



# Tocal College, CB Alexander Campus (former CB Alexander Agricultural College (Tocal))

Address Paterson Road, Paterson, NSW, 2421

Practice Ian McKay & Philip Cox Architects

Designed 1963 Completed 1965

History & Description Tocal College is on the hilltop about 1km south of the historic Victorian Regency style Tocal Homestead, 1841, in the lower Hunter Valley. The college, designed for the Presbyterian Church as a post secondary level (after what was then 4<sup>th</sup> year or 5<sup>th</sup> year) agricultural college for 120 residential students & staff, is based on the concept of quadrangles with the main central court fully open at the northern side with views towards the Paterson River & Tocal Homestead. The U<sup>l</sup>qform site plan was set out on a regular 2.7m planning grid utilising verandahs for primary circulation & an islandqchapel placed off-centre within the main court. The chapel was given visual dominance with a tall central spire & battered brick walls punctured by narrow deep openings.

The materials were chosen for their rustic appearance & low maintenance. Local durable hardwoods, including ironbark, brush box & tallow wood, were left exposed internally & stained externally with rafter ends painted white at eaves. Verandahs extend behind colonnades of oversized circular timber posts or closely spaced brick piers. The brickwork expressed the rustic nature of the buildings, both externally as well as internally. Internally floors are either timber or brick paved while externally there is a wide use of kiln fired pavers & rubble drains in lieu of gutters. Where gutters were required they are in copper. The unglazed terracotta tiled roof forms of the complex are otherwise kept low & are layered providing a level of intimacy appropriate for its purpose. The exuberant spire framing of the chapel is detailed with multi-layered members bolted together using recessed steel plates. The Dining Hall trusses pay homage to the influence on this style of architecture of Alvar Aalto's Town Hall, Säynätsalo, Finland, 1952, & its council chamber's roof fan trusses.

Later additions have followed the spirit & intention of the original concept. Tocal was the second important commission for the partnership of Ian McKay & Philip Cox; the earlier St Andrews Agricultural College, Leppington, had been awarded The Sulman Award in 1963, however, Tocal was a larger project & confirmed their reputation. The partnership though was ended not long after Tocal's completion. The CB Alexander Agricultural College, Tocal, was awarded both The Sulman Award & the Blacket Award in 1965. Phillip Cox was awarded the RAIA Gold Medal in 1984.

Statement of Significance Tocal College is an excellent example of the Late Twentieth-Century Sydney Regional style of architecture with its free massing; integration with the landscape in a naturalqsetting; the use of natural materials including clearly expressed timber structure & traditional load-bearing brickwork, & a return to crafted architecture exhibited in the quality of the detailing. The complex was an early important work by two of Australia's notable architects Ian McKay & Philip Cox.

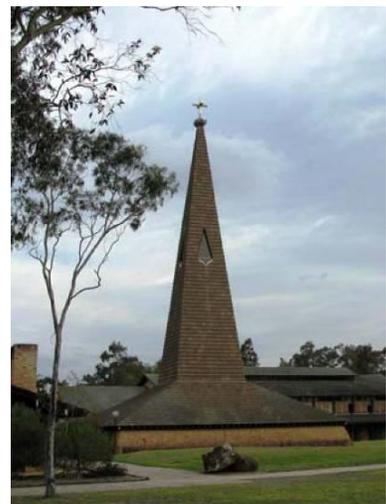
Criteria Applicable **N1.** Significant heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design **N5.** Having a special association with the life or works of architects of significant importance in our history



Dining Hall.



Chapel spire. Source for B&W photos: Max Dupain



View from north to chapel & central court. Source: EMA 2010