Tasmanian Heritage Register Datasheet

Tasmanian Heritage Council

134 Macquarie Street (GPO Box 618)
Hobart Tasmania 7001
Phone: 1300 850 332 (local call cost)
Email: enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au
Web: www.heritage.tas.gov.au

Name: **St Paul's Chapel at Launceston General Hospital**

THR ID Number: **12145**

Status: Permanently Registered

Municipality: Launceston City Council

Tier: State

Boundary: CPR11704

Location Addresses
280 CHARLES ST, LAUNCESTON 7250 TAS

Title References
164790/1

Property Id
3224093

Looking towards the windows with the servers' chairs, lectern and altar table behind the pews.
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Organ pipes and flanking doors, in the centre of the rear wall.
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The chapel's ceiling and rear wall of celery-top pine.
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Two of Merv Gray's smaller candlesticks.
© NRE Tas 2025

Font and integral book-rest, with organ console visible behind.
© NRE Tas 2025

Bowl by Stephen Walker.
© NRE Tas 2025

One of the servers' chairs (at left), with sedilia bench at right.
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Merv Gray's 'great Paschal candlestick', with altar table and sedilia bench behind.
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Hymn-board by Merv Gray.
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Sanctuary lamp and aumbry door, by silversmith Clare Westfield.

Credence table by Kevin Perkins.
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On the courtyard's south-east side: the crucifix of Huon pine by Peter Taylor and Merv Grey.
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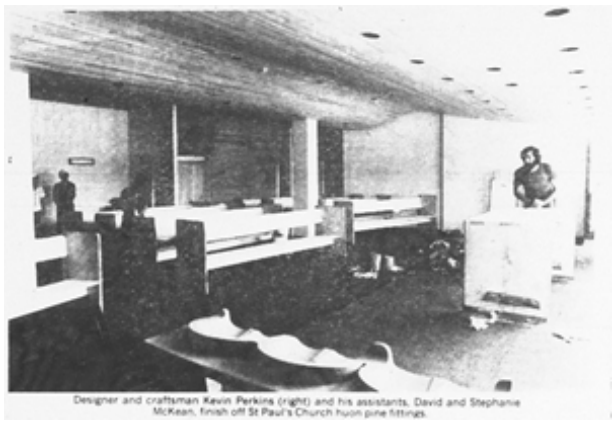
Courtyard's southern corner: the Crataegus phaenopyrum ('Washington thorn') planted in 1980.
© NRE Tas 2025

undated: the old Sunday school (left) and St Paul's church (right) buildings.
Tasmanian Archives NS6904/1/35

undated: old St Paul's Sunday school (left) and church (right) buildings.
Tasmanian Archives LPIC33/4/34



Designer and craftsman Kevin Perkins (right) and his assistants, David and Stephanie McKean, finish off St Paul's Church huon pine fittings.

In late 1980, when the pipe organ and the crucifix were yet to be installed.

Statement of Significance: (non-statutory summary)

St Paul's Chapel at the Launceston General Hospital is an important example of a place that provides spiritual and emotional care for hospital patients and their families, together with carers and staff. It instigated new processes in the commissioning of designed objects and artwork in Tasmanian public buildings. The chapel is particularly fine and highly intact, providing convincing evidence of innovative and creative achievement. It is one of few comparable post-WWII churches or chapels across Tasmania in which the finishes, furniture, art and sculpture combine to present a unified and coherent whole. Its fine collection of functional yet creatively-challenging elements is both unusual and distinctive in the context of Tasmanian places of worship. The chapel's interior remains mostly unchanged since completed, and it clearly demonstrates the collaborative nature of its design by the art and craft practitioners who created it. A number of State-wide and broader publications confirm that there has been critical acclaim of the chapel, acknowledging its merit as a notable Tasmanian example within art and design disciplines. Key contributions to the establishment of the chapel were undertaken by individuals who have each in their own right been of importance in Tasmania's history. Prominent among those were the architect Robert Morris-Nunn, designer-maker Kevin Perkins, and sculptor Peter Taylor.

Why is it significant?:

The Heritage Council may enter a place in the Heritage Register if it meets one or more of the following criteria from the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995:

a) The place is important to the course or pattern of Tasmania's history.

The design and construction of St Paul's Chapel at the Launceston General Hospital ('LGH') instigated new processes in the commissioning of designed objects and artwork in an architectural context for Tasmania. The

collaborative nature of the chapel's designing-and-making was watched closely at the time by the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board ('TAAB'). In 1979, the same year that work on the chapel began, the Art for Public Buildings Scheme ('APBS') was established in Tasmania – and the process developed for the chapel by architect Robert Morris-Nunn and the artist-makers Kevin Perkins, Merv Grey, Peter Taylor and others 'provided something of a model for the codifying of the architect-artist relationship by the APBS' (Malor 2013, p. 263). The chapel is also an important example of a place that demonstrates the function of providing spiritual and emotional care for hospital patients and their families, together with carers and staff.

b) The place possesses uncommon or rare aspects of Tasmania's history.

St Paul's Chapel is a place that is highly intact, and is one of few comparable post-WWII churches or chapels across Tasmania in which the finishes, furniture, art and sculpture together present a unified and coherent whole. Its fine collection of functional yet creatively-challenging elements is both unusual and distinctive in the context of Tasmanian places of worship.

c) The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Tasmania's history.

No data recorded.

d) The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of place in Tasmania's history.

