

# Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of St Joseph’s Catholic Church, O’Connor) Notice 2016

Notifiable Instrument NI2016–635

made under the

Heritage Act 2004, s32 (Decision about provisional registration) s34 (Notice of decision about provisional registration) and s37 (Public consultation about registration of place or object)

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## 1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of St Joseph’s Catholic Church, O’Connor) Notice 2016*.

## 2 Decision about provisional registration

On 17 November 2016, the ACT Heritage Council (the **Heritage Council**) decided to provisionally register St Joseph’s Catholic Church, part Block 1, Section 78, O’Connor (the **Place**).

## 3 Registration details of the Place

The registration details of the Place are in the schedule.

## 4 Reasons for the decision

The Heritage Council decided to provisionally register the Place because it has heritage significance as it meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria in section 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* (the **Act**), as set out in the schedule.

## 5 Date of provisional registration

The date of provisional registration is 18 November 2016 (being the day after the Heritage Council entered into the heritage register the registration details for the Place together with an indication that the registration is provisional).

## 6 Indication of the Heritage Council’s intention

The Council intends to decide whether to register the Place under Division 6.2 of the Act during the period of provisional registration.

**7 Invitation to make written comments during public consultation period**

The Council invites written comments about the registration of the Place. Any written comments must be made within 4 weeks after the day this notice is notified and are to be provided to:

The Secretary  
ACT Heritage Council  
GPO Box 158  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Email: [heritage@act.gov.au](mailto:heritage@act.gov.au)

Fiona Moore  
A/g Secretary (as delegate for)  
ACT Heritage Council  
17 November 2016



ACT Heritage Council

**AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY  
HERITAGE REGISTER  
(Provisional Registration)**

For the purposes of s. 33 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, a provisional entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

**St Joseph's Catholic Church, 61 Boronia Drive**

**(part) Block 1 Section 78, O'Connor**

**DATE OF DECISION**

17 November 2016

**DATE OF PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION**

18 November 2016 Notifiable Instrument: 2016-

**PERIOD OF EFFECT OF PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION**

Start Date: 18 November 2016 End Date: 17 April 2017

Extended Period (if applicable) Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ End Date \_\_\_\_\_

Copies of the Register Entry are available for inspection at ACT Heritage. For further information please contact:

The Secretary  
ACT Heritage Council  
GPO Box 158  
CANBERRA ACT 2601  
Telephone 13 22 81

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This statement refers to the location of the place as required in s. 12 (b) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

#### LOCATION OF THE PLACE

St Joseph's Catholic Church, 69 Boronia Drive, (part) Block 1, Section 78, O'Connor. The place is located between Boronia Drive, Hovea Street, and Macarthur Avenue.

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This section refers to the description of the place as required in s.12(c) of the *Heritage Act 2004*. The attributes described in this section form part of the heritage significance of the place. For the purposes of s. 12(c) of the *Heritage Act 2004*, the boundary of the place is at Image 1.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE

St Joseph's Catholic Church, consisting of the following attributes:

- the existing Catholic Church of St Joseph, including:
  - its central siting on the block, with a generous setback of 25 metres from the street on the following sides:
    - Macarthur Avenue;
    - Hovea Street;
    - Boronia Drive;
  - large panels of stained glass on the inside of the building, incorporating the following two windows by Harry Clarke Glass Ltd, Commissioned by the National Capital Development Commission:
    - The Annunciation and St Joseph; and
    - The Young Christ;
  - the Late Twentieth Century Ecclesiastical Style (1960 – ) architecture inherent in the design and styling of the building, as expressed by a range of architectural features, in particular:
    - the circular layout, with the building situated atop a platform clad with uncoursed bluestone retaining and balustrade walls;
    - the circular layout that allows informal, 'communal' pew-arrangement, with pews facing each other;
    - the exterior 'prow'-like roof folds and the interior roof space that follows the form of the exterior roof design, resulting in the dramatic manipulation of space;
    - the tower and spire, emphasising verticality;
    - the nave, free of intrusive ancillary spaces;
    - the sanctuary, which extends close to the congregation, with altar located towards the centre of the circle; and
    - the narthex – nave – sanctuary axis, visible from the main entrance and port cochere.

