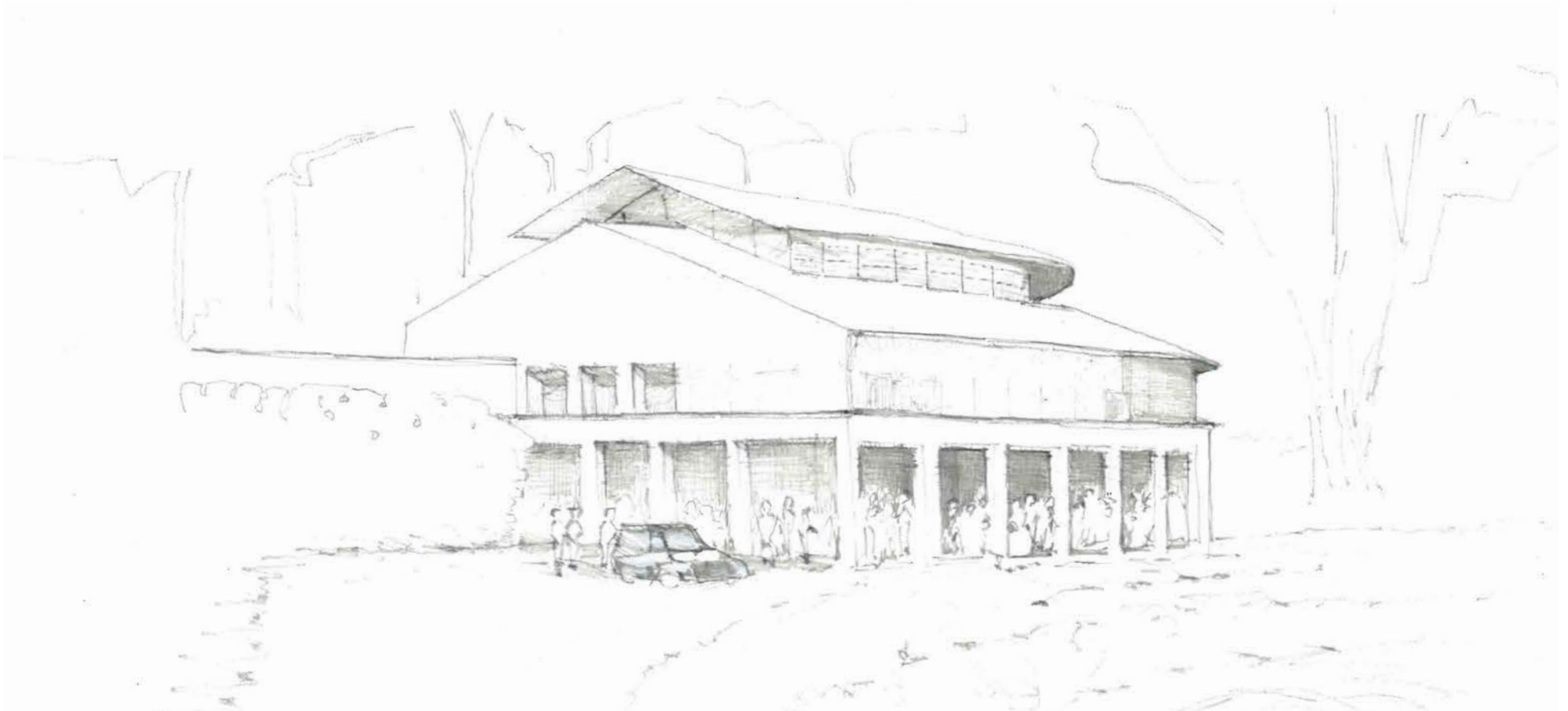


Frenches Forest Bushland Cemetery:
New Funeral Chapel, Function Centre and associated facilities



1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to set out the objective and purpose of the proposed funeral chapel facilities, and to explain how they have been achieved without adversely affecting the amenity of the neighbourhood or the neighbours.

The purpose of the project is to create a place for funerals that is wholly dignified.

One of the planning concerns raised by the planners during our Pre-DA discussions (23/01/2020) is the scale and mass of the proposed chapel in relation to the site and the planning constraints that exist with reference to the site.

