DECORATIVE

PROJECT
St Patrick's Cathedral Precinct

LOCATION
Bunbury, WA

ARCHITECT
Marcus Collins

BUILDER
Perkins Bunbury

ALUMINIUM WINDOW GLAZER/FABRICATOR (SPIRE)
LGA, Bunbury

GLAZIER (WINDOWS)
Glasspower, Perth

GLASS FABRICATOR
DigiGlass

PRINCIPAL GLASS MANUFACTURER
Viridian

ARTIST
Robert Juniper

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHER (CANVAS PAINTINGS)
Tony Nathan

ARTIST
Robert Juniper

PROJECT COST
$17 million

PRINCIPAL GLAZING
DigiGlass Decorative Safety Glass:
Viridian 11.52mm clear heat strengthened and laminate
Comprising:
5mm toughened glass
0.38mm soft white PVB interlayer
0.76 mm DigiGlass PVB interlayer
0.38mm soft white PVB interlayer
5mm toughened glass

Spire

Viridian DécorColour™ range – 17.14mm Laminated/Toughened

Interlayers: Viridian Vanceva range
3 colours – Arctic Snow, Coral Rose and Golden Light.

A COLOURFUL VISION

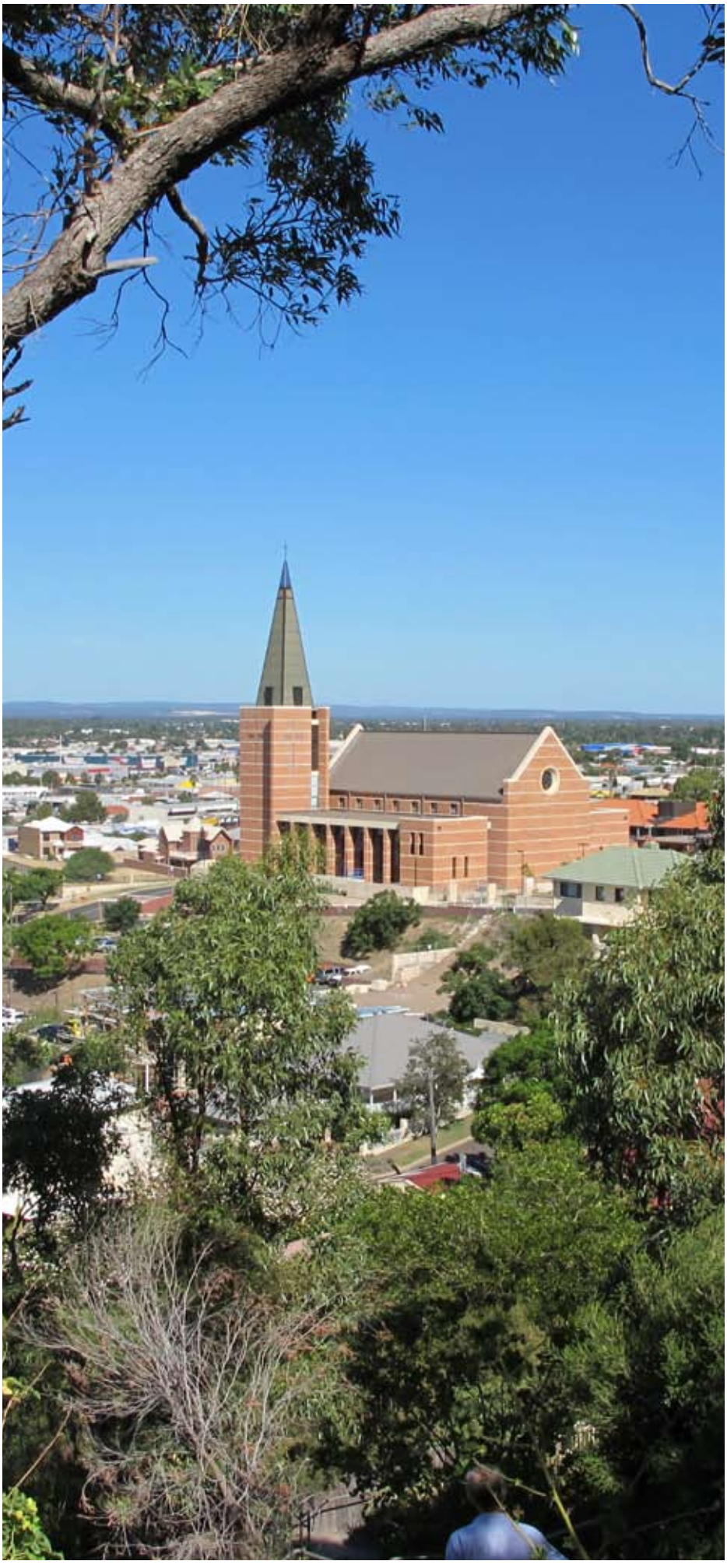
Text – Samantha Senior
Photography – Marcus Collins Architects

The newly rebuilt St Patrick's Cathedral in the Western Australian port city of Bunbury was consecrated on 17 March 2011, more than six years after its predecessor was destroyed by a tornado. Attended by more than 800 guests, including Cardinal Archbishop George Pell and the Pope's ambassador, an official opening of the Cathedral Precinct by the Governor of Western Australia Dr Ken Michael followed the Cathedral's first ever ceremony.

