



Case Study 22

Corpus Christi Seminary

Carlton VIC

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Corpus Christi Seminary

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The name Corpus Christi has long been associated with the training of Catholic priests in Melbourne. Previous seminaries bearing this name have been located at the magnificent Werribee Park Mansion and in Glen Waverley at what is now the Police Academy (known irreverently as “Coppers Christi”).

The newest seminary is in inner-city Carlton on a site that has been church property since 1854. The superbly renovated original bluestone chapel has become the seminary’s iconic centrepiece.

Non-heritage parish buildings were demolished to make way for four new buildings to accommodate students during their six years of training at the Catholic Theological College in East Melbourne.



“The brief was driven by the then archbishop who wanted a building that had the appearance of being solid and durable,” explains architect Kevin Fish who directed the project with Paul Viney.

The largest building is an accommodation block fronting Drummond Street, rising from two to three storeys and falling back to two. This facade in particular reflects the colour, rhythm and diversity of its neighbours. “If you stand back and look at the other buildings, they are all different,” Fish observes. “It picks up on these without trying to mimic them.”

“Brick was chosen because we know it’s a reliable product, we

Despite the brief calling for a solid appearance, this is not a monumental design. “The scale is friendly enough,” Fish says modestly. Local sensitivities influenced the “well mannered” design that he defines as “something that’s contextual while being representative of its era.”

In the quest for solidity and long-term performance, quality materials such as stainless steel and clay bricks were selected. “Brick was chosen because we know it’s a reliable product, we know that it’s durable, and we know the way it performs.”

The mass enhances the overall thermal performance of the insulated cavity walls. Post-tensioned floor planks at upper levels allow clear spans throughout.

It’s a colourful site with bands of red and terracotta (orange) bricks contrasting with panels of blue/black, semi-glazed bricks, setting off the stainless steel fittings against a backdrop of greenery.

Corpus Christi won the New Buildings Under \$5 Million category in the MBAV Excellence in Construction Awards 2001 and a commendation in the MBA national awards later that year.



Facing page, from top:

Bands of red and terracotta (orange) brickwork contrast with stainless steel railings and rainwater goods.

The extensive brick paving at the Drummond Street entrance is broken up with contrasting diamonds and bands.

This page, from left:

The seminary presents a durable, solid and decidedly masculine appearance. Three stone plaques marking significant previous site events are set into the low brick perimeter fences capped with double bullnose bricks.

The restored 1855 chapel is the spiritual and architectural centrepiece of the seminary.

The colourful Drummond Street facade reflects the rhythm of the neighbouring historic terrace houses.



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Corpus Christi Seminary, Carlton VIC

Client:
Roman Catholic Trusts Corporation

Architect:
Fish Payne Pattenden Viney

Construction:
LU Simon Builders

Bricklayer:
Bradreer (Aust)

Construction cost:
\$4.8 million

Photographer:
Peter Hyatt