

Erskine College Main Building and Chapel of the Sacred Heart

Avon Street, Island Bay



WCC Image from building file

Summary of heritage significance

- Erskine College is of outstanding and national heritage significance. It is a now rare physical reminder of the work of the Society of the Sacred Heart in New Zealand and tells the story of the development of Catholic education in this country. The buildings themselves are of special architectural, cultural, technological, and aesthetic significance as excellent examples of the work of a prominent architect.
- The Chapel in particular is regarded as the finest Gothic interior in New Zealand. It is associated with a number of important historic figures as well as being a place of worship, spiritual retreat, and celebration for generations of pupils, members of the society, and Wellingtonians. Its high value is best demonstrated by the formation of the Save Erskine College Trust and its official approval as New Zealand's first non-governmental heritage protection authority.



South West Perspective- *Images: Charles Collins - 2015*



North West Perspective- *Images: Charles Collins - 2015*

District Plan:	Map 4, reference 21/1 and 21/2
Legal Description:	Lots 57, 58, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 81, and 721 on DP 170
Heritage Area:	-
HPT Listed:	Category I, reference 7795
Archaeological Site:	Risk Unknown
Other Names:	Convent of the Sacred Heart Island Bay
Key physical dates:	Convent of the Sacred Heart constructed: 1906 Chapel of the Sacred Heart constructed: 1930 Lisieux Wing constructed: 1949, relocated: 1983 New Classroom Block and Dining Hall constructed: 1957 New Classroom and Dormitory Block constructed: 1967 Integration of Erskine College: 1983
Architect / Builder:	Architect: John Sydney Swan
Former uses:	Religion – chapel, Education, Civic Facilities
Current uses:	Religion – chapel, Education, Civic Facilities
Earthquake Prone Status:	Earthquake Prone – S124 Red notice issued (Orange notice expired 15 April 2012)

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History¹

The buildings on Avon Street that are commonly referred to as Erskine College are a collection of buildings originally constructed as a Catholic Girls' Boarding School founded by the Society of the Sacred Heart (Sacré Coeur). The college is recognised as being the second of four girls' schools that the society would set up in New Zealand. The buildings have become icons for Wellington, particularly Island Bay, and have received massive public and professional support when threatened by demolition and has increasingly been recognised for its outstanding heritage significance.

The first of the buildings to be constructed on Avon Street was the Convent of the Heart. Wellington architect John Sydney Swan, who was at the time just emerging from his partnership with Frederick de Jersey Clere, was commissioned to design the building. This would be the first of many commissions for the Catholic Church and John Swan is responsible for a number of significant religious buildings in the city. His religious work, as well as his commercial and domestic architecture, has made him one of the most important Wellington architects of the early 20th century. The foundation stone of the four storey building was laid on 14 May 1905, on the Feast of the Patronage of St Joseph, with building already advanced. The contractor was H. Ranson and the building was expected to cost £15000. At the blessing of the foundation stone Archbishop Redwood suggested that the building of the Sacred Heart would complete a Catholic system of education for girls in Wellington, as there was for boys. The main building shows influences from the Gothic, Tudor, Edwardian, and Romanesque traditions, stylishly adapted with a New Zealand colonial touch – for example the wooden verandahs which are a feature of the main western elevation. The interior extensively uses native and imported timbers, and the banisters of the main stairwell feature cross motifs that are carried from the exterior of the building. All of the windows on the south face of the building were glazed with double sash windows as protection from the southerlies blowing in from Island Bay. The original convent building has been added to over the years with the first addition, known as St Anthony's Block, completed in 1916. This area was primarily used for recreation, with the upper floor containing a series of cells for students to practice the piano. Parents donated to the school generously for other additions to the buildings, such as a two storey addition to the east side of the convent building in 1921. In 1927 a cage lift was installed in the main building that was still in use in the late 2000s.

As the school grew, the facilities were expanded with the addition of a timber accommodation block, known as the Lisieux Wing, in 1949, a gymnasium and classroom block in 1957, the Coen Wing of accommodation, and science laboratories and a kitchen/laundry added in 1967.