As a consequence of its installation within what – at the time of its commissioning – was the concrete shell of the Launceston General Hospital building, St Paul's Chapel has no exterior envelope or external built form. Nevertheless, St Paul's Chapel is a particularly fine and intact example of a chapel within an institution in the Tasmanian State-wide context, and it has a high degree of distinctiveness in that class of place. The chapel's interior remains mostly unchanged since created, and it clearly demonstrates the collaborative nature of its design by the art and craft practitioners who designed and built it.

e) The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement.

St Paul's Chapel provides convincing evidence of innovative and creative achievement – the nature of which is clearly beyond the ordinary – at a State-level threshold. A number of State-wide and broader publications confirm that there has been critical acclaim of the chapel, acknowledging its merit as a notable Tasmanian example within art and design disciplines. The chapel's design and furnishings are highly distinctive, and they are of particular interest in the context of a State-wide comparison of other similar places.

f) The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social or spiritual reasons.

No data recorded.

g) The place has a special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Tasmania's history.

Key contributions to the establishment of the chapel were undertaken by a small group of individuals who have each in their own right also made many important contributions to the history of Tasmania. Three of those were the architect Robert Morris-Nunn, furniture designer-maker Kevin Perkins, and sculptor Peter Taylor. Robert Morris-Nunn AM (1949–) moved from Sydney to Launceston in the late 1970s to work on the Launceston General Hospital project. Based in Tasmania since that time – and conducting his own private practice since 1984 – his institutional, commercial and residential projects have attracted attention both for their originality and erudition, and for his cooperation with artists, writers and (especially) the Tasmanian engineer Jim Gandy. Many of Morris-Nunn's major works have received state and national architecture awards (McNeill 2012, p. 471). He reports that the St Paul's Chapel project was his first constructed architectural project following his graduation from the University of Sydney some years beforehand (Morris-Nunn 2025, p. 1). Kevin Perkins AM (1945–) 'grew up on the fringes of Devonport' and trained in joinery, industrial arts and sculpture. In the mid-1980s Perkins worked with the highly-regarded Italian-Australian architect Aldo Giurgola on the fitout of the Prime Minister's suite within Australia's Parliament House in Canberra, and later with Giurgola again from 2001 until 2003 producing the 110 pews and various pieces of ceremonial furniture for the St Patrick's Cathedral complex in Parramatta, NSW (Berg 2013, pp. 210–219; Parkes 2004, pp. 18, 64; K Perkins 2026, pers. comm., 25 Feb). Pieces of Kevin Perkins' work are held by the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, Australian National Gallery in Canberra, Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery in Launceston, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in Hobart, and private collections in both the USA and Australia. He continues to design and make furniture at his studio in the Huon Valley, having now retired from a lecturing role at Hobart's School of Art within its Centre for Furniture Design (see the DT website). Peter Taylor (1927–2019), who lived and worked in the Huon Valley region of Tasmania from 1961, was an artist renowned for his distinctive sculptures and 'assemblages' made from Huon pine. Highly regarded both in Australia and abroad, he combined art, craft and design in an broad range of eclectic three-dimensional works during the 1970s, 80s and 90s. He also worked with Aldo Giurgola at Parliament House in Canberra, designing and fabricating the Coat of Arms for the Senate Chamber (see AGNSW website; Armstrong & Taylor 2022, pp. 60–63, 105–106; and Berg 2013, pp. 170–173).

h) The place is important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

No data recorded.

Heritage approval is required for work that will result in changes to the nature or appearance of the fabric of a Heritage place, both internal and external.
Please refer to the Heritage Council's Works Guidelines (www.heritage.tas.gov.au) for information about the level of approval required and appropriate outcomes.
Heritage Advisors are also available to answer questions and provide guidance on enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au or Tel 1300850332

This data sheet is intended to provide sufficient information and justification for listing the place on the Heritage Register. Under the legislation, only one of the criteria needs to be met. The data sheet is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of the heritage values of the place, there may be other heritage values of interest to the Heritage Council not currently acknowledged.

Setting:

The Launceston General Hospital (LGH) is located on the south-west edge of Launceston's city centre. This multi-storey building complex occupies a large portion of the block now bounded by Frankland, Charles, Howick and Wellington streets. St Paul's Chapel is situated on the south-east perimeter of the main hospital building. This side of the hospital flanks the open park known as Ockerby Gardens (THR#7941), which up until the mid-1940s was the city's Charles Street General Cemetery.

The chapel, on Level 3 – the hospital's entrance level – is adjacent to the complex's main 'corridor spine'.

Description:

St Paul's Chapel comprises a large nave space and small ancillary rooms within the LGH building. Extensive floor-to-ceiling windows of clear glass in the chapel's south-east wall visually link its interior with a garden courtyard to the immediate south-east.

The ceiling of the chapel is of celery-top pine boards, set out in an undulating wave form that spans the chapel's full width. The ceiling is hung on acoustic pads to prevent the transfer of sound from the chapel to spaces on the storey above (Morris-Nunn 2025, p. 3).

Recessed within the central portion of the chapel's 'rear' wall (on the side opposite the courtyard-facing windows) is a pipe organ. This incorporates purpose-fabricated timber pipes of square cross-section, fitted alongside metal circular pipes retrieved from the organ installed in 1867 within Launceston's former St Paul's church building. The organ's separate console is situated in the chapel's south-west corner.

Flanking both sides of the organ pipes, doors faced with vertical timber boards lead to:
- on one side, a plenum space behind the pipes and a small storage area; and
- on the other, a work sacristy.