The justification for the location, height and scale of the proposed project rests on five facts:

1. This is a cemetery. Cemeteries provide the community with the essential public service of facilitating the process of grieving. In order to do this the cemetery needs a funeral chapel and the associated facilities. An analysis of the entire cemetery site concluded that this is the only appropriate site for the chapel. This analysis is contained in a separate report (see statement from GSA Landscape Architects “Frenchs Forest Bushland Cemetery opportunity Analysis 05/12/2019)
2. That this is a cemetery and so guidelines designed for domestic dwellings are not appropriate for the activities and structures on this site. This analysis is contained in a separate report (Statement of Environmental Effects, Clause 4.6))
3. That the setting and size of the chapel is determined by the function and purpose of the chapel. This is demonstrated in the first part of this report through
 - An analysis of the setting, including some environmental constraints;
 - The geometry that underpins the overall form, examples of notable precedents from history have been included;
 - A discussion of the internal environment that is created, in particular the quality of light and the quality of air in the space.
4. That the form of the building has been conceived to enable the chapel to sit in the landscape gracefully, and avoid the perception of bulk in the landscape by adopting a tiered structure.
5. That the height of the building does not have a negative visual impact: Views may be changed but are not diminished. This is discussed in a separate report in more detail (Section 6, p.11 & 12).

2. The setting and size of the chapel

Design Principals

There are six principals that underpin the design of the project, these develop out of the purpose of the project and what it is intended to achieve:

The design should:

- Acknowledge that visitors are at different stages of grief and emotional response
- Be conscious that comfort and consolation are the principal desires of visitors
- Ensure no unintentional distractions intrude on the experience
- Appreciate the natural setting
- Achieve a familiar experience
- Achieve a memorable experience

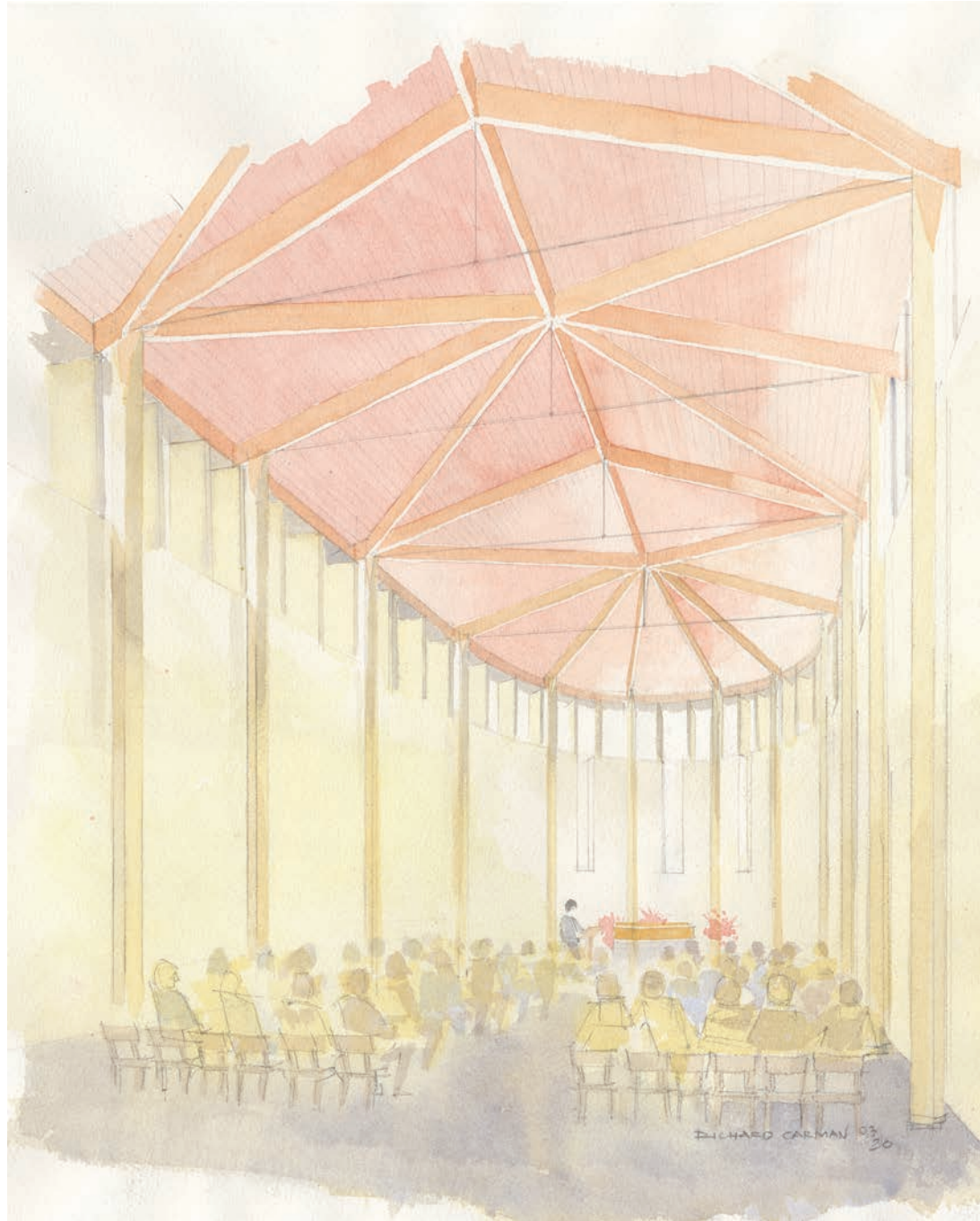
In addition the new chapel and associated facilities should achieve the following:

Recognisably a funeral chapel

The chapel should not appear to be a function centre, or a general-purpose or multi-purpose structure, but rather a place of sufficient gravitas and immutability that it situates visitors in a mood appropriate to a funeral. It should be set apart from other structures, clearly dedicated to its purpose, and nestle within a quiet precinct, uncomplicated and inviting.

Recognisably a Frenchs Forest Bushland Cemetery (FFBC) Funeral Chapel

The chapel should have approaches, materials and overall aesthetics appropriate to Frenchs Forest Bushland Cemetery's 'rural-suburban' character.



Building facilities and flow pathways should:

- Enable and encourage a reflective, decorous, and peaceful presence, particularly at access and egress points;
- Preserve dignity, as well as provide privacy and emotional safety, not only for ceremony guests but for contemporaneous non-ceremony cemetery visitors;
- As far as possible be intuitive, minimising visitor information requirements – for example, signage, staff direction;
- Provide opportunity for both intimacy and solitude – a guest should feel part of the whole party and yet find quiet spaces as desired. An appropriate level of modularity within the chapel and function space should be achieved that accommodates variety in scale, and in visitor need.

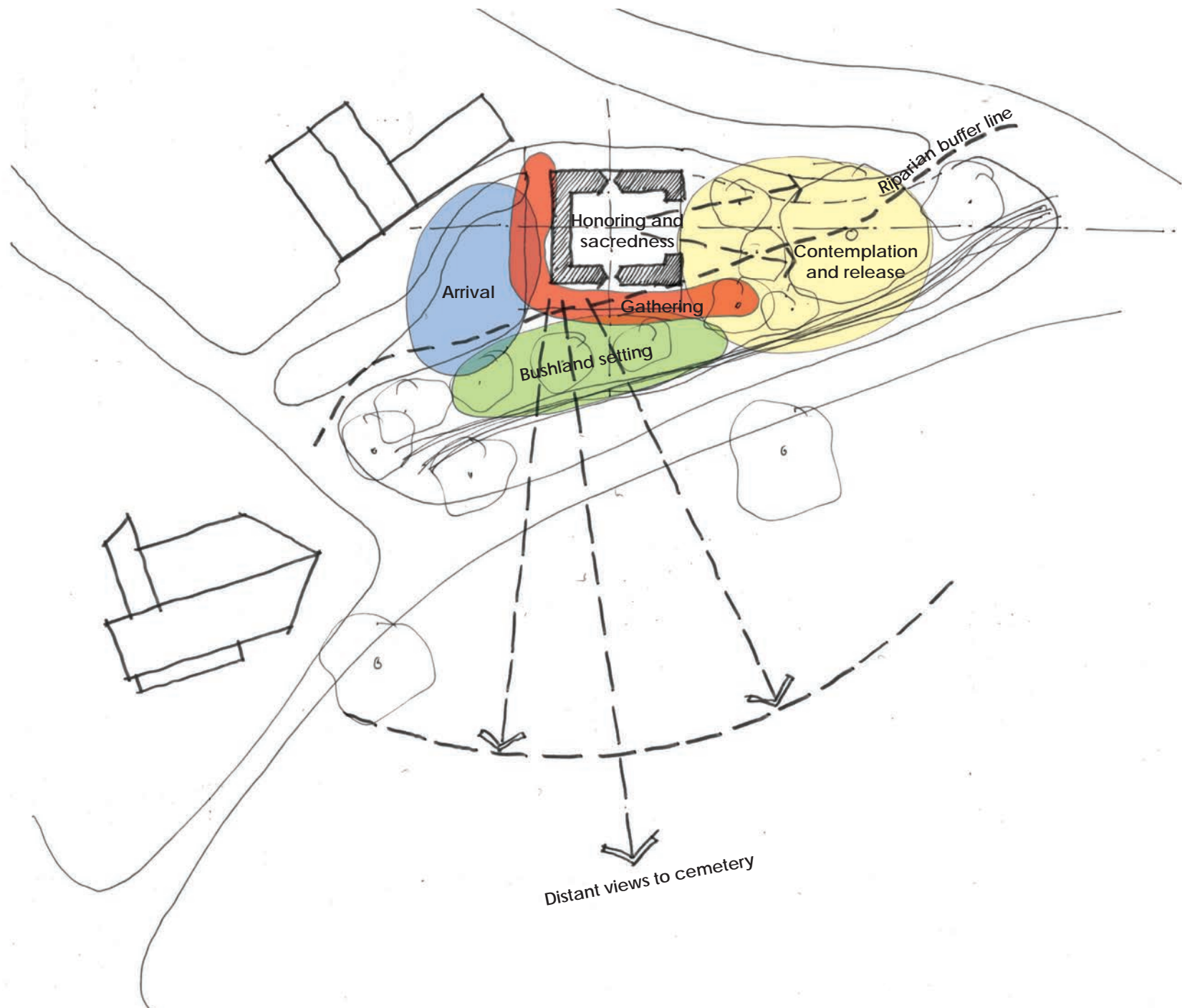
Ornamental features of a decorative or symbolic nature and functional elements should:

- Recognisably draw on a human history of response to death;
- Echo traditions that would evoke connection with this history;
- Appreciate that guests are not seeking a new or surprising experience but a comforting, recognisable experience.

A range of universal touchstones that function as metaphors for the experience of life, death and the ‘afterlife’ can therefore be confidently embraced including:

- The physical (for example, light, earth, flora, water, cairn/stone);
- The spiritual (for example, crosses, flight, text).

All of which should encourage remembrance and contemplation as guests arrive and proceed into the chapel. Then, as guests leave the chapel and pause in places of reflection and proceed to the function centre, they should experience a sense of hope, of transfiguration. This transformative experience could be enhanced by the unfolding use of colour tints and material textures, the gradual revelation of lighting variations, or a progression from still waters to gently moving waters (fountain or stream) bringing gentle sounds that enhance privacy and reassurance.



3. A building and setting to support and enable those in mourning

Grief is a deeply disorientating experience. The intention of this building is to provide grieving people with some respite and support by helping them orientate themselves within the landscape, the building, and the grieving ritual that is a funeral.

Through a series of carefully considered thresholds the building creates a framework that enables people to grieve, to share, to honour, to show respect with dignity.

A note on the word “sacred”: In this text the word “sacred” is not used in a religious context. We use “sacred” to mean something that is of fundamental social value, the value of a life itself.