Perhaps the most significant addition to the grounds, and probably the most celebrated, was the construction of the new chapel in 1929/1930. A large chapel space had been included in the main building, as well as a smaller chapel dedicated to Mater Admirabilis. John Sydney Swan was again commissioned to design a much larger chapel, which was to sit to the south east of the original school building, with access only through the corridors of the main convent building. The design for the chapel is regarded as one of the finest Gothic spaces in New Zealand. The soaring

¹ Unless specified the history in this report is adapted from: Blyss Wagstaff and Alison Dangerfield, 'Erskine College (former) – 25-31 Avon Street, Melbourne Road, and Mace Street, Island Bay', unpublished registration report (Historic Places Trust, 17 July 2009) and Chris Cochrane with Michael Kelly, 'Erskine College Conservation Plan' prepared for Ian Cassels Property Link Development Ltd, 31 May 2001.

vaulted ceiling forms a high ribbed canopy over a light space, with the impact of the room being enhanced by the elongated stringers and slender half columns spaced along the walls. The twelve stained glass windows along each side were brought out from Mayers in Munich over several years, with donations being used to purchase each. Swan himself donated to the central window, which is situated above the magnificent Carrara marble altar, demonstrating his attachment to the complex that he had designed.

The altar itself is finely designed, its high quality Gothic style carving crafted in Italy and houses relics of several saints including St Madeline Sophie. The gilded tabernacle door is inset with rubies, diamonds, and moonstones and finely carved shrines. Gothic timber panelling, pews, and stalls, as well as statuary from Mayer of Munich all add to the grandeur of the space, and have created an interior that is richly decorated and elegant. The proportions of the interior of the chapel have created a space that is still widely renowned for its acoustic excellence, and a number of noted performers, including the Vienna Boys Choir, acknowledging the quality of the space. As well as this it has been the location of countless ceremonies, individual and collective celebrations, and has been witness to two members of the order being beatified; Foundress St Madeline Sophie Barat was beatified in 1908 and canonised in 1925, and St Phillipine Duchesne was beatified in 1940 and canonised 1988.

The 1960's saw a great amount of change in the Sacré Coeur school culture. Among the changes proposed by the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II 1963-1965) was for more collaboration with lay people, and at the Island Bay convent school this was reflected in increased numbers of lay staff. The changes, however, caused some confusion between this school and Sacred Heart College in Lower Hutt. In the late 1960s, in view of this, it was decided to rename the school Erskine College, in honour of the former Superior General of the Society, Mother Janet Erskine Stuart, who had visited the Island Bay campus in 1914 and planted a Norfolk pine which is still remaining in the Reverend Mother's garden alongside other well established trees planted in the early days of the school. From this time Erskine College became more integrated with the state schooling system, and reflecting these changes, the Society of the Sacred Heart also became more open. At this time, financial strains were beginning to become an issue. And although school fees were not insignificant, being a private school meant that the school was largely dependant upon these and donations for funding, and as school rolls were in decline at the time there was significant added pressure.

The first announcement that the school was to close came in 1970, and it was a strategic decision not made lightly by the Society of the Sacred Heart. In a precursor to the effort that would later be demonstrated in the battle to save the buildings from demolition, a large group of parents, staff, alumnae, and friends rallied to keep the school open. This was successful in the form of an Incorporated Society (Erskine College Inc.), which managed by a Board of Governors managed to continue running the school for another 15 years until its closure in 1985. The catalyst for closure in the 1980s was reported as being the prohibitive proposed cost of strengthening the college building against earthquakes. This ended the 79 year operation of a college that at its time of opening had been one of few secondary schools in Wellington and one of an even more exclusive group that was based around educating girls.

The school was purchased in 1986 by the New Zealand Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society, which parcelled off the land around the edges of the site and sold them for residential development. The Society planned to develop the site as a retirement village. In the meantime the chapel was occupied by the Pope Pius X Society, the Lisieux Block was rented as accommodation, and various tenants made

use of the main convent building, most of whom had a common focus on the creative and performing arts. By 1992 the Erskine Complex was being used regularly as a studio and performance space, a film site (it featured as a location in Peter Jackson's early film *The Frighteners*), and as a venue for high profile events such as the International Festival of the Arts and the Shakespeare Society's Globe tapestries exhibition.