The chapel interior incorporates other features that assist with acoustically isolating it from adjacent spaces within the hospital. Prominent among these are:
- a set of three large floor-to-ceiling sliding wall-panels, which when fully deployed enclose an approximately 3½ metre-wide portion of the chapel along its north-eastern side; and
- a small narthex space with doors on one side that open to the chapel's north-eastern portion, and on the opposite side a pair of heavy steel acoustic doors on large pintle-hinges. These steel doors provide access to a foyer space that is slightly larger than the narthex, which then in turn opens to the hospital complex's main circulation spine.

The Huon pine furniture within the chapel was designed and made by the Tasmanian master artisan **Kevin Perkins.** The individually-carved items were crafted to retain the profile of the wavy smooth-bark wane edges of the timber slabs. Brass stripping, screw-fixed to the bases of these pieces of furniture by Perkins at the time of their fabrication, protects the soft timber from impact damage by vacuum-cleaners or shoes.

These Huon pine items include:
- eighteen bench pews of varying lengths, each with leather seat-cushions;
- a font, made from a large solid log, which incorporates a book-rest on its top surface;
- an altar table, which incorporates bracing cross-pieces of 'simple branch-like tracery' (Malor 2013, p. 266);
- a similarly-detailed lectern;
- three high-backed servers' chairs;
- a *sedilia* (seat for officiating clergy), in the form of a long bench that incorporates three side-by-side tractor-seat-shaped inclusions; and
- a *credence table* (small side-table for the implements that are used in the Eucharistic celebration), incorporating a high frame within which five fish-shapes are supported by vertical wires.

Carvings made by Perkins into the surfaces of these furnishings include:
- Chi-Rho symbols on the uprights of the altar table and lectern; and
- depictions of animals which feature in the bible, incised in many of the pew-ends 'at child's eye height' (McKee 1999, p. 45; and Ratcliff 1981 in Malor 2013, p. 265).

Other significant internal timber elements are those made by made by Tasmanian wood-turner and artisan **Merv Gray,** including:
- the hymn-board of birds-eye Huon Pine,
- a small book-rest; and
- several timber candlesticks, including the 'great Paschal candlestick'.

Metalwork made by silversmith **Clare Westfield** includes:
- the silver and enamel door of the *aumbry* (a cupboard or secure receptacle in the side wall of a sanctuary or sacristy – traditionally used to keep sacred vessels, books, reliquaries, and oils for anointing), and
- the brass sanctuary lamp.

There is also a bronze bowl handcrafted by **Stephen Walker**, which fits into a recess in the top of the font.

Within the courtyard is a 2.5 metre-tall sculptured crucifix of Huon pine. This comprises a rugged cross built by **Merv Gray**, supporting **Peter Taylor's** sculpted Christ figure – with its 'anguished face and tense musculature' – which is 'distinct from yet merging with' the cross (Frankham 2005, p. 18; Tanner 1982, p. 7).

In the southern corner of the courtyard – to the right of the crucifix when viewed from the chapel interior – is a *Crataegus phaenopyrum* (Washington thorn) tree.

FEATURES OF CONTRIBUTORY HISTORIC CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE
St Paul's Chapel contains features that are of **contributory** cultural heritage significance in their own right. Changes to these features may potentially impact the significance of this place.

Features of contributory significance at the chapel include:

- the contents of two timber-framed glass cabinets within the chapel's narthex. These comprise 'holy vessels… along with relics and photos of early days at St Paul's' (Malor 2013, p. 264). The cabinets themselves are of no cultural heritage significance;

- the carpeting throughout the nave and narthex spaces, the rich colour of which complements the chapel's timber furnishings and lining boards;

- the pair of vertical timber-board-clad access gates in the courtyard's north-eastern wall; and

- a framed watercolour drawing on the chapel's north-east wall, depicting the Launceston-based architect H. S. East's preliminary design in 1927 of a brick and stone church, proposed by the parishioners of St Paul's at that time to replace their weatherboard-clad church building.

History:

St Paul's Chapel is located within the contiguous region formerly occupied by Tasmanian Aboriginal people of what in the present day is known as the 'North Midlands nation' (Ryan 2012, pp. 29–31).

The 19th-century St Paul's church, on Launceston's former Cleveland Street
In the 1850s the increasing population of Launceston led to the creation of the Anglican parish of St Paul's, taking in the portion of the town south of Balfour Street. Reporting on this new parish, the November 1854 issue of the

Tasmanian Church Chronicle noted that it comprised

> a thickly-populated part of Launceston, principally inhabited by the working classes, who have now the means of religious worship brought home to their doors with the benefits of a resident clergyman (Grant 2019a).

Services were initially conducted in 'the Frankland-street school', a building reputedly constructed in 1847 and which *The Examiner* (26 Oct 1904, p. 7) later described as 'a strange looking old weatherboard structure of the bush hut style of architecture'. The parish's new 'Gothic style' church, also weatherboard-clad, was opened for worship on Sunday the 10th of May 1861 (*LE* 21 May 1861, p. 2). In 1863, a stone and brick Sunday school building was constructed alongside the church (*Examiner* 26 Oct 1904, p. 7).

In 1867 a 'small but handsome and full-toned organ' – made by Messrs Bevington and Sons, of Greek-street, Soho, London – was installed within the church (*LE* 26 Oct 1867, p. 4). In 1882, a three-light stained-glass chancel window – paid for by a member of the congregation, and crafted by the Ferguson & Urie company of North Melbourne – was installed, with two additional single-light windows arriving later that year. Another fine stained-glass window – obtained this time from the studio of Messrs E R Suffling & Co of Edgware, London – was installed in 1886 (*LE* 11 Apr 1882, p. 3; and 5 July 1886, p. 2; and Ferguson & Urie 2015).

