

Complex brief sees clever design

TASMANIAN architectural firm Artas Architects has recently completed another major project on the East Coast for a Child and Family Centre at St Helens.

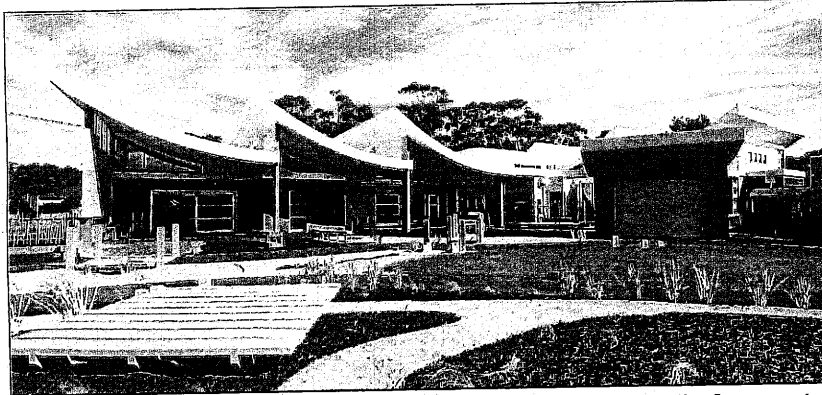
Artas Architects director Heath Clayton said the East Coast Child and Family Centre was a very satisfying project to be involved in, due to the fabulous community spirit behind the project and the partnerships formed between Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services and members of the Local Enabling Group.

The centre provides innovative indoor and outdoor spaces that stimulate and challenge children to explore and learn. Child and Family Centres are specifically designed for children

from birth to five years, their parents and carers.

It provides a venue which can offer support for local families with health, well-being, care and the education of children to prepare them for a healthy and successful life. Programs such as Launching into Learning for children, support groups and training programs for parents and carers as well as a range of allied health services are all offered at the Centre.

Mr Clayton said that the complexity of the brief placed unique demands on the architectural team who must ensure that the design of the child family centre offers a wide range of learning experiences for the child, is socially and culturally diverse for everyone's needs and can relate equally to



The Artas Architects designed East Coast Child and Family Centre at St Helens.

children, parents and the wider community. It is a new and innovative model that is child and family focused.

The brief allowed the style of architecture to be unique which relates to its seaside location. The roof sweeps upward in a series of waves, the metal skin is reflective — in whites, greys and blues of the sea, and this is

complemented by the colour of an orange sun. The split face texture of the block refers to the stone outcrops along the shoreline. Mr Clayton said: We had serious "fun" with a variety of window types and arrangements."

"This included a large porthole window which kids can sit in and view out, large continuous vistas that extend into the outdoor

play areas, coloured and louvred windows at child height, as well as highlight windows to fill the spaces with natural light.

"The children will be excited about the outdoor spaces — it has a great bike track, a large enclosed sandpit that opens up but contains the sand, a water play area that leads into a dry creek bed, decks and

platforms, and when the planting matures there is a dune track to the slide."

Safety has been paramount in the design and the selection of finishes, with soft fall used where needed and majority of areas wheelchair friendly.

The internal spaces are light and bright, providing a parent lounge and adjunct play area, kitchen facilities accessible to everyone, a training room, meeting room and quiet rooms, a sleep nook for babies, which is supported by an integrated administration area. From most of these areas you can see into the dedicated child play zone.

It is a free play space with sink area, low and high level platforms, an integrated tunnel and

steps to an upper level cubby.

There is a baby change facility, consulting rooms for the allied services and support rooms.