It was also in 1992 that the Hibernian Society applied for resource consent to strengthen the chapel walls, which would be needed if the second part of the proposal was to be carried out – the demolition of the main convent building. This proposal was met with considerable protest among the local community, heritage professionals, college alumnae, users of the buildings, and other appreciators of the heritage of the Erskine complex. These groups banded together to advocate for the retention of the convent building and preservation of the site as a whole. Esteem for the main building and the whole complex was so strong that a group called the Save Erskine College Trust (SECT) was established, and successfully applied to become the first non governmental heritage protection authority under the Resource Management Act 1991. SECT has since had a heritage protection order placed upon the site, prohibiting the alteration, modification, damage, removal, or demolition of any of the buildings, structures, trees, shrubs or natural growth within the grounds, by anyone without their authority. In response to the public notification of the application for the order, 65 submissions were received in support and only two in opposition, illustrating the value that the community places on the Erskine College complex.

The perceived financial viability of the Erskine Site has been demonstrated by the number of interested purchasers over the years. In 1994 local businessman Victor Cattermole attempted to purchase the site but this was not completed. In 1996 another group of interested individuals, including Jonathan Milne of the Learning Connexion International School of Art and Creativity, also proposed to purchase it but could not raise the necessary funds. The building was leased by the Learning Connexion apart from the chapel from 1996 until 2009.

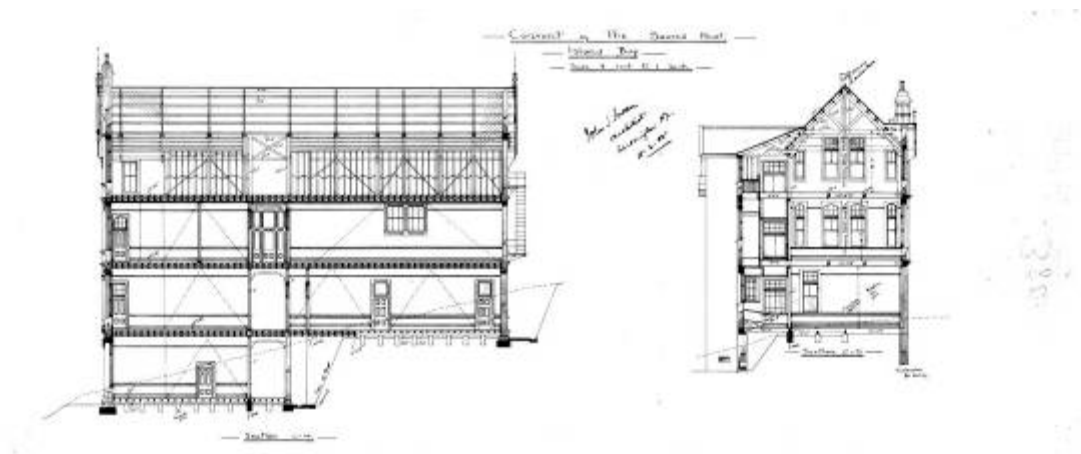
Since 2000 the complex has been owned by property developer Ian Cassels and his company Property Links (Developments) Ltd. The company refurbished several of the spaces associated with the Chapel creating a venue, reception room, new bathroom, and kitchen facilities suitable for hosting weddings and other functions. A new main entrance to the Chapel – now used separately from the rest of the college buildings – was installed to the south side of the buildings. The main convent building is still in need of refurbishment and maintenance, and the whole complex is in need of earthquake strengthening. The buildings received an orange sticker notice that expired on the 15 April 2012, and it has been issued with a S124 Red notice. The Chapel, which was a popular wedding venue and the other buildings in the complex, have now been closed.

In 1993 a feasibility study was carried out to explore the future of the convent building that stated: 'Erskine College has played a leading role in the education of many New Zealand women – including members of some of the nation's most prominent families – whose combined cultural, economic, social, and artistic contribution to the development of Aotearoa is inestimable'. These values have not changed since this time, and as well as the cultural, social, ceremonial, and traditional values that these buildings have, they are also of outstanding architectural, townscape, educational, technical, and historic value. Work is ongoing regarding the future of these buildings, however, the future of the building has been uncertain for some time, but the earthquake prone status has placed new pressure

upon the building. The site's owner has proposed demolishing the school buildings, but retaining the Chapel and vesting it in a trust, however this proposal has been met with extreme opposition. Critics of Cassels have stated that he was aware of the earthquake prone issues of the complex when he purchased it in 2000, and to allow the company to demolish a significant part of it would be setting a disturbing precedent condoning demolition by neglect.² Part of this complex issue is the fact that there are two parties directly involved in any proposed work for the buildings – the owner and SECT – as well as the restrictions placed upon development by the protection order, its heritage listing on the Wellington City Council District Plan, and its recognised status as a Category I heritage site with the Historic Places Trust. There is currently a lack of coordination and cooperation between the parties involved in the management of these buildings and as of 2013 the situation is no less fraught.