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This statement refers to the heritage significance of the place as required in s.12(d) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

## STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

St Joseph's Catholic Church is an excellent example of a building in the radical stream of church design of the Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical Style (1960 –). Indicators of the style are its circular plan-shape responding to liturgical changes, and its emphatic verticality culminating in its tower and spire. The dramatic manipulation of shape and space demonstrated in the church is also a characteristic of the style, and is expressed strongly in the design of the building. The church exhibits high quality aesthetic characteristics due to its careful siting, shape and interior design, in particular the lighting, with stained glass, which provides a brilliant focus at the centre of the nave [*criterion (d)*].

St Joseph's Catholic Church is the most outstanding building by the architect Kevin J. Curtin in Canberra. It has special associations with the architect, whose practice, Kevin J. Curtin & Partners, contributed significantly to Canberra's architectural history, particularly its churches, church schools and clubs [*criterion (h)*].

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## CONSERVATION OBJECTIVE

The guiding conservation objective is that St Joseph's Catholic Church, O'Connor, shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance.

The ACT Heritage Council may adopt heritage guidelines applicable to the place under s25 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

For further information on guidelines applicable to the place, or for advice on proposed works or development, please contact ACT Heritage on 13 22 81.

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## REASON FOR PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION

St Joseph's Catholic Church, O'Connor, has been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and been found to have heritage significance when assessed against criteria [d, h] under s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

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## ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

The Council's assessment against the criteria specified in s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* is as follows.

In assessing the heritage significance of St Joseph's Catholic Church, O'Connor, the Council considered:

- the original nomination and documentary evidence supplied by the nominator;
- the Council's *Heritage Assessment Policy* (February 2015);
- information provided by a site inspection on 23 September 2016 by ACT Heritage; and
- the report by ACT Heritage titled, *Background Information St Joseph's Catholic Church, O'Connor*, (November 2016) containing photographs and information on history, description, condition and integrity.

Pursuant to s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, a place or object has heritage significance if it satisfies one or more of the following criteria. Future research may alter the findings of this assessment.

### **(a) importance to the course or pattern of the ACT's cultural or natural history;**

St Joseph's Catholic Church, O'Connor, does not meet this criterion.

A site for a Catholic Church, convent and primary school was provided in the plans for the early post war suburb of O'Connor. In 1956, in response to the growing population, the primary school opened with staff from St Joseph's Goulburn and, by the early 1970s, the convent school hall where church services were held had outgrown its congregation. The church of St Joseph's was completed in 1973. It is an example of Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical Style (1960–) architecture, which is widespread in Australia, reflecting liturgical reforms primarily arising from the Second Vatican Council, held in the early 1960s. It is characterised by a shift away from the heavy symbolic rituals of traditional ecclesiastical architecture, with new plan-shapes and freer forms of expression reflecting this shift. However, while the style reflects important ecclesiastical changes of the period and is prominent in Australia with several significant examples in the ACT, including Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Lyneham, and Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church in Turner, there is no evidence of its importance to the course of history in the ACT.

There are other, stronger examples of churches and ecclesiastical buildings that can be said to have influenced the course of the ACT's cultural history. For example, places such as Shakespeare Hall (Braddon, registered) St Andrew's Church Precinct (Forrest, registered), St Christopher's Cathedral Precinct, (Forrest, registered) St Paul's Church (Griffith, registered) and Reid Uniting Church (registered), have significant associations with the establishment of places of worship and the spiritual fabric of early Canberra. These places are associated with the *Church Lands Lease Ordinance 1924*. This established that each religious denomination with a presence in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) was exempt from taking a 99 year lease, and granted a single lease at peppercorn rental in perpetuity, with a view to ensuring the spiritual needs of the population of the FCT would be met.

**(b) has uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the ACT's cultural or natural history;**

St Joseph's Catholic Church, O'Connor, does not meet this criterion.

In the context of ecclesiastical buildings in general in the ACT, including Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical Style (1960–) buildings, St Joseph's Catholic Church, O'Connor, is not considered to be uncommon, or rare. Examples of Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical Style (1960–) architecture listed on the ACT Heritage Register include:

- Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Lyneham (registered, built 1961). Designed by Frederick Romberg of Grounds Romberg and Boyd.
- Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church, Turner (nominated, built 1971). Designed by Ken Woolley of Ancher Mortlock & Woolley.

Other good examples of the style in the ACT include:

- Holy Cross Anglican Church, Hackett (not listed on ACT Heritage Register, built 1967). Designed by Luker Thompson and Goldsmith.
- Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Curtin (not listed on ACT Heritage Register, built 1975). Designed by Kevin Curtin and Ernest Munns.