The Chapel and the surrounding landscape we have created together recognises the design principals in a number of ways:

The setting

The site has been organised to help provide guests with a structure that they understand intuitively, dedicated to honouring the dead with dignity:

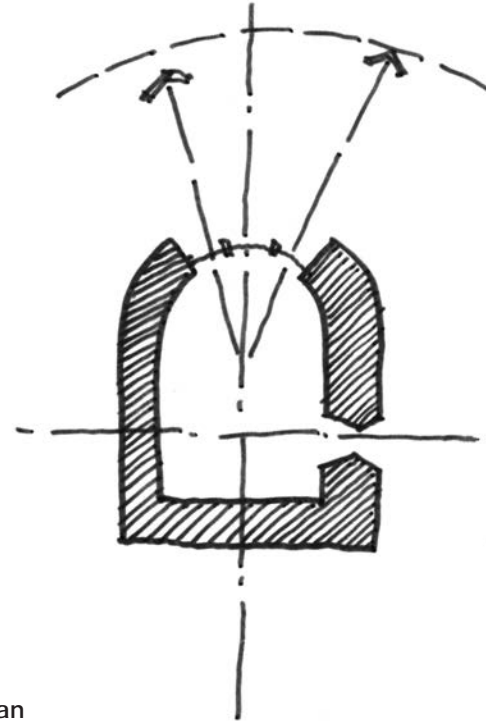
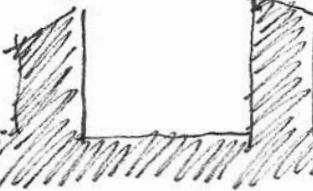
The building and associated spaces are in a bushland setting, set apart from and above the burial areas that can be seen beyond.

The spaces and form have been designed to enable people to navigate intuitively from the arrival courtyard, through a gathering space defined by the colonnade sculpted out of the solidity of the building, and into the chapel through an entrance created by a deep cut in the thick wall.

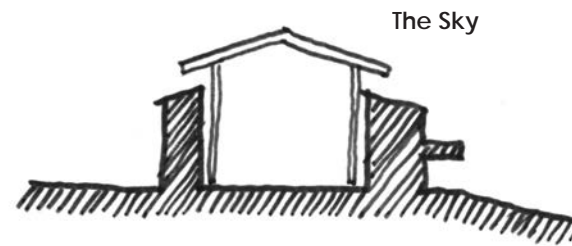
The colonnade continues to a smaller cut that takes people into the Family Room, with its own discrete connection to the main chapel, and beyond to the secluded Ash Garden, a space for contemplation. The columns of the colonnade are thick to create spaces between them for quiet moments alone or with a friend.