1.2 Timeline of modifications (include original plans)

WCA – 00043: 4: 380



- 1906 Building opened
- 1907 Completion of convent - finishing of top floor (part)
Cost: £690
Architect: J.S. Swan
Builder: John Moffat
- 1909 Completion of convent - finishing of top floor (balance)
Cost: £776
Architect: J.S. Swan
Builder: H. Davis
- 1916 Addition of St Anthony's block. (No details of the architect, cost and builder are known, although it was likely to have been designed by John Swan).
- 1921 Additions to the building in two parts.
Community refectory and classroom block behind the convent. Two storied, with connecting covered ways to old building, one covered

² Kerry McBride, 'Wellington's historic Erskine College faces demolition', *Dominion Post*, 23 March 2012, accessed 20 December 2013, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/business/commercial-property/6627718/Historic-Wellington-building-faces-demolition>

way leading off from lower floor corridor, ii) the other from the upstairs study room, and also adjoining the upper floor lavatory.

New pantry added off entrance way. School refectory extended by the removal of wall (included removal of a fireplace). New door to outside from Sisters room (room adjacent to the school refectory)

Cost: Not known

Architect: Swan Lawrence Swan and Hamilton.

Builder: M. Browman

Permit no.: C13401, C13450

1927 Cage lift installed in main building.

By 1930 Decorative timber infills removed from principal gables.

1930 Chapel of the Sacred Heart built and officially opened on 26 October

1930

The building of the chapel brought extensive alterations to the school block, including a new library, studyroom and Junior School area. The little Lady Chapel was moved next to the studyroom. No record of these alterations has yet been located.

1934 Addition of a dormitory to the top of the 1921 wing. Connected to Old Building by a covered way

Cost: £700

Architect: Swan, Lawrence and Swan.

Builder: J.H. Myers

Permit no.: B13557

1943 Strengthening of the music room block after earthquake.

Cost: Not known

Architect: B.F. Kelly.

Builder: Yeatts and Co Ltd

Permit no.: B22582/B3794

1949 Lisieux Wing, an accommodation block added to the east of the main building, erected.

Cost: £5,268

Architect: Kelly & Marie

Builder: A.V. Swanson

Permit no.: B28006

1955 Alterations to Sacred Heart Convent - included alterations to St Antonio's block (St Anthony's). Houghton & Son and Marie.

Cost: Not known

Architect: Houghton & Son and Mair

Builder: Not known

Permit no.: B39298

1957 Gymnasium built. No record of this work has yet been found.

1967 Building of the Coen Wing, incl. accommodation for senior girls in bed-studyrooms on the top floors, science laboratories on the first floor and a kitchen and laundry block on the ground floor.

Cost: Not known

Architect: Houghton and Mair

Builder: Not known

Permit no.: C20061

1980 Alterations to Lisieux Wing etc.

Cost: \$58,500

Architect: Houghton Partnership

Builder: Robin Schwass Ltd

Permit no.: B13557

2003 Unspecified modifications

1.3 Occupation history

1906	Society of the Sacred Heart (Sacré Coeur)
1970	Incorporated Society (Erskine College Inc.)
1985	Various tenants
1996-2009	Learning Connexion International School of Art and Creativity

1.4 Architect

Swan, John Sydney - Architect³

Swan (1874-1936) practised architecture during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He formed part of the last group of architects to follow the traditional Gothic and Classical styles. He was articled to Frederick de Jersey Clere, working with Clere on many major designs such as the Wellington Rowing Club building (then known as the Naval Artillery Boat Shed, 1894) as well as smaller provincial buildings such as the Church of the Good Shepherd, Tinui. The firm was known as Clere, Fitzgerald and Richmond and was one of the most prominent architectural practices in Wellington. From 1901 to 1906 Swan was in partnership with Clere, practising on his own account from 1907. The first major design produced by Swan in this new practice was the Karori Crematorium (1907) which served to establish his architectural identity separate from Clere. During his long and varied career Swan produced a large and wide range of work, including a number of banks for the National Bank such as the head office building in Wellington (1907), educational buildings for the Wellington Technical College with William Gray Young (1922), and a number of major buildings for the Catholic Church including St Gerard's Church, Mt Victoria (1910), Sacred Heart Convent (later Erskine College), Island Bay (1909), and Wanganui Convent (1912). He was an architect of imagination as evidenced by the design of his own house 'The Moorings', Glenbervie Terrace (1905).

