

ST CATHERINE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Address	126 Main Street, Proserpine
Lot Plan	11RP835215
Coordinates	(E: 665517 N: 7743208)
Integrity	Fair
Condition	Good
Statutory Listings	Nil
Non-Statutory Listings	Nil
References	Historical information provided by Proserpine Historical Museum. David Scobie Architects, 2005. Proserpine Main Street Study & Datasheets. Townsville Daily Bulletin, Wednesday 30 June 1954, p.5.

Street View



Location Map



Physical Description

St Catherine's Catholic Church is located on the southern side of the eastern end of Main Street Proserpine.

St Catherine's Catholic Church comprises a substantial 1950s red brick building. There is a small entrance portico which has been added in order to allow for a front access driveway and cover for vehicles. The roofline of the portico matches that of the church.

The main structure of the church is a long, tall rectangular building. To either side of the building there are covered walkways/arcades designed to increase airflow and provide shelter from rain. The roofline of these walkways is lower than the main roofline, providing articulation. At the front and rear of these walkways, the main building extends out. Long, vertical, narrow windows are on the side facades at the rear. The two front side projections have large, arch windows. The side extended section at the front have gabled rooflines facing to the sides of the building. At the peak of these gables are crosses.

Above the front entranceway, is a large arched, stained-glass window depicting St Catherine. At the peak of the roof gable at the front of the church is a cross.

At the rear of the church there is a timber entrance door covered by a tin awning. There is also a small brick skillion extension at the rear. At the rear of the church is a metal framework with the church bell at the top.

Internally the altar appears intact, and there have been a number of donations to church furniture and statues. The confessional room, which is accessed from inside the main church, appears to be an addition.

There is a grotto and associated St Catherine statue located externally at the northwest elevation. At the ground level within this grotto is the foundation stone with the wording:

“MOST REV. H. E. RYAN D.O.

BISHOP OF TOWNSVILLE

BLESSED & PLACED

THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THIS CHURCH

UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF ST CATHERINE

ON THE 30TH OCT 1955

THE FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING”

The church is constructed from red brick, terracotta tiles for the roofing and render. The portico materials reflect the main church, terracotta tiled roofing, terracotta coloured paneling and green detailing.

Adjacent to the front entrance of the church are two plaques commemorating important milestones of the church.

Historical Context

The Proserpine district was first settled by European pastoralists in the 1870s. One property, Glen Isla, was set aside for a 3000-acre sugar plantation in 1882. Land was cleared by Pacific Islander and Chinese labour, and machinery and a mill were ordered for crushing. Despite these investments, the Crystal Brook Sugar Company Limited was not successful (due to the Pacific Island Laborers Act Amendment Act 1884, the depression and the poor seasons and sugar process). The land was subdivided under the auspices of the Crown Lands Act 1884 which provided for the resumption of larger pastoral runs and conversion to small selections.

In the 1890s, part of the Glen Isla property was included in the Proserpine township. A second sugar mill was opened in Proserpine in 1897, financed under the provisions of the Sugar Works Guarantee Act 1893. The mill crushed cane grown by independent farmers and was served by a tramway to a wharf on the Proserpine River. Proserpine township developed quickly after the establishment of the Proserpine Central Sugar Mill in 1897.

St Catherine's Roman Catholic Church has a long association with the Proserpine district. In 1904, the Catholic Church erected a small wooden church along Main Street on land donated by Joseph and Charles Busuttin. It was blessed and opened by Bishop Higgins of Rockhampton in 1905. St Catherine's School and Convent were established by the Sisters of Mercy in 1925. Proserpine Parish was founded in 1926.

The wooden church was removed during the 1950s when the parishioners decided to erect a new church. Tenders were advertised in 1954 at an estimated cost of £20,000 and the foundation stone was laid in 1955.

The new church was constructed from red brick, terracotta tiles and render. The prominent building, with its significant street presence, reflects the influence of the Italian migrants who came to work in the sugar industry, particularly post World War II. Various internal features demonstrate this influence, including the Sacred Heart statue 1944 – attributed to Valmadre Family; the Mary statue 1950 - attributed to the Scaldiero family and the stations of the cross (erected c.1957) - attributed to Joseph Sussini.

The new covered area in front of the Church was erected in July by Wayne Borellini. During a cyclone in 2011, the roof tiles were blown into a drain and the church sustained some water damage.

Historical Significance

Criteria A - *the place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the region's history*

St Catherine's Catholic Church demonstrates the important role of the Catholic Church in Proserpine and, more broadly, the region's development. Constructed on the site of the original church, the site is evidence of the strong migrant community (particularly Italian) that was part of the sugar industry following the opening of the Proserpine Mill in 1897 and which again expanded following World War II. The size

and scale of the 1950s church is also evidence of the districts continued growth and prosperity.

Criteria G - *the place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons*

Established in 1904, the site of St Catherine's Catholic Church been in continuous use as a place of worship since this period and the current church is significant for its enduring association with the Catholic Church.