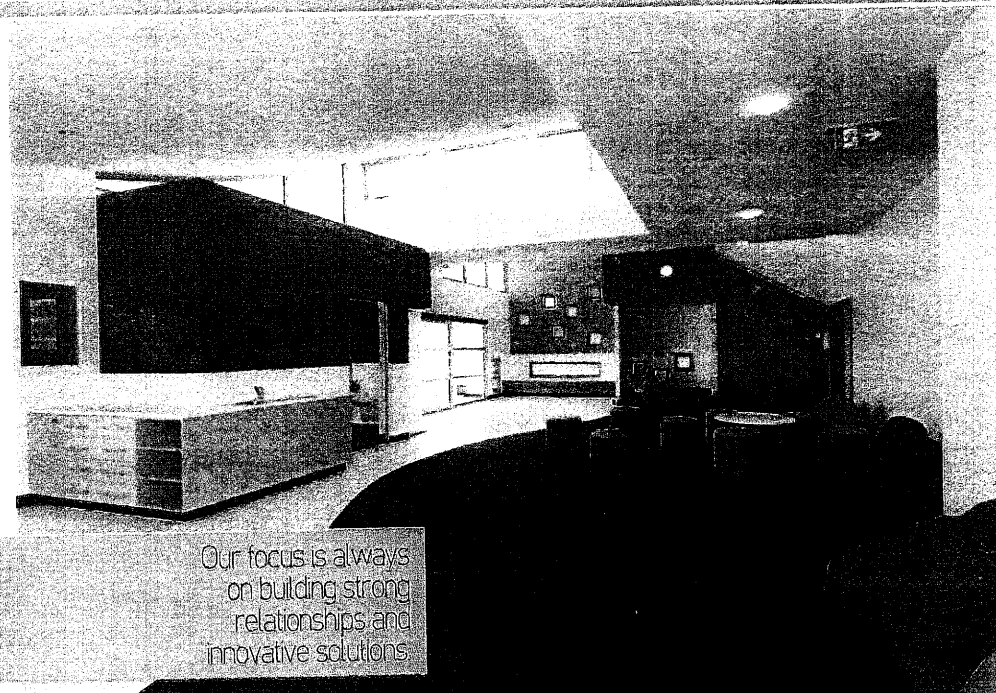
Artas Architects has carefully considered the functional design such as facility size and area requirements, essential spatial relationships and connections, including integration between internal and external play, desirable physical and visual links between areas, integration of allied health and other services within the facility, community and consultation, accessibility and building codes, child safety and local planning scheme requirements, as well as site conditions, including environmentally sustainable design principles.

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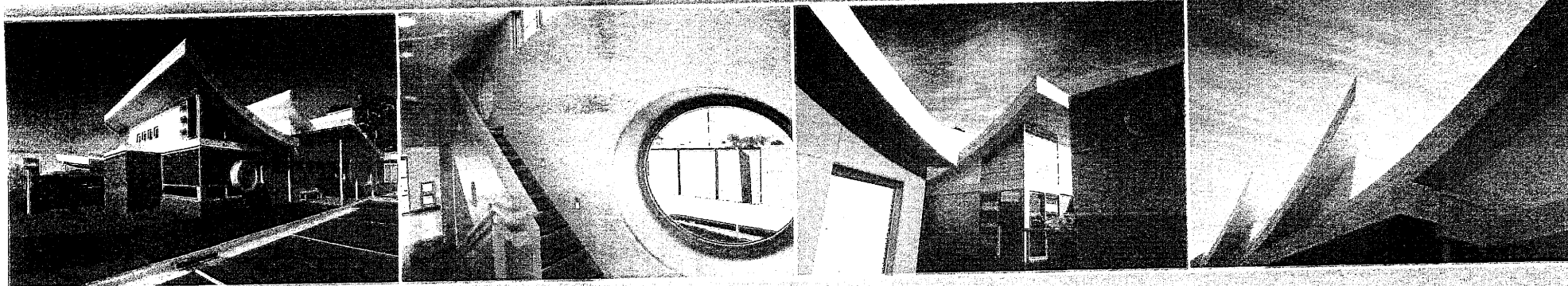
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Landscape: Robert McRobert Sydney: Bruce

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