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture⁴

Summary of Convent Building:

The 1906 Convent Building (or Main Building) features vertical proportions and roof forms that are typical of the Gothic style, and it is the building that defines the complex. Its interiors are not as impressive as those of the Chapel, but its proportions and symmetry are striking in their scale, elegance, and grandeur. The entrance is centred and flanked by full height gabled wings. These wings contain the essentials of the decorative presentation of the Convent Building: the half timbered Tudor influenced gables, rectangular paned Edwardian styled windows, Romanesque influenced tall rounded windows, a centred niche and Sacré Coeur emblem (two hearts encircled by lilies), negatively formed crosses, and engaged columns – one below the other on successive floors, and all formed in a symmetry of its own. Between the wings the simplest of the windows are in the front wall, set back and

³ Historic Places Trust, 'John Sydney Swan', *Professional Biographies*, accessed 20 December 2013, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Swan,+John+Sydney>

⁴ Architecture adapted from Blyss Wagstaff and Alison Dangerfield, 'Erskine College (former) – 25-31 Avon Street, Melbourne Road, and Mace Street, Island Bay', for further detail please refer to this resource.

embellished by timbered verandahs at each level and three dormers at the fourth level – all reinforcing the importance of this view by mirrored features and detailing.

The building is constructed in brick with reinforced concrete, and is robust and solid in appearance behind its decoration. The exterior is predominantly light grey plastered brick which has weathered in an elegant way and is complimented by the off white timber joinery of the verandahs, gables, and window frames. Each floor level is marked by horizontal plinth detailing, at the point of the structurally reinforced bond beam. The roof is steeply pitched and iron clad. Most of the original chimneys have been removed.

Around the building, the other elevations do not have the same extent of elaborate detailing. The fenestration becomes more slender and elongated with similar joinery to the front façade. The regularity of the windows and dormer timbered gabled modulate the high solidity of the exterior form. While the three other facades of this H plan building are less intricate, they are sufficiently grand, with high quality detailing emphasising its craftsmanship and giving it significant architectural merit, and allowing an impressive view from all sides.

Summary of Erskine Chapel/Chapel of the Sacred Heart:

The Chapel added to the south side of the Convent Building in 1930 extends down to the front edge of the Convent Building and the ground floor of the Chapel is level with the first floor of the Convent.

The main entrance to the chapel is now through double doors to the driveway rising on the southern side of the site, this entrance replaced the original internal points of access from the convent. The east end of the chapel is up against a steep embankment planted with shrubs and trees. There are some residential properties in close proximity to the east and south. To the north the chapel is adjacent to a well maintained garden and courtyard that was used for weddings.

The exterior of the Chapel only gives hints as to the magnificence of the interior. Stained glass windows are arranged on the upper part of the exterior with hood moulds over the windows, the high steep roof suggests an impressive interior space. Rhythmic buttressing extends the length of the nave, the five sided apse projecting at the east end, gables with high crosses, a niche, and quatrefoil window mark the transepts. A rectangular stout section of the building projecting from the Chapel north houses supporting spaces. The Chapel has been constructed to complement the main Convent with the use of brick finished in grey plaster and timber framed detailing. The interior of the building has features, surfaces and finishes that are superb. The plasterwork around doors, windows, columns and alcoves is finely detailed providing exquisite modulations of light around the interior. The plaster vaulting of the ceilings fans down onto slender decorated columns around the apse and through the nave. The Stations of the Cross are positioned beneath the vaults. Brilliant stained glass of German origin are set in lancet windows around the Chapel.

The Chapel is remarkable also for its fixtures. The statuary (including those flanking the entranceway), the altar and the cancelli in white marble are delicately carved in the (mainly) Gothic tradition. The rimu pews are simply constructed. The rimu stalls are panelled with trefoil and quatrefoil motifs, surmounted with crosses. The panelled rimu pulpit is a neat, cantilevered enclosure reached by five stairs.

2.2 Materials⁵

Concrete - foundations, piles, floors, verandah floors, steps.

Reinforcing (rail irons) - over window and door heads, otherwise steel rod within concrete.

Brickwork – (in areas indicated on plan). Every 1/8th course bonded with a hoop of iron; brickwork - English bond.

RSJ - in marked walls.