The Australian bush with the high level canopy filtering light



The Plan



The Section

The Sky

The Earth

4. The form of the building

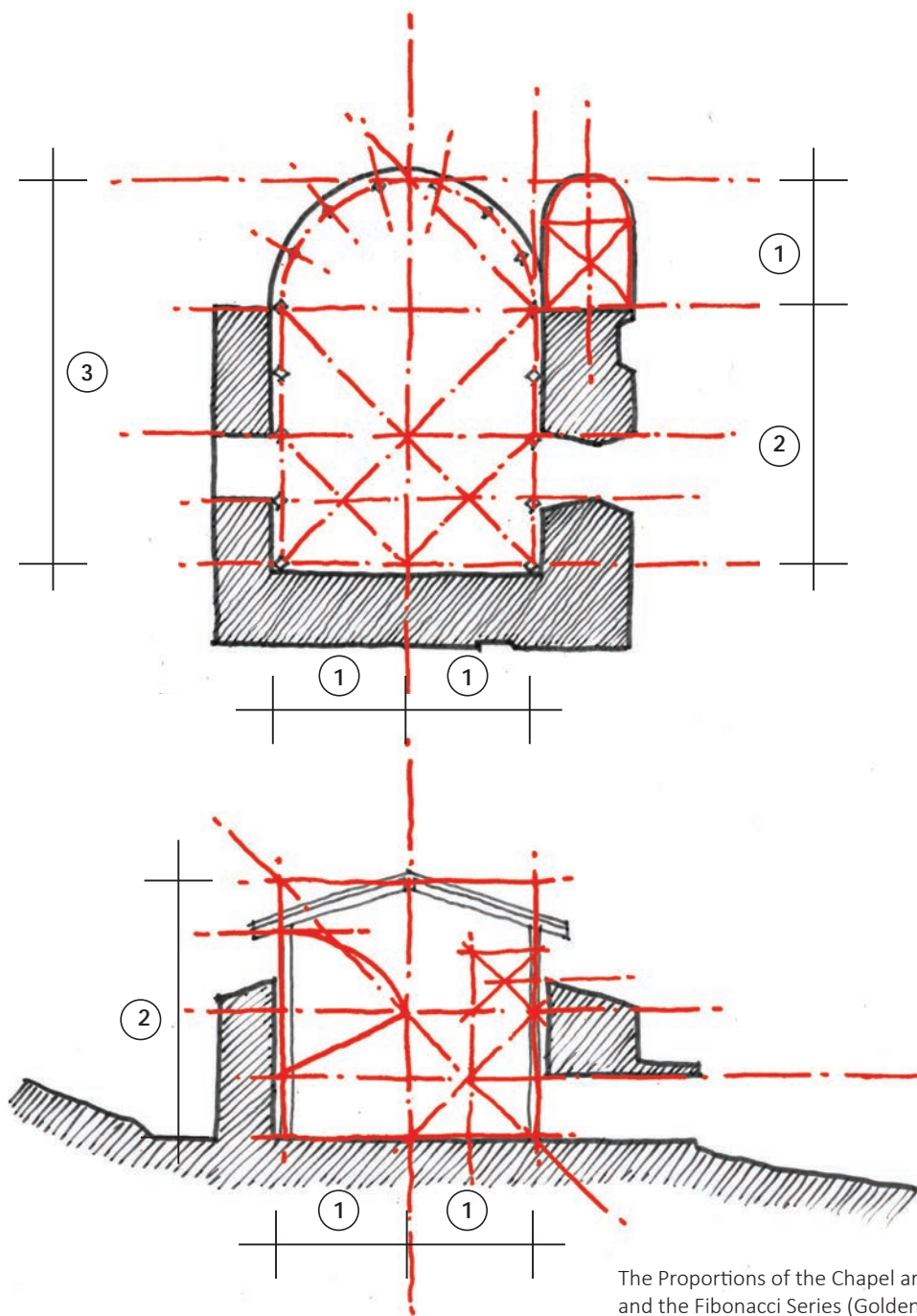
In many cultures, buildings, particularly sacred buildings, represent our relationship with the world. In this building the thick walls and solidity of the lower structure are representative of the earth.