Late 1920s: proposal to construct a new church building for St Paul's

In 1927 the *Daily Telegraph* (13 April, p. 4; and 27 April, p. 3) reported on a proposal by the parishioners of St Paul's to replace their timber church building with a much larger one constructed of brick and stone. Working on a pro bono basis, Launceston architect Hubert Springford ('H.S.') East gave his 'valuable and voluntary assistance' in preparing preliminary designs, and a black-and-white photograph of his coloured drawing of the proposed new building was also published in *Building* (1927, p. 45) magazine. H. S. East, an experienced and skilful architect, was also a gifted watercolourist and designer in various media (Neale 2012, p. 222).

However, the proposed replacement church building was never constructed. Duncan Grant (2019b), while noting that the reason for this is not yet known, also points out that the cost of the project to a parish which was not a wealthy one in combination with the impacts of the Great Depression shortly afterwards were likely to have prevented the church from proceeding with its plans. In 2025, H. S. East's original 'preliminary design' watercolour drawing was framed and mounted on the north-east wall of the present-day St Paul's Chapel.

1970s: planning for the new Launceston General Hospital and a new chapel

In 1968, Tasmania's Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works examined a proposal to build additional accommodation at the Launceston General Hospital, which at that time was situated on the eastern side of Charles Street, between Frankland and Howick Streets. The Committee concluded that while it was essential to carry out 'necessary improvements' as quickly as finance would permit, a new hospital complex on an adjoining site would be ideal (Valentine 2013, p. 15).

Following acquisition of land on the western side of Charles Street, planning began for the design and construction of a new multi-storey hospital. Three roads were closed to permit the development, with two streets of little houses and other properties – and most of the hill they stood on – scheduled to be removed. Among these properties was the parish church of St Paul's. Discussions in the local press regarding the fate of St Paul's began as early as 1971. Faced with the demolition of their church, or its removal to another site, parishioners asked if it would be possible for St Paul's to stay where it was and become the hospital's chapel (Malor 2013, p. 263; Ratcliff 2013, p. 12).

In 1975 the church, its rectory and hall were acquired in a sale agreement between the Trustees of the Diocese of Tasmania and the then Minister for Health, the Hon. Michael Barnard (Malor 2013, p. 263). This meant that in the subsequent planning and construction of a new chapel within the envelope of the evolving LGH complex, all conversation and decisions took place between representatives of the Diocese and those of the Minister, leaving the contracting government department to one side while still needing to collaborate in the process. The dynamics of this arrangement – together with those which regulated day-to-day access to the Chapel – were played out at great length, both during the construction phase and in the following decades.

The contract of sale signed by the Minister for Health noted that the new hospital's chapel was to be named 'St Paul's Chapel' – indicating continuity with its parish community – and that it should have a separate entrance direct to the street to avoid confusion for the members of the congregation. The contract of sale also stated that the new chapel 'shall be interdenominational', 'may be used for church services', and would be available for Anglican use

> from 9.45am to 12.15pm each Sunday and on Good Friday and Christmas Day and at such other times as reasonable for the conduct of normal parish ceremonies namely weddings, christenings and burials (The Rt Revd R Condie [Anglican Diocese of Tasmania] 2025, pers. comm., 29 Dec).

The old St Paul's church and hall buildings were demolished later in 1975. Information sheets that were available for

visitors to the completed hospital chapel in the 1980s noted the 'controversy [as] the design went forward', and that 'there was fierce public dispute in Tasmanian media between church and state' (Malor 2013, pp. 263–264). The dispute was led, for the Church, by Father David Johnson – the incumbent rector of St Paul's – who had become the hospital chaplain and thus the client representative for the new chapel. **Robert Morris-Nunn** – the architect appointed by the government to design the hospital chapel – intended to undertake a 'total and collaborative' approach that would involve a close relationship between him and the artist-makers to be engaged for the project, and Johnson quickly understood this. Reputedly, the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board ('TAAB') watched the process with close interest (Malor 2013, pp. 263–264; and Morris-Nunn 2025, p. 2).

On completion, the chapel was intended to function simultaneously as an interdenominational hospital chapel as well as the parish church for the St Paul's community. In 1979 the Minister for Health, at that time still the Hon. Michael Barnard, had claimed this would be the first chapel in Australia to be created 'as an integral part of a public hospital' (Barnard 1979 in Malor 2013, p. 263) – although at the Royal Hobart Hospital in the late 1950s, an 'undenominational' chapel building also existed (see RAIA 1959, p. 15).

Finding new homes for the components of old St Paul's

Although the sale agreement had stated that the internal fittings of old St Paul's 'as considered appropriate' were to be used in the new chapel, much of its fabric and contents – including the stained-glass windows – were instead installed in a new church building at Low Head, some 50 km to the north-west of Launceston. Named 'St Paul's Chapel by the Sea', this building later came under the management of the adjacent Ainslie Lifestyle Village (*The Examiner* 24 Dec 1980, p. 8; Grant 2018c; and TA NG472).

As the design for the new chapel progressed, Father Johnson submitted a list of 'Proposed LGH Chapel Ornaments and Equipment' together with a 'Case for New Furnishings and Equipment', stating:

> The Chapel will be vastly different from old St Paul's. Neither myself nor the architects ever thought that we could salvage any more than the bell and the organ from the old church. A church is a work of art, it all has to fit together (Johnson c.1980 in Malor 2013, p. 264).

Almost all of Johnson's requests eventually materialised – including the practical matters of a fridge, pie-warmer and urn to 'add a touch of fellowship with the opportunity to befriend the lonely and the distressed' (Johnson c.1980 in Malor 2013, p. 264).