Dressed timber – for flooring, in hall, staircase and about windows. Roof principals of rimu.

Jarrah - sleepers, stringers, 6” ground floor joists, wall plates, partition plates, framing in verandahs and balconies, flooring of fire escape platform flooring of ? stand, covering boards and beams and studs under beams and roof principals.

Heart totara – all outside woodwork not jarrah, sun boards and bearers, outside door frames, window frames and sills complete, ground for lining and skirtings on brick walls.

Heart baltic pine – for sundry doors and all window sashes.

Heart matai – for flooring and 10” joists where within three feet of ground.

Kauri – sundry doors, wash tubs, sink tables, shelving and dresser.

Oregon – floor joists not already specified for jarrah and matai, rafters of roof principals.

Rimu – varnished.

2.3 Setting

Immediately, the buildings stand with the Reverend Mother’s Garden, which features cast iron gates and fences as well as stone walls, which mark the original pedestrian entrances to the property from the Melbourne Road Property. Although slightly unruly, the garden is still present and is emphasised by the now sizeable mature trees. The Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto is located on the embankment on the north of the site, adjacent to the northern driveway. It is made up of a small shrine with mosaic stone work where a statue of the Virgin Mary once stood.

More widely, Erskine College stands on the eastern hills of Island Bay, overlooking the community and the valley. The site rises up from Avon Street with a drive sweeping Melbourne Road, curving before the main entrance to the college. Behind the college the hill rises steeply to the suburb of Melrose. The most prominent building, the 1906 Convent Building, is set apart from its neighbours in the suburban neighbourhood. It looks out over the valley, and with its obvious architectural and somewhat romanticised grandeur, it contributes to the local townscape of Island Bay.

⁵ Michael Kelly, ‘*Erskine College Heritage Assessment*’, unpublished heritage assessment report (commissioned by Michael Hartfield for Wellington City Council, October 1997).

3.0 Sources

Cochrane, Chris with Michael Kelly. '*Erskine College Conservation Plan*.' Prepared for Ian Cassels, Property Link Development Ltd. 31 May 2001.

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<http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Swan,+John+Sydney>

Kelly, Michael. '*Erskine College Heritage Assessment*.' Unpublished heritage assessment report. Commissioned by Michael Hartfield for Wellington City Council, October 1997.

McBride, Kerry. 'Wellington's historic Erskine College faces demolition.' *Dominion Post*, 23 March 2012. Accessed 20 December 2013,

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/business/commercial-property/6627718/Historic-Wellington-building-faces-demolition>

Wagstaff, Blyss and Alison Dangerfield. 'Erskine College (former) – 25-31 Avon Street, Melbourne Road, and Mace Street, Island Bay.' Unpublished registration report, Historic Places Trust, 17 July 2009.

Wellington City Archive

WCA – 00043: 4: 380

Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance

Cultural heritage values

Aesthetic Value:

Architectural: Does the item have architectural or artistic value for characteristics that may include its design, style, era, form, scale, materials, colour, texture, patina of age, quality of space, craftsmanship, smells, and sounds?

The Erskine College complex is of outstanding architectural significance. Its size and style harken back to an era when schools were intended to be places of distinction and exude confidence and tradition. These buildings are among the greatest achievements of John Sydney Swan and are remarkable for their design, form, and composition and the separate Chapel and Convent building have been skilfully designed to read as a single, imposing and grand, entity.

Townscape: Does the item have townscape value for the part it plays in defining a space or street; providing visual interest; its role as a landmark; or the contribution it makes to the character and sense of place of Wellington?

Erskine College is set apart from its neighbours in the suburban neighbourhood. It looks out over the valley, and with its obvious architectural and somewhat romanticised grandeur, it significantly contributes to the local townscape of Island Bay.

Group: Is the item part of a group of buildings, structures, or sites that taken together have coherence because of their age, history, style, scale, materials, or use?

Historic Value:

Association: Is the item associated with an important person, group, or organisation?

Erskine College is associated with a number of important people and organisations in New Zealand's history. It was founded at the invitation of Bishop Francis Redwood who would later become an Archbishop. It is associated with the development of Catholic education in New Zealand. It is also significant for its association with John Sydney Swan, who not only designed the most noteworthy buildings on the site, but who also donated to the central chapel window. The place is also of historic importance for its links with the Society of the Sacred Heart, and is important as the second convent school that was instituted by them in New Zealand.

Association: Is the item associated with an important historic event, theme, pattern, phase, or activity?

