



## Case Study 13

### St Mary & St Merkorious Coptic Orthodox Church

Rhodes NSW

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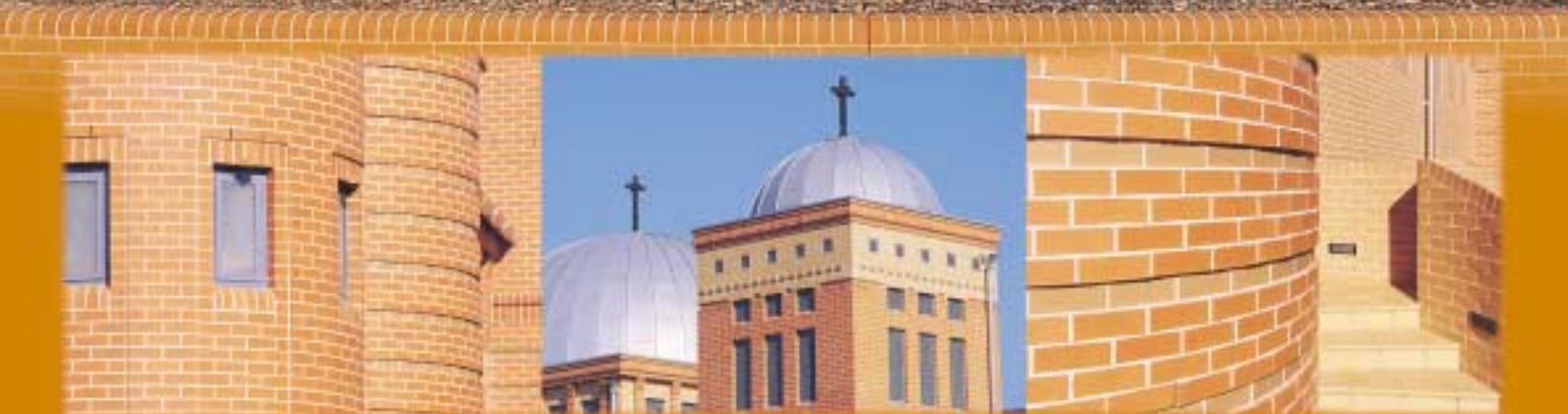
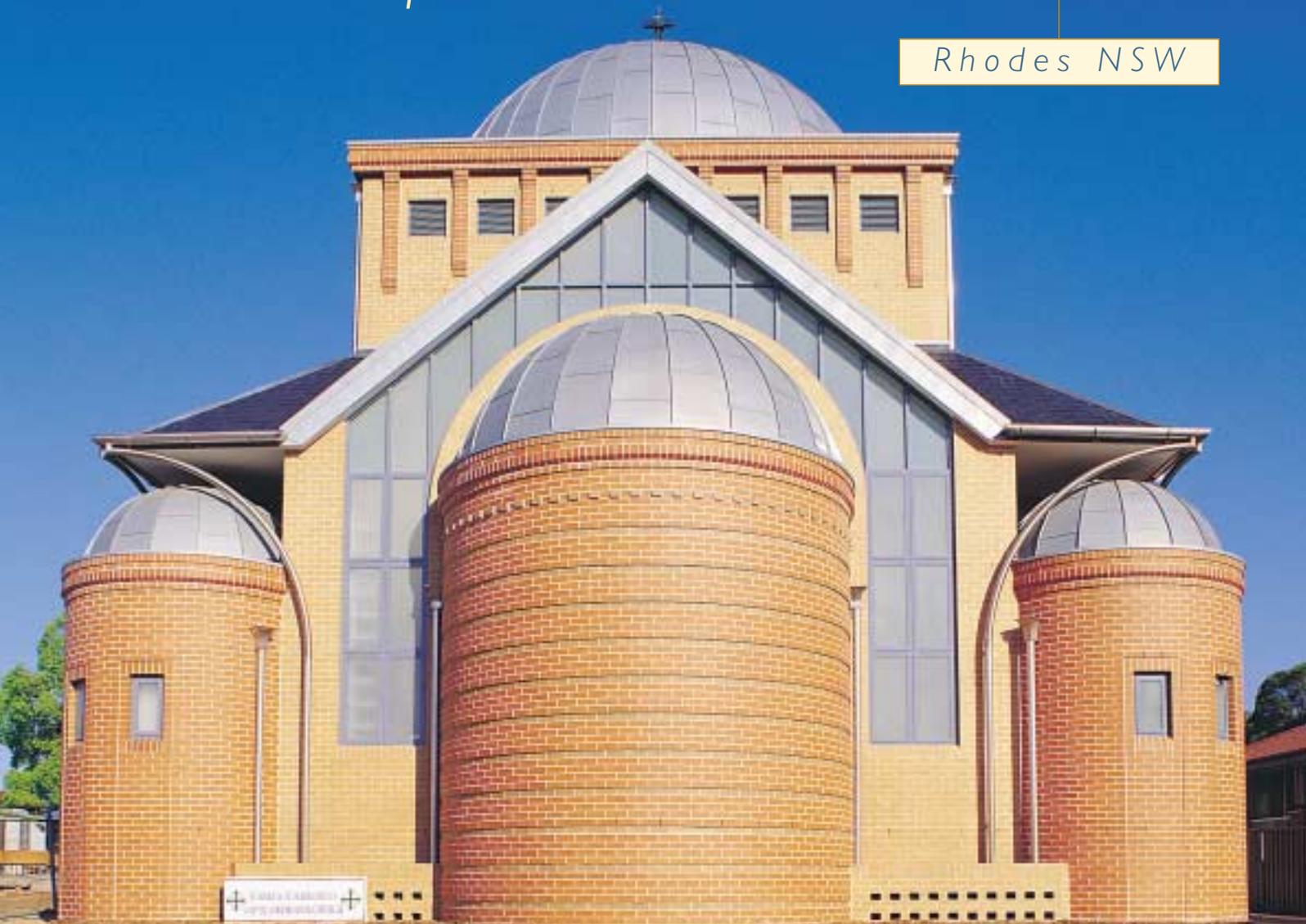
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Reveals are neatly detailed with two-course headers and sills, and set into recessed panels. The project used almost 20,000 shaped bricks.