Designed by WA based architect Marcus Collins, the Cathedral is a welcome arrival for the local Catholic community that was devastated by the loss of the former building, which had served them for 80 years. Located on the same site as the previous Cathedral, the new St Patrick's covers 1600sqm – an expansion on the former facilities. As well as the Cathedral, the development features offices, a hall and Presbytery, providing residences for the Bishop and priests.

Viridian
New World Glass

CSR



Marcus was approached by Bishop Gerard Holohan to design the Cathedral precinct. While he hadn't actually designed a cathedral before, he did have experience in the field of religious architecture, having previously worked on four churches as well as two mosques in the Middle East.

"When it came to designing the cathedral, the architectural process itself was similar to that of any other project. In fact, in this instance I was lucky to have an incredibly full brief which isn't always the case," says Marcus.

The brief was developed in consultation with the local community. In keeping with the wishes of parishioners and the community, the Cathedral has a traditional form when viewed against the skyline from the city and surrounds, however the interior design and detailing is contemporary. While the interiors of traditional cathedrals tend to be quite narrow and lineal, the new St Patrick's Cathedral's nave shies away from the trend by being wider than it is in length. An upstairs gallery offers additional seating without affecting the Cathedral's footprint, while operable clerestory glazing provides natural light and ventilation.

One of the most eye-catching aspects of the Cathedral's design is the biblical inspired artwork that fills the Cathedral's walls of windows. Used in place of stained glass windows, the artwork was reproduced using DigiGlass.

"The decision to use DigiGlass was born out of another key element of the brief, which was that although the cathedral sits upon a hilltop, the client did not want the interior to look out over Bunbury. Rather, it was preferred that it be inward looking while still allowing in natural light. It was while considering the possibilities of contemporary coloured glass that we decided on using DigiGlass to help achieve this objective," says Marcus.

With a brief to paint a series of biblical scenes in such a way that they would appeal to younger people, well-known WA artist Robert Juniper was commissioned to create a series of 16 paintings. Despite the fact he doesn't specialise in religious art, Marcus was sure that 82-year-old Robert, who was recently appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for his service to the visual arts, was the right man for the job.

"It was agreed that the paintings should reflect their local context. So while the artwork is religious, it also features items such as native flora and kangaroos, wallabies and dingoes," says Marcus. "Due to its modernity, the Bishop was initially concerned that the artwork may be controversial, however it seems to have been received extremely well."

Once finished, the canvas paintings were photographed at a very high resolution to enable them to be enlarged and reproduced in DigiGlass at window sizes of 7m high x 3m wide. Printed onto a PVB interlayer, the artwork was then sandwiched between two pieces of Viridian clear toughened glass. In keeping with the Bishop's wish for the interior to be a reflective space rather than one that looks out over the town, a double soft white interlayer was used to increase opacity. It also provides additional UV protection.

According to DigiGlass director, Anthony Anderson, the ability to capture detail, as well as allow natural light to shine in, is one of the product's major advantages over traditional stained glass.

The level of detail is so high that you can see the brushstrokes and even the individual threads of the canvas. This simply couldn't be achieved with leadlight and stained glass.

Marcus agrees: "The windows have been incredibly successful. Everyone that's seen them has said 'wow'. The level of detail is so high that you can see the brushstrokes and even the individual threads of the canvas. This simply couldn't be achieved with leadlight and stained glass."

Given the fate of the former cathedral, it was important to the client that the new cathedral would be capable of withstanding any future extreme weather phenomena such as another tornado. A heavier than usual structural steel framework is set deep into the masonry to provide a solid framework while the DigiGlass laminated safety glass panels satisfy Terrain Category 2.5 winds.

In an era when so few new cathedrals are being built, the rebuilding of the city's most iconic religious building has sparked a wave of public interest around Australia. On 3 April 2011, ABC's Compass program aired a feature on the St Patrick's Cathedral, tracking the story of the new Cathedral from the day of the tornado to the March 2011 opening. Included is a segment filmed at Viridian's Clayton plant, showing how DigiGlass is manufactured.

If you missed the program or would like to watch it again, it can be downloaded from: www.abc.net.au/compass/pastepisodes.htm