The form of the building, experienced particularly in the plan, is a hollowed-out block. Guests arrive and move through a thick wall into a sacred space dedicated to honouring people.

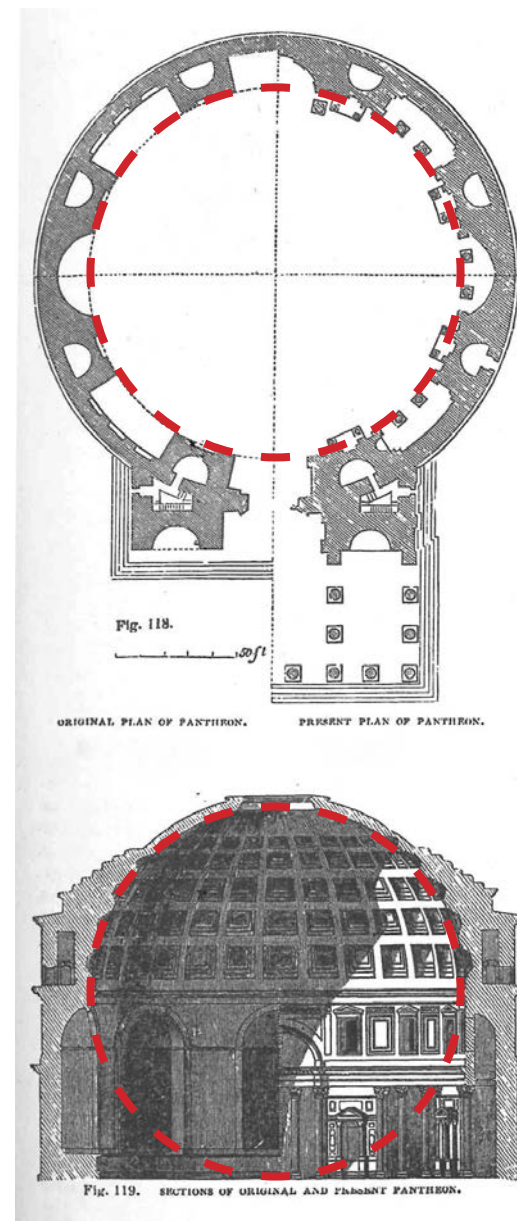
The section of the building builds on the concept underpinning the plan.