Scientific Value:

Archaeological: Does the item have archaeological value for its ability to provide scientific information about past human activity?

The archaeological values associated with Erskine College are unknown, but it is known that the site was in use prior to the establishment of the school.

Educational: Does the item have educational value for what it can demonstrate about aspects of the past?

Erskine College is of educational value to demonstrate the development of Catholic education in New Zealand, in particular in the narrative of secondary education aimed at girls. The site is also the site of a major, long lasting, and continuing heritage battle so the site has a high profile. As the buildings have a long association with the Society of the Sacred Heart they are also useful in telling the story of the society and its mission.

Technological: *Does the item have technological value for its innovative or important construction methods or use of materials?*

Erskine College has technical value as an early example of reinforced masonry construction and for the technical accomplishment of the design.

Social Value:

Public esteem: *Is the item held in high public esteem?*

Erskine College is held in extremely high public esteem, demonstrated by the public outcry and outrage at its proposed demolition in the 1980s, the establishment of SECT who were the first non-government authority to hold a heritage protection order, and the continued involvement of the public in the development and future of the buildings.

Symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual: *Does the item have symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual or other cultural value for the community who has used and continues to use it?*

Erskine College has a high level of symbolic, commemorative, traditional, and spiritual value. It is a physical symbol of the work of the Society of the Sacred Heart. The buildings tell of the expansion of the school and the educational work of the society and a number of them are named for important members of the society. The Chapel contains many relics associated with donors and venerated members of the Catholic community, both local and worldwide.

Identity/Sense of place/Continuity:

Is the item a focus of community, regional, or national identity?

Does the item contribute to sense of place or continuity?

Erskine College is an extremely visible element of the Island Bay community and contributes significantly to the sense of place and continuity in the suburb. It is the subject of huge public esteem and the socio-cultural values of the place are well documented.

Sentiment/Connection: *Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?*

These buildings are a focus of community sentiment and connection and are of outstanding heritage significance. It is a now-rare physical testament to the work of the Society of the Sacred Heart in New Zealand, the place tells a story of the development of Catholic education in this country and is associated with numerous significant historical figures as well as being a place of worship, spiritual retreat and celebration for generations of pupils and Sacré Coeur religious, some of whom are commemorated within the site.

Level of cultural heritage significance

Rare: *Is the item rare, unique, unusual, seminal, influential, or outstanding?*

Erskine College is one of few remaining secondary school buildings from the Victorian/Edwardian period remaining in Wellington and is certainly the city's oldest purpose built secondary school building.

Representative: *Is the item a good example of the class it represents?*

The Convent and Chapel are excellent examples of the Gothic tradition designed with a colonial influence by one of Wellington's most important architects from the period.

Authentic: *Does the item have authenticity or integrity because it retains significant fabric from the time of its construction or from later periods when important additions or modifications were carried out?*

The College retains considerable authenticity in some ways, particularly on the main facades. The essential characteristics of Swan's designs are intact and few features have been altered. Some decoration has been lost (timber in the gables for example) but the cement plaster mouldings and other embellishments remain in place. The refurbishment of the Chapel has made some alterations, in particular the addition of new doors.

Local/Regional/National/International

Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?

Erskine College is of outstanding and national heritage significance. It is a now rare physical reminder of the work of the Society of the Sacred Heart in New Zealand and tells the story of the development of Catholic education in this country. The buildings themselves are of special architectural, cultural, technological, and aesthetic significance as excellent examples of the work of a prominent architect. The Chapel in particular is regarded as the finest Gothic interior in New Zealand. It is associated with a number of important historic figures as well as being a place of worship, spiritual retreat, and celebration for generations of pupils, members of the society, and Wellingtonians. It is the focus of huge public esteem and is held in high regard by former alumnae, members of the Catholic community, Island Bay residents, heritage professionals, and a myriad of other interested parties. Its high value is best demonstrated by the formation of the Save Erskine College Trust and its official approval as New Zealand's first non-governmental heritage protection authority.

4.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory		
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
WCC Records – building file		
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)		
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
Plan change?		
Heritage Area Report		
Heritage Area Spreadsheet		
Heritage items folder (electronic)		
HPT website		
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)		

Background research

Insert any relevant background information into this section. This may include:

- *Additional plans, such as those for alterations*
- *Chunks of text from other sources such as Cyclopedia of NZ, Papers Past*
- *Additional images*