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**Nunyarra Conference Centre and Chapel**

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**BEL:002**

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**Address**            5 Burnell Drive  
**Suburb**            BELAIR 5052

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**ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE****Description**

The conference centre comprises a single storeyed, narrow rectangular building built at the turn of the century. It was three separate pavilions that have been linked by infill buildings. It is built of freestone with brick quoins and surrounds and a red tiled hipped and gabled roof. The building has turned timber posts to the verandah. It is a fine example of Federation architecture in South Australia and is set within large grounds with tennis courts and old fruit trees.

Nunyarra Chapel, located to the east of the original sanatorium is essentially an external metal frame within which a glass box exists. The glass walls of the chapel are set in from the frame creating a verandah that encircles the building. The Chapel is located on a sloping site so that it is single storey at one end and double storey at the other. The first floor of the building sits on stone walls and at the entrance to the building there is a large stone wall. It is well positioned in a site full of large trees, taking advantage of its site and the views obtainable from the location.

**Statement of heritage value**

Established in 1902 by Dr Arthur Gault, the Nunyarra Conference Centre was purpose-built as a sanatorium for the treatment of the disease, tuberculosis. The location, facilities and design of the building that comprised Nunyarra were at the cutting edge of the treatment of this disease. Nunyarra Chapel is an excellent design and a fine example of 1960s architecture.

**Relevant criteria**

- (a) demonstrates important aspects of the State's history in illustrating the turn of the century 'best practice' treatment for people with the feared disease tuberculosis.
- (d) it is an outstanding representative of a particular class of places of cultural significance in that, of the few sanatoriums built that remain, Nunyarra retains many of its specific design features that characterise its original purpose.
- (e) the Nunyarra Chapel demonstrates a high degree of creative and aesthetic accomplishment as a fine example of 1960s architecture.

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Nunyarra Conference Centre and Chapel be entered in the State Heritage Register.

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### HERITAGE VALUE

**Criterion (a) it demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history.**

Originally the Nunyarra Conference Centre was a home for the treatment of the dreaded disease, tuberculosis. It was established in 1902 by Dr Arthur Gault (previously employed as the first director of the Kalyra Sanatorium) to accommodate 16 patients in the best environment and with the best equipment then available. The facilities and design of Nunyarra were said to follow the latest European and English models and no expense or trouble was spared.

Although not the first TB sanatorium established in South Australia, it was particularly designed to suit its purpose and represents the 'best practice' of the treatment of this disease at the turn of the century in South Australia. Its location, Belair was considered an ideal site (as is evidenced by the construction of Kalyra nearby) due to its climatic conditions as well as its isolation from the main population centre.

Tuberculosis at that time was regarded as a curable disease - although insidious and intractable. The available drugs were considered to be of little value; the 'open air' treatment was considered best practice. Belair was thought to have an excellent climate for curing TB with its dry bracing air, low rainfall and reduced summer temperatures. Dr Gault used as his model the treatment devised by Dr Walther at Nordrach which had been judged to be very successful. His overall aim was to raise the general physical tone of the patients by the open air, a good diet and plenty of rest and recreation.

It is not known for how long it functioned as a TB sanatorium but during the Second World War it was taken over by the RAAF and used to provide temporary accommodation for men returning from overseas service.

By the close of the Second World War, anti-tuberculous antibiotics had been developed and were beginning to be used. Although there were difficulties encountered with the side effects and the organism's rapid development of resistance to the new drugs, slowly the disease was combated and it lost much of the dread that had been associated with it for hundreds of years.

In 1946 the Nunyarra complex was bought by the Methodist Church and was renamed the Methodist Memorial Youth Centre. Youth camps were held at the centre. In the 1950s further buildings were added and its role shifted to that of a conference centre, seminar venue and retreat house.

In line with the function of the complex as a conference centre, Symons House was opened in 1975. It provides five self-contained units for small groups and families on the first floor.

In 1987 Nunyarra was developed to accommodate a greater number of day and residential seminars, conferences and workshops. In that year the dining room was refurbished and a new reception area and manager's residence constructed.

**Criterion (d) it is an outstanding representative of a particular class of places of cultural significance.**

Although not the first TB sanatorium established in South Australia, Nunyarra was one of the early TB treatment centres established. It was particularly designed to suit its purpose and well represents the treatment of this disease in South Australia.