The timber roof floating above the chapel is representative of the sky, the cosmos and heavens. The slender timber columns are a reflection of the tiered structure of the Australian Bush: Creating open space below and filtering light from above through a delicate canopy.

The lower part of the building is conceived of and constructed as a solid element with the colonnade and entrances sculpted out of the block. Within the chapel the timber columns support the timber roof that floats above the solidity of the base.

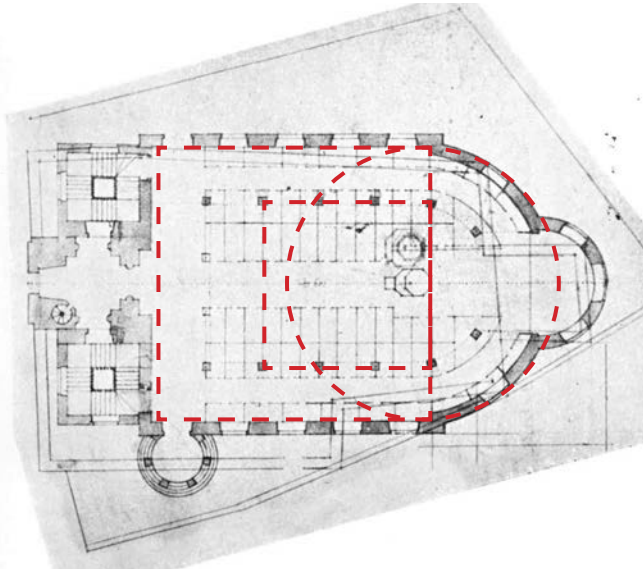


The Proportions of the Chapel are taken from Classical Geometry and the Fibonacci Series (Golden Ratio)



The Pantheon in Rome, used as a secular and faith space over 2000 years, has a strong proportional relationship between plan and section.

5. Geometry



Plan geometry of St Clements, London by Christopher Wren.

Geometry, or the use of certain proportions, has been used by civilisations to bring harmony, beauty and order to their structures for thousands of years. We find these proportions all around us in the natural world: In the spiral of a snail's shell, in the growth and branching patterns of plants, the relationship between notes in an octave and between octaves in music.

In this building, geometry serves four functions:

First, it defines the proportions of the chapel space, family room space and the elevations. Ensuring each part of the building has a formal relationship with the whole.

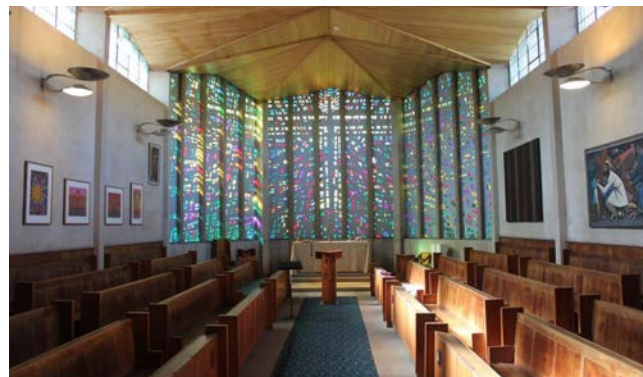
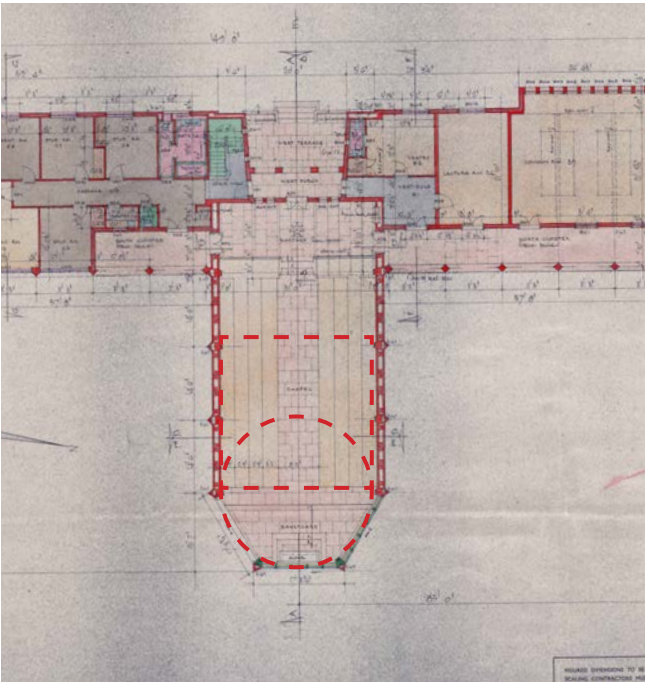
Second, it ensures that the experience of the volume of spaces is harmonious and reassuring for those in need of support.