Installing components from the pipe organ at old St Paul's – which the State government minister had agreed to acquire and re-use at the hospital, should it fit into the new space – proved costly, not least because of the need to retrofit adequate soundproofing to the surrounding concrete structure. These components were reassembled within the LGH by the prominent British-Australian organ-builder **Steve Laurie** (1914–2006), who had been based in Melbourne from the early 1950s (see Maidment 2006). Robert Morris-Nunn (2025, p. 3) recalls that the organ had to be reconfigured, 'with a separate console remote from the instrument… then electronically connecting the two'. Morris-Nunn has noted that the chapel ceiling's undulating form was a response to the needs of the organ, also acknowledging that an important design precedent was the wave-shaped ceiling of the auditorium at the 1927-to-35-built Vyborg Library (formerly known as the Viipuri Library) designed by the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto.

Selecting the team of designer-makers

Further issues arose in connection with finding artists and 'makers' to work on the project. The government set out to call for tenders and supply in the same manner as they were applying to other hospital fittings – but Father Johnson, Robert Morris-Nunn and the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board ('TAAB') 'did not believe that the normal tender process could be applied in special cases such as this… artistic judgement must over rule the lowest tender procedure' (Malor 2013, p. 264).

Following an advertisement for craftspeople to submit proposals, the stand-out submission was that by **Kevin Perkins** and **Peter Taylor**. Perkins had a background in technical college teaching of cabinet-making, and had undertaken study in architectural drawing and sculpture. He had recently obtained a considerable quantity of Huon Pine salvaged from the Lake Pedder area, and proposed that the chapel's furniture, fittings and crucifix be made from this famous rich, rare Tasmanian softwood. Perkins and Taylor – and later, other colleagues – were duly engaged (Cochrane 1992, pp. 235, 401; Frankham 2005, p. 18; K Perkins 2026, pers. comm., 25 Feb).

Robert Morris-Nunn later wrote of the chapel that it was a pioneering and significant government-funded project in Tasmania which 'allowed a group of artists and craftspeople to contribute collaboratively, in a truly free and passionate way, to create a whole interior space' (Malor 2013, p. 264).

New methods of procuring public art in Tasmania

Supply and tender standard processes figured in another way during the creation of the chapel. Normally in government construction projects of this scale in Tasmania, invoices were only paid when the corresponding items were

completed and installed on site. This was of course necessary for equipment which needed to be properly-connected and operational, but problematic for individual craftspeople making bespoke chapel furnishings. Kevin Perkins' order of Huon Pine had been a very large one and needed to be paid for promptly, yet State government procurement processes could not be modified, even to suit Father Johnson. At one point Perkins was asked to put a mortgage on his workshop to protect the State in the event he died during the contract and couldn't complete the work. With no other formal path available, the Anglican Bishop of Tasmania agreed to act as 'guarantor' for Kevin Perkins, personally underwriting the artist-maker's involvement and allowing the project to proceed (Cochrane 1992, p. 401; Morris-Nunn 2025, p. 4).

These and other experiences during the design and construction of St Paul's Chapel turned out to be important to the TAAB's future processes. This was particularly the case with those that impacted the Art for Public Buildings Scheme ('APBS') in Tasmania – in 2026, now named the Tasmanian Government Art Site Scheme – which came into being at about the time of the chapel project's completion. Deborah Malor (2013, p. 263) has noted that the developing working relationship between architect Robert Morris-Nunn and the artist-makers Kevin Perkins, Merv Grey, Peter Taylor and others went on to provide 'something of a model for the codifying of the architect-artist relationship by the APBS'.

What seems clear is that although St Paul's Chapel appears as the first file in the APBS archive, it is the chapel project that informed much of the early thinking within the APBS and initiated its processes, rather than the chapel being an early *outcome* of that scheme (Malor 2013, p. 264).

The curator, writer and historian of Australian decorative arts and design Grace Cochrane (1992, pp. 235, 393) has also described the 'schema' which demonstrated the formalisation of government support for the development of arts and craft in the 1970s and 80s. This included the establishment of the TAAB in 1975, and also the directions in tuition of new artist-makers by the Tasmanian School of Art (in Hobart) and at the Hobart Technical College. The Tasmanian 'woodies' (artist-woodworkers and allied crafts practitioners) in turn provided a model for designer-makers and craftspeople in other Australian states, through their interrelationships with both the timber industry and with educational institutions (Malor 2013, p. 265).

The furnishings of Huon pine

Following a visit to the chapel, a reporter from *The Examiner* (24 Dec 1980, p. 8) wrote

> words pale beside the sight of the pews, font, lectern and carved sedilia in Gordon River Huon pine, crafted with a waney edge so the true form of the timber is evident from the smooth bark edges to its soft mellow centre.

And writing as 'Brickbats' in *The Examiner* the following year, Eric Ratcliff described how

> Perkins has allowed each slab of wood to speak for itself. He has resisted to carve this most carveable of all timbers, except for small incised representations of the ancient symbols of Christianity (Ratcliff 1981 in Malor 2013, p. 265).

Accessible supplies of the slow-growing Huon pine had been almost cut out in waves of exploitation in the 19th and mid-20th centuries. Renewed awareness of Huon pine's properties, and of its rarity generally, coincided with the 1972 Lake Pedder and 1978-to-83 Gordon/Franklin protests in Tasmania (Malor 2013, p. 265). Assisted by the emerging genre of contemporary wilderness photography, these events had begun to configure an identity for the State beyond its borders – reflecting a popular image of Tasmanian nature and the enduring impress of colonialism. Deborah Malor (2012, p. 75) has suggested that the Huon pine furnishings and crucifix at St Paul's Chapel were an early expression in Tasmanian public art of this simultaneity of nature and the legacy of colonialism.

