

# History

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Marist Brothers Rosalie represents an enduring example of the history of Catholic Education in Queensland, and stands as a testament to the influence and foresight of the great Catholic “architect” and “builder” of Brisbane, [Archbishop James Duhig](#). In 1912 Archbishop Duhig was made adjudicator of Brisbane and then Archbishop of Brisbane in 1917. He instigated a period of great expansion in the Catholic Church resulting in the building and rebuilding of churches, schools and convents that lasted well into until the 1940s. What makes the Archbishop’s vision even more impressive is that the expansion occurred during the financially difficult time of the Great Depression and during uncertain times of World War One and World War Two when young men were at war and construction material and labour was difficult to obtain. The hills across Brisbane are dotted with Catholic education buildings built on land purchased by the Archbishop during this period as part of his vision for the future. As Archbishop of Brisbane for fifty years, he oversaw the construction of more than four hundred major church buildings.

At the same time as Duhig's "construction" the Marist order was invited (although the Marists taught at as far back as 1919 in the Rosalie parish), as were the Brigidine Sisters, Christian Brothers, and Josephite nuns to educate the Catholic families of Brisbane in these new buildings, and they became an integral part of Queensland's religious cultural history.

In line with Archbishop Duhig’s vision the Rosalie monastery was the Marist Order's first house in Queensland and the foundation stone of the Marist Brothers' Monastery was officially laid on 29 July 1928 by His Excellency B. Cattaneo. The construction was completed and ready for the new school year and was officially opened on 20 February 1929 by Archbishop Duhig. One hundred and thirty-five students were enrolled, a large number coming from the Convent School at Rosalie. The monastery was also used as a boarding residence until 1940.

Those responsible for the design of the monastery were George Frederick Addison, son of prominent architect [George Henry Male Addison](#), and G. F. Macdonald. After his father's death in 1922, the majority of Addison's work would be residential. He designed over thirty homes before his retirement in 1938. In designing the Marist Brothers Monastery, G.F. Addison was continuing a family connection with the Catholic Church as his father's last commission had been the neighbouring church of the Sacred Heart at Rosalie in 1918. G.H.M. Addison designed several other ecclesiastical buildings for the Catholic Church including: the Coorparoo Presbytery (1914); St. Columba's Church, Wilston (1915); St. Benedict's Church, East Brisbane (1917) and the Church of the Little Flower, Kedron (1924). This site stands as a purpose-built, landmark religious structure in Brisbane's Catholic Archdiocese. Its aesthetic significance and association with Brisbane architect, George Frederick Addison, who was continuing the connection of his father, G.H.M. Addison, to the Catholic Church, is a legacy that has been recognised in need of protection and preservation by the Queensland government "heritage listing" process.

Eventually, modern school buildings were constructed, and the Monastery became primarily a residence for the teaching brothers of Marist College, Rosalie. It continues in this function today, as well as being a meeting place for parents and students of the College. It is a landmark structure in Rosalie's residential and Catholic precinct.

Marist Brothers Rosalie took some boarders during the 1930s but this ceased with the opening of Marist College Ashgrove in 1940. By 1939 the Marist College Rosalie roll was four hundred and fifty-one students. It was clear that a new college was necessary. Again under the guiding hand and vision of Archbishop Duhig plans were put in place for a new school building.

The present senior college was officially blessed and opened by Archbishop Duhig on 2 October 1949 at a cost of 35,000 pounds. A crowd of nearly two thousand people attended the opening including the Labor Premier (a staunch Catholic and local resident), [Ned Hanlon](#) and the Works Minister, Mr. William Power. Another one of the official guests caused quite a stir at the time. Present at the laying of the foundation stone was Irish hero, revolutionary, president of Sien Fein, Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of Ireland (from 1932–1948, 1951–1954 and 1957–1959) and future President of Ireland (for two seven-year terms from 1959–1973), [Éamon de Valera](#). Mr de Valera was travelling around Australia, at the invitation of a bishop, to speak and associate with the

many Irish immigrants who had made Australia their home. At the ceremony at Rosalie, Mr de Valera said, according to press reports at the time, that "...the new school was part of the evidence of the magnificent works of charity and community effort that he had seen in every capital of the Commonwealth."

It was at this time that Archbishop Duhig's vision was finally fulfilled, that is schooling of Catholic boys from grade 1 to grade 12. As the school grew further building projects that were funded by the Parents and Friends Association including the building of the swimming pool (1965), the science block (1969) and the library block (1975).

In 1955 the school acquired 22 acres (89,000 m<sup>2</sup>) of bushland in the suburb of [Fig Tree Pocket](#), in Brisbane's west and rechristened the land "Lavalla". Luton White, owner of a chain of garages, sold his land cheaply to the Marist Brothers and the parish at the time on the basis that it be used by the students of Rosalie College for their sports. The visionary Principal, Brother Cyprian Dowd (1935–41, 1953–59), grabbed this opportunity. Brother Cyprian, by all accounts, was a tireless worker and he "marshalled the troops" and over a six-month period the scrub was cleared by parents, old boys, students, members of the parish and a horse (named Dolly) to create four new sports ovals. The grounds were officially opened on 16 October 1955 by Monsignor Steele.