The first TB sanatorium (now demolished) to be established in South Australia was established in the mid 1880s in the grounds of the Botanic Gardens. In 1895 Kalyra (now substantially altered) was opened at Belair. Nunyara followed, opened in 1902. There were other sanatoriums established; at Bedford Park (now demolished), at Myrtle Bank, at a ward in the grounds of the Keswick Army Barracks, at what is now the Hampstead Centre at Northfield, established in the 1920s, and in the Flinders Ranges to name but a few.

As stated, Nunyara was established by Dr A Gault who had been the Chief Medical Officer at Kalyra. Gault ensured that every aspect of his new sanatorium was designed with care. The complex is now a single storeyed, narrow rectangular building built at the turn of the century. It was three separate pavilions that have been linked by infill buildings. It is built of freestone with brick quoins and surrounds and a red tiled hipped and gabled roof. The building has turned timber posts to the verandah. It is a fine example of Federation architecture in South Australia and is set within large grounds with tennis courts and old fruit trees.

The three pavilions at Nunyara included one for men, one for women and the administration, dining room and kitchen block. The building materials were chosen because they were thought to reduce the temperature. Each room was designed to allow air (but not draughts) and light to enter and every room was provided with a lavatory basin, hot and cold water, electric bells, a hot water radiator and deep drainage. All corners in the complex were rounded, the floors polished and the woodwork and furniture specially designed to ensure cleanliness and hygiene. The garden contained such things as a revolving shelter, a simple gabled roofed building with openable flaps to allow air to penetrate, that could be positioned to catch the sun. The patient lay on a bed inside.

All of the former tuberculous sanatoriums have changed their function. The nearby and purpose-built Kalyra has been altered substantially to accommodate its new use as part of an aged care complex and is now surrounded by many new buildings.

Nunyara has not escaped alterations. The original pavilion buildings have been altered. Alterations to each building include the provision of linking structures to join all three buildings into a continuous one. Necessarily, some end walls have been removed. The linking buildings have raked or flat roofs that are linked into the original pavilions at a point under the original buildings' roofline. At the rear of the buildings, in several places, new facilities have been added, such as bathrooms and kitchens, usually built out of red brick with raked roofs. Their position ensures that they are not obvious.

Internally, walls have been punctured to allow access to these new facilities. The most significant internal alterations have occurred to the most eastern pavilion where internal walls have been removed to create a large dining space. The building has been gutted and flows into the linking structure that connects it to the next pavilion. Only the external walls remain. The remaining buildings are more intact, but still reflect a number of alterations. The alterations made to the building do damage its integrity and it is for this reason that only the external walls, verandah and roof of the original buildings are recommended for inclusion in the State Heritage Register. The external appearance of the former sanatorium is recognisable and it is still one of the best remaining and earliest examples of a purpose built TB sanatorium in South Australia and it represents the treatment of this disease in the early days of the twentieth century.

**Criterion (e) it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics.**

Nunyara Chapel, located to the east of the original sanatorium is an excellent design and a fine example of 1960s architecture. Its structure is essentially an external metal frame within which a glass box exists. The glass walls of the chapel are set in from the frame creating a verandah that encircles the building. The Chapel is located on a sloping site so that it is single storey at one end and double storey at the other. The first floor of the building sits on stone walls and at the entrance to the building there is a large stone wall. It is well positioned in a site full of large trees, taking advantage of its site and the views obtainable from the location.

Nunyara Chapel was opened in May 1963. Its architects, Cheesman, Doley, Brabham and Neighbour received an Architectural Award of Merit from the RAlA (SA Chapter) in 1966. In the RAlA's Register of

Significant Twentieth Century Architecture the significance of the building is said to lie in its "successful integration of the building's spiritual quality and its relevance to daily life. The first is achieved through its relationship to the wooded site, city view and the simple dignity of the detail. The second arises from its domestic form, scale, construction and materials (seen in 'contemporary' houses)- the idea of a church not being a place apart. The bell-tower identifies the building's purpose."

The building was upgraded in 1984 and is now used for seminars and weddings. It seats 150 people.