Controversy and outrage: Peter Taylor's crucifix

In April 1982 as the chapel moved closer to completion, 'Brickbats' (Ratcliff 1982, p. 20) noted that

> the most important development of the past year has been the visual extension of the Chapel beyond its glass wall into the garden forecourt… for Peter Taylor's sculptured crucifix of Huon pine is in place… Its impact is beyond design, which has the primitive force of a middle-period Epstein. It is beyond craftsmanship, which here is impeccable. It is a shock, as the vision of a crucifixion should be.

Across the following months and until August 1982, many articles and letters appeared in *The Examiner* setting out a range of opinions about the sculpted Christ figure. Deborah Malor (2013, pp. 265–266) has listed the titles of several of these, which included 'Sculpture grotesque'; 'Sculpture revolting'; 'Moving sculpture to be moved'; 'Sculpture change termed vandalism'; 'Crucifix must stay, priest says'; 'Crucifix brings peace'; 'Crucifix had to go, LGH board explains'; and 'Sculpture change termed vandalism'. The then Tasmanian Minister for Health, the Hon. Thomas Cleary, was asked to rule on a decision to relocate the crucifix (Tanner 1982, p. 7).

On the 17th of August 1982, contractors duly moved the crucifix to a less visible location at the side of the courtyard. However, in late December 1987 it was returned to its originally-intended position, reinstating its visual connection

with the Chapel's interior (Armstrong & Taylor 2022, p. 25; Richards 2020, pp. 68–69, & 76).

The 'Washington thorn' tree in the courtyard's corner
In 1980, a cutting from a *Crataegus phaenopyrum* (Washington thorn) tree was planted in the southern corner of the Chapel's courtyard. This was a carefully-tended transplant taken from a tree which had stood in the garden of the rectory at the former St Paul's. The date upon which that former tree was planted is yet to be confirmed, although it is likely to have been later than the 1935 construction of the rectory. For many years, the tree at the rectory – and therefore, the one now in the Chapel courtyard – was widely believed to be a *Crataegus monogyna* 'Biflora' ('Glastonbury thorn') propagated from one growing at Glastonbury Abbey in Somerset, England. Both the Washington thorn and Glastonbury thorn species are part of the hawthorn genus. However, recent investigations have confirmed that the tree at St Paul's Chapel is definitely a Washington thorn (Richards 2020, pp. 84, 87–91, 94).

Paul A C Richards (2020, pp. 84–85) has reported that in the Spring of 1984 the Washington thorn tree in the chapel courtyard began flowering for the first time – and was then in full bloom on Sunday the 14th of October, the day of the chapel's 'dedication' by Bishop Phillip Newell.

Ongoing use of St Paul's Chapel
Since the early 1980s St Paul's Chapel has also hosted a number of musical events, including a series of concerts in 1991 at which music students from the University of Tasmania performed (*Examiner* 15 May 1991, p. 3).

On the 1st of January 1995 the chapel ceased its use as the parish church of the Anglican parish of West Launceston, but has from that time continued as the 'interdenominational' chapel of St Paul (The Rt Revd R Condie [Anglican Diocese of Tasmania] 2025, pers. comm., 29 Dec).

Recognition and acknowledgement of creative achievement
Critical acclaim of the Chapel's artistic and design excellence featured in a range of publications during the decades following its completion – see for instance Moult 1983, pp. 104–105, & 114–115; Cochrane 1992, p. 401; King 1992, p. 30; Vine-Hall 1997, p.33; and McKee 1999, pp. 43 & 45.

When seated, present-day visitors to St Paul's Chapel continue to be able to look into the courtyard – an 'external although still-private world', as Father Johnson put it (Johnson c.1980 in Malor 2013, p. 266). As originally intended, Peter Taylor's crucifix remains visible as a presence beyond the altar table: 'an image of suffering, and of triumph through and over suffering, to which no viewer can be indifferent' (Ratcliff 1982, p. 20).

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS:

The word 'chapel' is used to describe a number of different site-types:

1. a place of worship, sometimes interfaith, that is located within a building, complex, or vessel with some other main purpose – such as a school, college, hospital, palace or large aristocratic house, castle, barracks, prison, funeral home, hotel, airport, or a military or commercial ship. This definition of the term encompasses chapels that are not affiliated with a particular denomination and are situated within a non-religious institution such as a hospital, airport, university or prison. Military installations may have chapels of this sort for the specific use of their personnel, usually under the leadership of a military chaplain.

2. smaller spaces inside a church that have their own altar. A 'Lady chapel' – also known as a 'Mary chapel' or a 'Marian chapel' (i.e. a chapel dedicated to Mary, the mother of Jesus, particularly inside a cathedral or other large church) – is a common example of these. Such chapels were traditionally the largest side-chapel of a cathedral, placed eastward from the high altar and forming a projection from the main building.

3. small places of worship, built as satellite sites by a church or monastery, and often in remote areas. Examples of these are also referred to as a 'chapel of ease'.

A feature of all these types is that often no clergy are permanently resident or specifically attached to the chapel.

Note: for historical reasons, 'chapel' is also often a term used by independent or nonconformist Christian denominations for their places of worship (aka 'meeting houses') in England and especially in Wales, even where such places are large and in practice operate as a parish church.

Chapels within Tasmanian buildings or complexes that serve some other main purpose e.g. school, college, hospital, university, or prison:
Chapels within institutions are an example of a class of place that may sometimes be better understood as what

McConnell and Knaggs (2018, p. A-108) describe as a *social/cultural typology*, rather than the 'fabric-based' typology that is often demonstrated by free-standing places of worship.

