



Kirra Hill Community and Cultural Centre

**From then until now: a brief history of this
unique heritage listed site**

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History

This unique site was initially the home of the Coolangatta State School which was established in 1919. On 26 January 1919 the Queensland/New South Wales border was closed because of an influenza epidemic, which prevented the 57 students living in Queensland from crossing the border to attend the Tweed Public School.



Parents lobbied to build a new school in Queensland. A temporary school was set up behind the Coolangatta Municipal Council office on 10 February 1919 while the school building commenced on Kirra Hill. Coolangatta State School occupied the site from the beginning of 1920 and it was officially opened on 2 October 1920 by Governor Sir Matthew Nathan, with 67 students enrolled under the supervision of Headmaster Claude de Jersey.

By November 1977 Coolangatta State School had out-grown the space and moved to its present site. The site then became the Coolangatta Special School from January 1979 until 2006, providing services for students with intellectual and other disabilities.

Following considerable community action by the 'Save Kirra Hill' group, in 2005 the Queensland Government agreed to preserve the site for public use. Custodianship passed to the City of Gold Coast (the City) in 2008 to create a facility for community purposes.

After public consultation the City spent \$3 million to restore and refurbish the historic buildings, which were officially opened for community use in October 2011. During the community consultation around the restoration and redevelopment of the site, the historic significance was voiced strongly.

Within the redesign of the building, one of the original classrooms was identified as the ideal location for a historical display room. Since the opening of the Kirra Hill Community and Cultural Centre in 2011 the local historical group has established the room as a key source of information about the school and the wider community. Several displays have been curated by the group, as well as establishing a permanent collection of displays. The group regularly conducts guided tours, holds talks with local schools and was instrumental in establishing a local heritage trail in the area.

Today

The restoration, preservation and current use of this site aligns with the City's Culture Strategy 2023 which states that we are 'a community that values its cultural heritage' and 'our built heritage and character-rich places are conserved and where appropriate adapted to contemporary needs'.

The centre stands on Kirra Headland with spectacular views in all directions. Community and stakeholder engagement influenced the priorities for the site which include:

- preservation and celebration of the history of the site and the surrounding area
- appropriate space to nurture, develop and celebrate artistic talent in the southern Gold Coast
- flexible and affordable meeting spaces for small interest groups
- increased accessibility to services to enhance health and wellbeing
- space for community celebration events.



The site won an Urban Design Award due to the restoration process involving multiple layers of government, strong community participation and the sensitive restoration of the building to create a multifunctional community facility.



Key elements of the facility include:

- flexible meeting and activity spaces
- internal and external arts spaces
- a heritage display room with school memorabilia, replica model ships and an historical display of Coolangatta
- art gallery and external events space.

Grant funding from Arts Queensland was used to contribute to the creation of the arts spaces within the site.

The site is fully accessible and has lift access to the first floor. Rooms and spaces are available to hire for art and craft, fitness and yoga, music, singing, dance, drama and meetings.

The beautifully restored heritage listed building and sensational ocean views also make it very popular as a wedding venue.

For more information and bookings

Kirra Hill Community and Cultural Centre
1 Garrick Street, Coolangatta

P 07 5581 7227 or 07 5581 1964

E kirrahill@goldcoast.qld.gov.au

W cityofgoldcoast.com.au/kirrahill

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