Other examples of significant ecclesiastical architecture in the ACT include:

- Shakespeare Hall, Braddon, (registered, formerly the Presbyterian Hall in Ainslie)
- St Andrew's Church Precinct, Forrest (registered)
- St Christopher's Cathedral Precinct, Forrest (registered)
- St Paul's Anglican Church, Griffith (registered)

- Reid Uniting Church (registered)
- St John the Baptist Church and Churchyard, Reid (registered)
- All Saints Church, Ainslie (registered)
- Wesley Uniting Church Complex, Forrest (nominated)

The places listed have been identified by the Council as good or excellent examples of certain styles of ecclesiastical architecture, are still occupied or in use, are in good condition and are adequately maintained. As such, the Council does not consider ecclesiastical architecture to be an endangered aspect of the ACT's cultural history.

The Council notes that the examples listed above do not represent an exhaustive list of nineteenth and early twentieth century churches present in the ACT.

**(c) potential to yield important information that will contribute to an understanding of the ACT's cultural or natural history;**

St Joseph's Catholic Church, O'Connor, does not meet this criterion.

There is insufficient evidence before the Council to demonstrate that St Joseph's Church, O'Connor, has the potential to yield important information that will contribute to a wider understanding of the ACT's cultural or natural history. The Council does not anticipate a reasonable likelihood that the place contains substantial physical evidence – currently obscured and of high integrity – pertaining to a defined, significant research interest, and it is unlikely to provide key information that will fill an important gap in existing knowledge about the history of the ACT. What ability the place does have to provide information about the history of the development of the ACT's religious institutions is adequately represented by documentary evidence, and the physical material of the building is unlikely to contribute further to a wider understanding.

**(d) importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or objects;**

St Joseph's Catholic Church, O'Connor, meets this criterion.

St Joseph's Catholic Church is an excellent example of Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical Style (1960 –) architecture, strongly expressing the style's key attributes.

The style is expressed in the radical plan-shape responding to liturgical changes, evidenced by the circular plan of the nave which allows for a more communal configuration of pews, and generous sized sanctuary which brings the altar forward, before the congregation. With its communal emphasis, and interior layout that encourages a closer interaction between priest and congregation, St Joseph's Catholic Church strongly reflects the changes and ethos introduced by the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

The style is also strongly expressed in the manipulation of space and shape, which is important as liturgical changes of the late twentieth century allowed for more freedom of expression in church shape, configuration, and design. The architect's adoption of this approach to ecclesiastical design is evidenced by the building's 'prow-like' roof, resembling origami folds, creating a highly distinctive roof profile and corresponding dramatic interior ceiling space. This space is emphasized by stained glass panels on the underside of the tower, where direct sunlight is admitted into the nave and sanctuary.

St Joseph's Catholic Church also represents the style in the following ways:

- demonstration of unbroken straight lines, emphasizing verticality. This is evidenced by the high, dramatic tower rising from the centre of the roof;
- by incorporating inverted v shapes into its design, reminiscent of the Gothic pointed arch, again evidenced by the shape of the tower; and
- by demonstrating glazing with vertically proportioned panes. These are embedded in the centre of the tower.

**(e) importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by the ACT community or a cultural group in the ACT;**

St Joseph's Catholic Church, O'Connor, does not meet this criterion.

St Joseph's Catholic Church represents an example of Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical Style (1960–). This is valued by the Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) as evidenced by the inclusion of this building (Item No. R074) and buildings of the same style on its Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture, such as Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Lyneham (Item No. R074), and Canberra National Seventh Day Adventist Church, Turner (Item No. R114).

However, the Council's Heritage Assessment Policy interprets a cultural group as a 'group of people within a society with a shared ethnic or cultural background' or 'a group of people connected through the same way of living, which has been transmitted from one generation to another'. The Council therefore does not consider the Institute to be a cultural group for the purposes of the criterion.

Furthermore, while the Council does consider the Catholic Church and its adherents to constitute a cultural group in the ACT, there is insufficient evidence demonstrating that St Joseph's Catholic Church exhibits particular aesthetic characteristics which are valued by this cultural group to a degree high enough to distinguish it from other churches or ecclesiastical buildings. While the Council may receive some anecdotal accounts of how members of the place's congregation appreciate certain aesthetic attributes (such as, for instance, stained glass windows, or the interior layout), such informal, undocumented accounts do not constitute adequate evidence that the Catholic community as a whole strongly values the place's aesthetic characteristics.