In their nine-volume study of 20th-century churches in the Melbourne metropolitan area, Coleman et al. (1996, p. iv) advised that they had decided to *not* include school, hospital or convent chapels in their work – while simultaneously noting that 'a number of notable 20th-century ecclesiastical architectural works take this form', and expressing their hope that 'future work' in which their study 'will be expanded' could include such chapels. Unfortunately, that work has not yet been undertaken.

Little published information has come to light on examples of chapels of this type in Tasmania. However, those within the State constructed since the 1950s include:

• the chapel at St Patrick's College (not in the THR), in the Launceston suburb of Prospect Vale. Designed by the architectural practice Cooper & Vincent and consecrated in 1959, this free-standing building serves both the College and the wider community. Reflecting then-contemporary currents in liturgical architectural thinking – with its square plan, soaring interior volume and steep gabled roof arranged along a diagonal axis – the design was intended to unite the clergy and congregation. The chapel's sanctuary projects into the fan-shaped arrangement of its pews (Grant 2018a; McNeill & Woolley 2002, p. 75);

• Mary Fox Chapel & Assembly Hall, within the Scotch Oakburn College's Elphin Campus (THR #12033) at inner-suburban Newstead in Launceston. The brick chapel building's elevations contain floor-to-ceiling steel-framed windows, comprised of textured glass panes of varying sizes and colours, including green, amber, orange, light and dark blue, and red. Completed in 1961, its architect was Tom Tandy of the local practice Tandy Pryor & Rogers (Grant 2018b);

• the Chapel of St Thomas (not in the THR) within The Hutchins School at Sandy Bay, about 2½ km to the south of Hobart's city centre, dedicated and opened in 1971 (Grant 2023). This red-brick building has a square-pyramidal roof and tall central spire;

• the present-day chapel within the Royal Hobart Hospital. This is a small, retrofitted space located on the first floor of the hospital's 'C Block' (THR#2409), the 1936-to-39 built 'Acute wing' which faces Liverpool Street. Adjacent to this chapel and accessed by a separate door is an Islam-specific prayer room;

and

• Dominic College Chapel (not in the THR) at Glenorchy, about 7 km to the north-west of Hobart's city centre. This asymmetrical building, by architects DesignInc Tasmania, acknowledges the footprint of a previous chapel on the site. Its interior linings include extensive plywood sheeting, and large sliding windows and door panels allow considerable operational flexibility. In the Australian Institute of Architects' Tasmanian Chapter 2007 awards the chapel was one of two recipients of a Public Architecture Award, and also received that year's Colorbond Award for the building's 'intelligent and refined' use of steel components (RAIA 2007, pp. 6 & 9).

Also: the Winter 1959 issue of the journal 'Tasmanian Architect' included a brief article describing a then recently-completed free-standing chapel building at the Royal Hobart Hospital. Designed by architects Philp Lighton Floyd & Beattie as an 'undenominational' chapel, with cupboards in the adjoining vestry 'for the three denominations at present using the building' (RAIA 1959, p. 15), this chapel has since been demolished.

Post World War II places of worship in Tasmania:
From the 1950s onwards, many new places of worship built in Tasmania continued to adopt straight-forward vernacular or gable-roofed basilica forms, but others exhibited innovative and/or Modernist architectural design characteristics. Of the extant church buildings within this latter category, examples across the State include:

• St Pius X Catholic Church (THR#7502) in Taroona, designed by the Hobart-based architect Esmond Dorney. Blessed and opened by Archbishop Guildford Young in late 1957, this building combines a barrel-vaulted form with a rectilinear plan. Its lightweight construction comprises wall and window frames of steel, fibre-cement sheet wall cladding, plywood-panelled interior linings, and buttresses of bent steel pipe;

• Hagley Uniting Church (within THR#10157). Also opened in 1957 – and designed by Launceston architect Clarry Pryor, who was also a lay preacher within the Methodist Church – this building has a multiple-gabled roof above a hexagon-shaped floor plan, with walls of red-coloured brickwork (Grant 2019c; McNeill & Woolley 2002, pp. 75–76);

• The Catholic Church of the Incarnation (THR#12046) in Lindisfarne, completed and opened in 1967. Designed by local architect Lindsay Johnston, the church building is strongly representative of the impacts of the international

liturgical reform movement – and, later, the Second Vatican Council – within the Catholic Archdiocese of Hobart. This church building's walls of carefully-detailed concrete blockwork demonstrate its design's alignment with the Modernist architectural movement of Brutalism;

• 'Snug Christian Church' (not in the THR). Completed in 1969 as St John's Anglican Church, and designed by the Tasmanian architect Harry Oldmeadow (Gardam 2007, pp. 169 & 171), its tiled roof, deeply recessed timber-framed windows, and walls of coarse face brickwork are strongly reminiscent of the 1960s 'Sydney School' regionalist style of Modernist Australian architecture;

and

• Sacred Heart Catholic Church (not in the THR) at Newstead. Completed in late 1970, this building was designed by architects Tandy, Pryor & Rogers and has an irregular octagon-shaped plan with its pews set out in a semicircle around the altar (Grant 2020).