The pre-weathered zinc in the domes sits well with the brickwork. "I think its colour is very beautiful with bricks," says the architect.

Inset courses of beige/grey bricks break down the mass of this semi-circular brickwork form.

(Left) The street elevation is dominated by a massive semi-circular brickwork form behind which is the altar. This follows the Coptic tradition of having the altar facing east.

<b>Client:</b>	Coptic Orthodox Church
<b>Architect:</b>	Tiba Architecture Group
<b>Builder:</b>	Coleman & Fairburn
<b>Bricklayer:</b>	Daljon (FNQ)
<b>Building cost:</b>	₹2.3 million
<b>Photographer:</b>	Jackie Dean, Dean Photographics

*This award-winning church may appear to be orthodox in design as well as doctrine, but in reality it is a skilful blend of Middle Eastern and contemporary architecture.*

Some elements – especially the domed roof – follow Coptic tradition but architect Ihab Sidrak contends these are complemented by contemporary details, materials and construction methods. “We have taken the general spirit and tried to give it a more contemporary look. It wasn’t easy but even in Egypt they build the traditional forms and elements but treat it in a contemporary way.”

The building has worship areas on two levels – 110 can be seated in the lower ground, 350 at ground level – and a mezzanine level housing choir stalls and two parents’ rooms. The reinforced concrete frame supports concrete floor slabs with non-loadbearing infill cavity brickwork. Although render is favoured in Coptic architecture, face clay bricks were chosen for the outer leaf for their low maintenance qualities. The inner leaf of clay bricks is rendered.

Following Coptic tradition, the altar is to the east, placing the entrance to the west, the rear of the site. The street elevation is dominated by three semi-circular brickwork forms which house the main altar and two side altars, surmounted by domes clad in pre-weathered zinc.

The main brickwork colours are terracotta and cream, accented by a beige/grey brick mainly in panels and banding. “I was looking for

bricks that were very smooth and neat, very even colour and even shape,” Sidrak considers. “The colours we selected were the most earthy that matched the stainless steel [downpipes and guttering] and the zinc roofing.”

The level of brickwork detail is outstanding with inset bands and a dentil course in the main semi-circular form, dentil courses in the towers, extensive corbelling (including corbelled arches), and inset panels around reveals. The project required 220,000 bricks including 20,000 shaped bricks.

This remarkable building was the overall winner in the Commercial & Public Buildings category of the 2000 Awards for Excellence in Bricks and Blocks of the Masonry Contractors Association of NSW.

The next stage is the construction of an ancillary services building accommodating a car park, classrooms, canteen, hall, offices, bookshop, library, commercial kitchen, visual aids room and computer room.

(Left) The entrance shows many of the fine brickwork details that distinguish the building. The designers chose face brickwork for its low maintenance qualities.

(Below) The two main brick colours – terracotta and cream – are accented by the sparing use of beige/grey in bands and panels.

