconies, we've gone for the red, held that back and let the dark brick come out. Higher up, the red then comes out to the front as well," says Peter Crone. "It's just a matter of creating different layers around the building."

Jenifer Nicholls, project manager for the Office of Housing in the Department of Human Services, describes the project as a "welcome addition to the area; it does credit to the site." St Bernard's Older Persons Housing Development was completed in January 1999 and officially opened in late March.

CLIENT:	Department of Human Services
ARCHITECT:	Crone Ross Architects
BUILDER:	LU Simon Builders
BRICKLAYER:	Bradreer (Australia)
PROJECT COST:	\$5.8 million
PHOTOGRAPHY:	Roger du Buisson & Mike Scully