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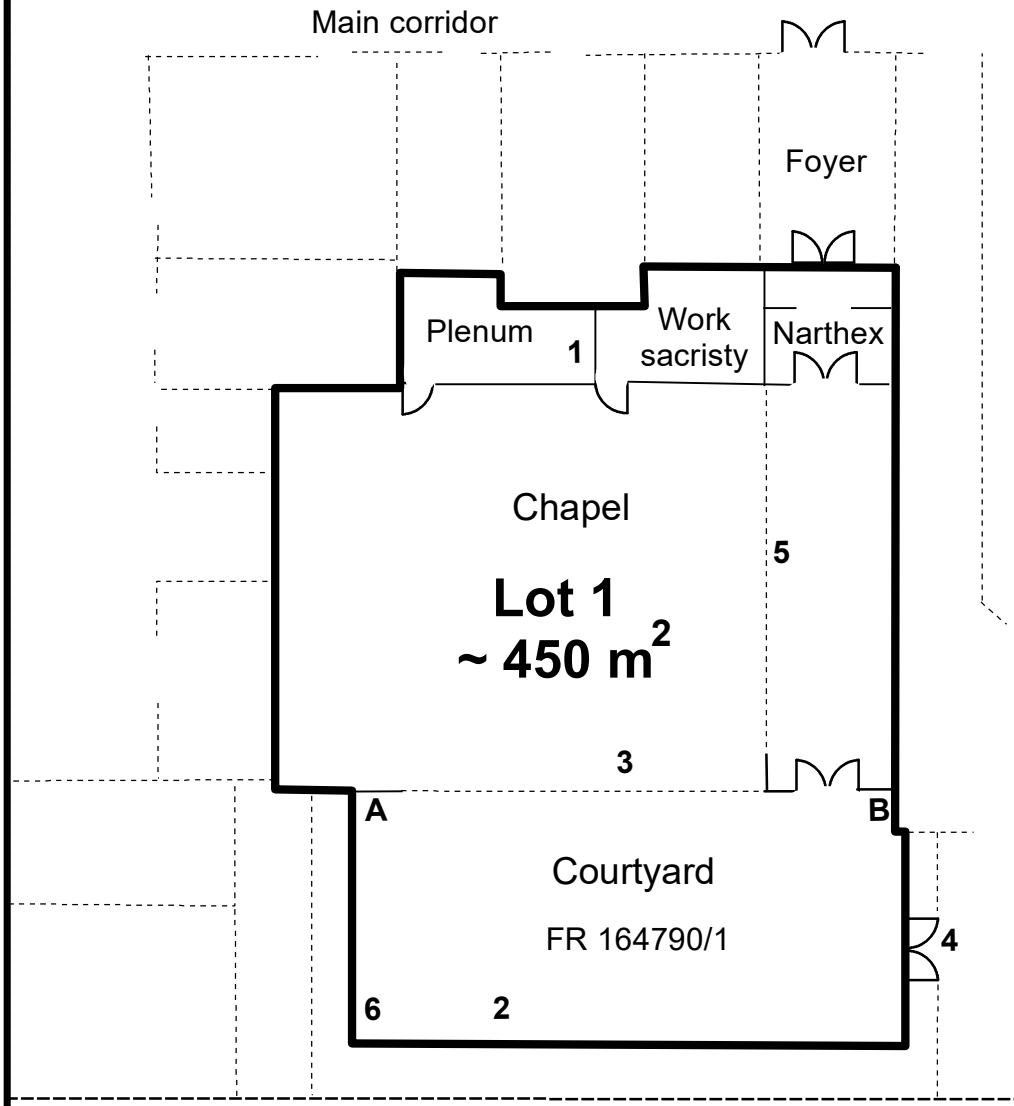
Note

1. Lot 1 represents the registered boundary for 'St Paul's Chapel at Launceston General Hospital', #12145 on the Tasmanian Heritage Register.
2. Lot 1 is part of the Launceston General Hospital complex (FR164790/1) the boundary of which is marked by a heavy black line and described below.
3. Details of individual land parcel boundaries may be accessed through the Land Information System Tasmania (LIST).



Point & Boundary Description

The Chapel is located on the third level of the Launceston General Hospital.

The registered area extends vertically from floor to ceiling and includes the linings, finishes and substrates of floors, ceilings and enclosing walls.

The registration encompasses both the Chapel & courtyard as shown.

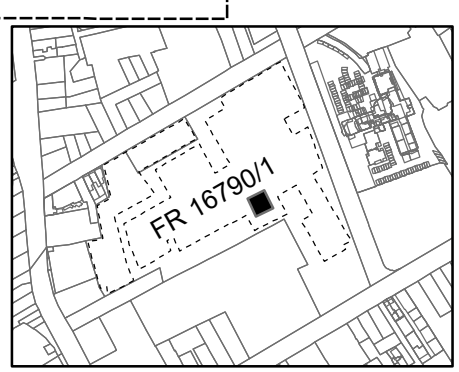
A-B. Identified elements of the Chapel extending the full thickness of enclosing walls.
B-A. Face of courtyard wall

Key

1. Organ pipes
2. Crucifix
3. Windows
4. Timber gates
5. Sliding wall panels
6. Washington Thorn

0 5 10 m

Locality Plan



TASMAP: LAUNCESTON - 5041	GRID: MGA94 / ZONE 55	DATUM: AHD	CONTOUR INTERVAL: N/A

No.	PRODUCTION / AMENDMENT	AUTHORITY	REFERENCE	DRAWN	APPROVED	DATE
1	Production	THC	12145	AW	S.PARRY	19.8.26

Tasmania

St Paul's Chapel at LGH

Level 3, 280 Charles St, Launceston

PREPARED BY
HERITAGE TASMANIA

Tasmanian Heritage Council

GDA

CENTRAL PLAN REGISTER

p.p. Surveyor General: _____

Date Registered: 19.8.26

CPR 11704