The school continued to grow and a Junior College (61 Fernberg Rd) for grades 4–7 was constructed in 1971 at a cost of [A\\$142000](#). Archbishop [Patrick Mary O'Donnell](#) formally blessed the building on 6 June 1971.

All of these buildings have been refurbished in recent years and the Parents & Friends Association has overseen the construction of tennis courts, cricket practice wickets, basketball courts and a covered assembly area.

Although the school was built by (and largely funded by) the people of Rosalie and the surrounding parishes, in 1970 the school became an Archdiocesan College and under the control of the Brisbane Catholic Education office. In accordance to Catholic canon law this can occur only if there is no parish priest residing in the area as was the case then for a short time. That is its administration was no longer done in the community but externally at the central offices of Brisbane Catholic Education. Subsequently, Father Dennis Power, was assigned the parish however administration was not returned to the Parish. Father Power, worked tirelessly in promoting the school as well as the primary school, the Sacred Heart Convent, adjacent to the school, until his retirement in the 1990s.

At its peak, in the mid-1970s, the school (which also had junior years 4–7) had about 550 children enrolled.

Controversially, at the time, Brisbane Catholic Education decided to close the Junior College (61 Fernberg Rd) down in 1979 and it became part of the Senior College in 1980. The decision was controversial as there was no reason given for the closure except that the adjacent convent, Sacred Heart Convent, which catered for children from grades 1 – 7 was losing boys to the junior school in grade 4, meaning that the grades 4 – 7 at the convent were almost exclusively female even though the school was co-educational. This was deemed not to be in the best interests of the convent. The controversy was fuelled further by Brisbane Catholic Education's decision to then abruptly close Sacred Heart Convent down in 1995. Unfortunately this decision to close the Junior College ( and the convent) affected the high school as it had lost its "feeder" school, a decision which was to haunt it later.

On 9 March 1989 [Pope John Paul II](#) paternally imparted a Special Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of continued divine protection on the school on the occasion of its Diamond Jubilee.

In 2000 Rosalie parish became part of cluster of three parishes with the surrounding suburbs of Red Hill and Bardon, and finally in 2005 the new larger parish was christened the Jubilee Catholic Community.

From the start of the school and in line with the Marist philosophy and to promote Catholic education amongst the working class the school fees were kept at an "affordable" rate. Accordingly, Marist College Rosalie has produced a colourful array of old boys.

## Recent history

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The school suffered a further blow when on 13 July 2006 Archbishop Bathersby of Brisbane, acting under advice from Brisbane Catholic Education, made the decision to close Marist College Rosalie, with the last class going through in 2008.

There was an outcry from parents, old boys and the community in general. There was substantial local media coverage of the parent's reactions in relation to availability of placements for their boys in Catholic high schools. There was also concern from the wider Catholic community regarding the closure of a number of schools under Archbishop Bathersby.

The concerns included reservations about an increasingly [bureaucratic](#) church run by ex-brothers and nuns who are out of touch with the community and the numbers of Catholic boys that would be thrown onto the State schooling system at a time when secularism is increasing hold in a once large Catholic community. Philosophic concerns were also raised regarding the place of "[economic rationalism](#)" in Catholicism and Catholic schooling. Brisbane Catholic Education defended its advice to Archbishop Bathersby by saying that the school was not viable in its current position and that school-age students of the Catholic faith in its catchments area were decreasing.

Opponents of the school's closure say that Brisbane Catholic Education based its decision to close the college due to declining student numbers on outdated demographic figures from 2001 and ignored the findings of its own marketing research report which indicated that appropriate marketing strategies would guarantee a viable future. They were vocal in their criticism of Brisbane Catholic Education by citing official government figures and referring to poor work practices and managerial incompetence within Brisbane Catholic Education as the real reason for the school's misfortune.

Still other opponents of the school's closure referred to hidden agendas in relation to the land the school and its sport fields sit on.

Subsequent to the announcement a group of old boys, business leaders, parents, and concerned Catholics calling itself "Save Rosa" formed the "Rosalie College Interim Board" and have lobbied to keep the school open or open another Catholic School on the site. The group has been successful in gaining official support from local and Queensland State politicians, local businesses and the community as well as behind the scene support from Catholic Orders, Catholic priests and senior public servants. The group, headed by high-profile businessman [Barry Maranta](#) approached the Brisbane Archdiocese with a business plan and approved curriculum but their offer was rejected without explanation. The group has vowed to keep working towards a solution that results in a school at the site.

It remains to be seen what will come of the school but concerns have been published in the local media regarding the fact that all of the Catholic high schools in the vicinity are at capacity and have started to refuse Catholic boys admission. Apparently this has led to a crisis which is eroding the faith in the Catholic Church administration, especially given that members of the Archdiocese are complaining that the Archbishop is either not responding or not seeing letters addressed to him regarding the problem.

The school closed on 30 November 2008. In January 2009 the campus became the Lavalla Centre and is used by the Marist Brothers for teacher in-service training and retreats. The local Catholic parish organises youth activities on the site.<sup>[2]</sup>