Further, the Council also considers the congregation attending St Joseph's Catholic Church to constitute a cultural group in the ACT, and there is some evidence suggesting the congregation of St Joseph's values certain aspects of the place's aesthetic characteristics. For example, considerable care was taken to faithfully rebuild damaged portions of the place's interior after fire damage sustain in 2007, in accordance with Kevin Curtin's original design. However, this does not demonstrate that the congregation values the place's aesthetic attributes beyond what would ordinarily be expected of a local church community in the event of damage to a house of worship. Evidence may exist that strongly exhibits how the St Joseph's Catholic Church congregation values the place more than other similar cultural groups adhering to other religious organisations in the ACT. However, this evidence is not yet before the ACT Heritage Council.

**(f) importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement for a particular period;**

St Joseph's Catholic Church, O'Connor, does not meet this criterion.



The Council recognises there is a degree of creative and technical achievement evident in the design and construction of St Joseph's Catholic Church, O'Connor. For example, the building represents an architectural expression of the liturgy of the Catholic Church. It was designed to comply with a key element of the church's doctrine which arose from the Second Vatican Council: a centralised sanctuary. The generous sanctuary has allowed the altar to be located well towards the centre of the circle, close to the people. While the configuration of the sanctuary demonstrates a creative response to liturgical changes, it does not demonstrate creative achievement to a high enough degree to meet this criterion, as all churches of the Second Vatican Council era were required to adapt to these liturgical changes, and modify traditional internal church configurations accordingly.

The Council also acknowledges that the roof of the church demonstrates a degree of creativity that is interesting, the design is not considered exceptional. The roof has origami-like folded planes, projecting dramatically in four directions, comparing well with religious buildings designed by Frank-Lloyd Wright. The interior reflects the design of the roof, resulting in a dramatic ceiling space, panelled by walls of stained glass, admitting direct sunlight into the nave and sanctuary. However, again, the creative design of the roof and ceiling is not of a high enough degree to meet this criterion. For example, it does not represent development of new technology, or a breakthrough in fabrication or construction techniques that contributed significantly to the field of architecture and construction. Moreover, while it may demonstrate influences of the architectural designs of Frank Lloyd Wright, this in itself cannot not be said to represent an innovative departure from established norms in architecture.

**(g) has a strong or special association with the ACT community, or a cultural group in the ACT for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;**

St Joseph's Catholic Church, O'Connor, does not meet this criterion.

The Council considers the Catholic Church and its adherents to constitute a cultural group in the ACT, and does acknowledge that the place has some social, cultural, and spiritual association with the Catholic Church, as it has functioned as a place of worship within the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn since the 1970s.

The connection between St Joseph's Catholic Church and its Parishioners is evidenced by time and financial contributions when the place was being restored after sustaining fire damage in 2007, and when the place was opened and consecrated in 1973. However, it is common for a religious institution to receive community time and fiscal donations to assist with its construction, opening, ongoing maintenance, and running of church programs. Community contribution is not sufficient as evidence, beyond the ordinary, of a strong or special association between Parishioners and church for social or cultural reasons.

Further, there is no evidence suggesting St Joseph's Catholic Church is valued as the site of an event that has had a profound effect on the Catholic Church, or the adherents to its faith. For example, it is not a place where there are known associations with important figures in Catholic history in Australia (such as, for example, Saint Mary MacKillop), or with events out of the ordinary (such as Miracles associated with Saints, Church founders or important themes or people in Church history).

There is no evidence that the place symbolically represents some aspect of the past which contributes to a sense of identity for the Catholic community. For example, it is not recognised as the first, oldest, or most spiritually important Catholic place of administration or worship in the ACT, nor does the Catholic Church consider it critical in the context of the contribution of the

Catholic Church, and the Catholic story, of the ACT.

- (h) has a special association with the life or work of a person, or people, important to the history of the ACT.**

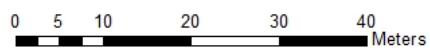
St Joseph's Catholic Church, O'Connor, meets this criterion.

Kevin Curtin contributed significantly to the architectural fabric of the ACT, designing churches, office buildings, schools, public buildings, and hospitality buildings during the course of his career. He was awarded a papal medal for his architectural service to the Catholic Church. The association between Curtin and St Joseph's Catholic Church is special, as the place represents arguably some of Curtin's finest work, as evidenced by the place's sophisticated expression of Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical Style (1960 –) architecture.

# SITE PLAN



**St Joseph's Catholic Church (part Block 1 Section 78 O'Connor)**



**Image 1 Site Boundary, St Joseph's Catholic Church, O'Connor**