#### References

Aeuckens, A. 1989, *More about Mitcham*, City of Mitcham, Adelaide, pp. 128-29

Burgess, H. T. 1909, *The Cyclopedia of South Australia*, 1909, p. 132

Mitcham Local History Collection, files for Belair

RAIA's *Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture*

Interview with Dennis Chapman and others, Nunyara & Uniting Church, June 1995

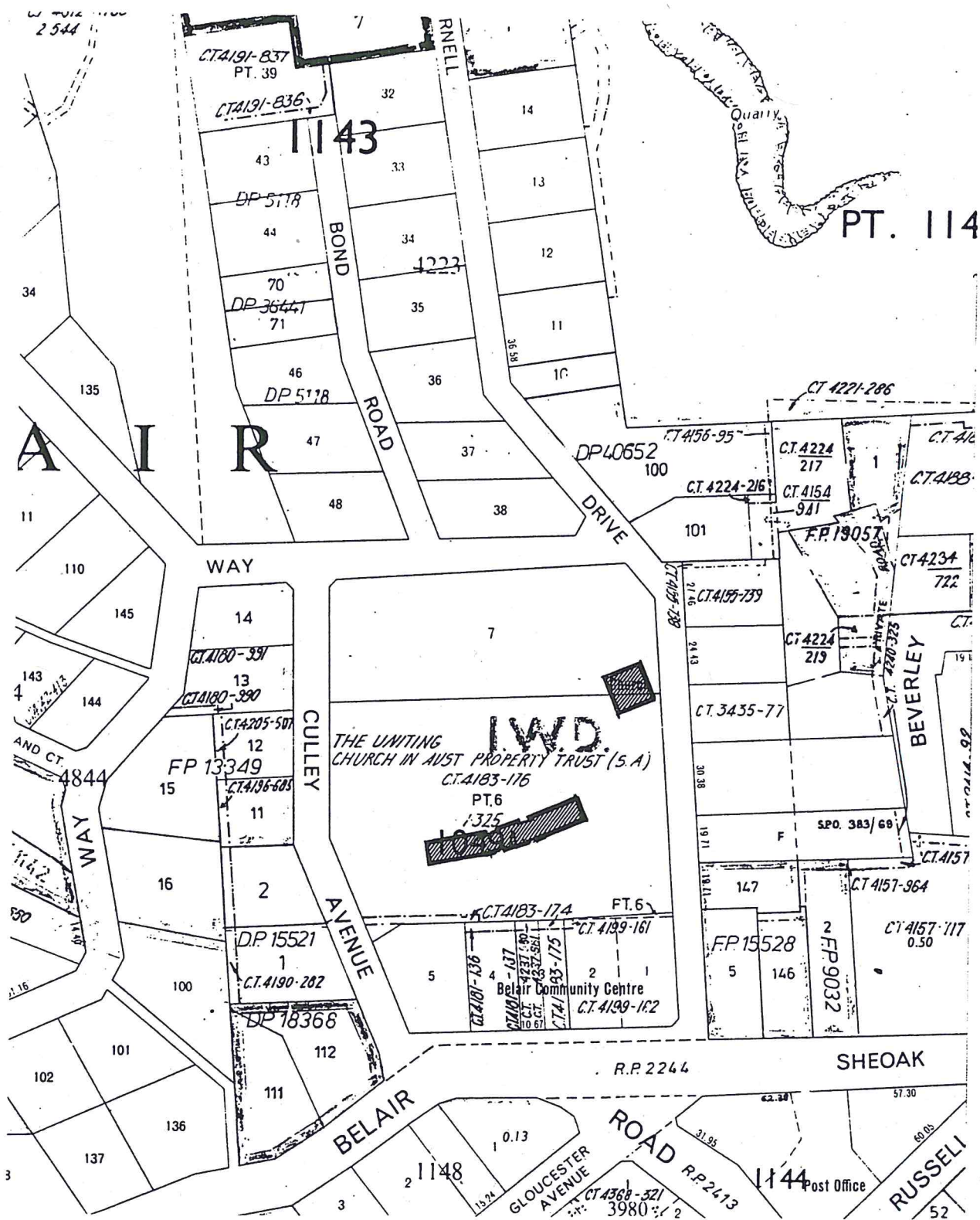
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## Nunyara Conference Centre and Chapel

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### SITE RECORD

Location	5 Burnell Drive, Belair
Description	Conference centre and related facilities
Boundary	External walls of the original TB sanatorium and chapel buildings only; the other buildings on the same land parcel are not of heritage value
Land Description	Lot 7, Part Section 1049A, Hd Adelaide, CT 3273/54
Local Government	City of Mitcham
Owner	Uniting Church in Australia South Australia Property Trust 33 Pirie Street Adelaide SA 5000
Use	Conference centre
Condition	Good
Other Assessments	Significant Twentieth Century Architecture, AHC
Heritage Status	SHR Nominated, File No. 10595
Photographs	3: 29 and 30
Report By	Robyn Taylor



MITCHAM HERITAGE SURVEY	PROPOSED STATE HERITAGE PLACE Nunyara Conference Centre and Chapel BELAIR	Scale: 1 : 2 500 ↑
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