Third, it creates structure and order within the building.

Finally, it creates a building of a certain size in proportion to its plan. This size gives the building presence in the broad landscape of the cemetery, of which it becomes an appropriate focus point.

The form of the building is not overly assertive. The form is broken down in segments and the roof has a gentle and imposing low pitch.

The internal proportion is most suitable to the dignity of a funeral service. There is sufficient vertical height to admit light from high windows which dignifies people. There is space for emotional release. There is generosity.



Plan geometry and interior view of St Pauls College Chapel, within the University of Sydney

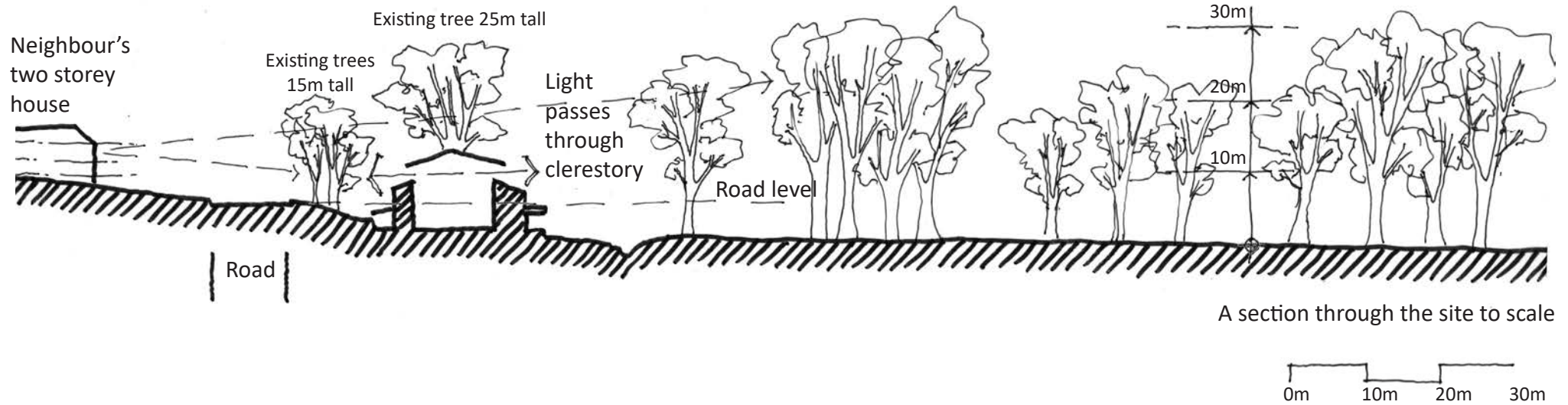
Existing trees
#176 & #177
15 - 20m tall

Existing trees
#157 - #167
10 - 30m tall

Existing trees
#138,139 &
#177-179
15-20m tall

Existing trees
#130,
#134 - #137
20 - 30m tall

Existing trees between 15 and 30m tall

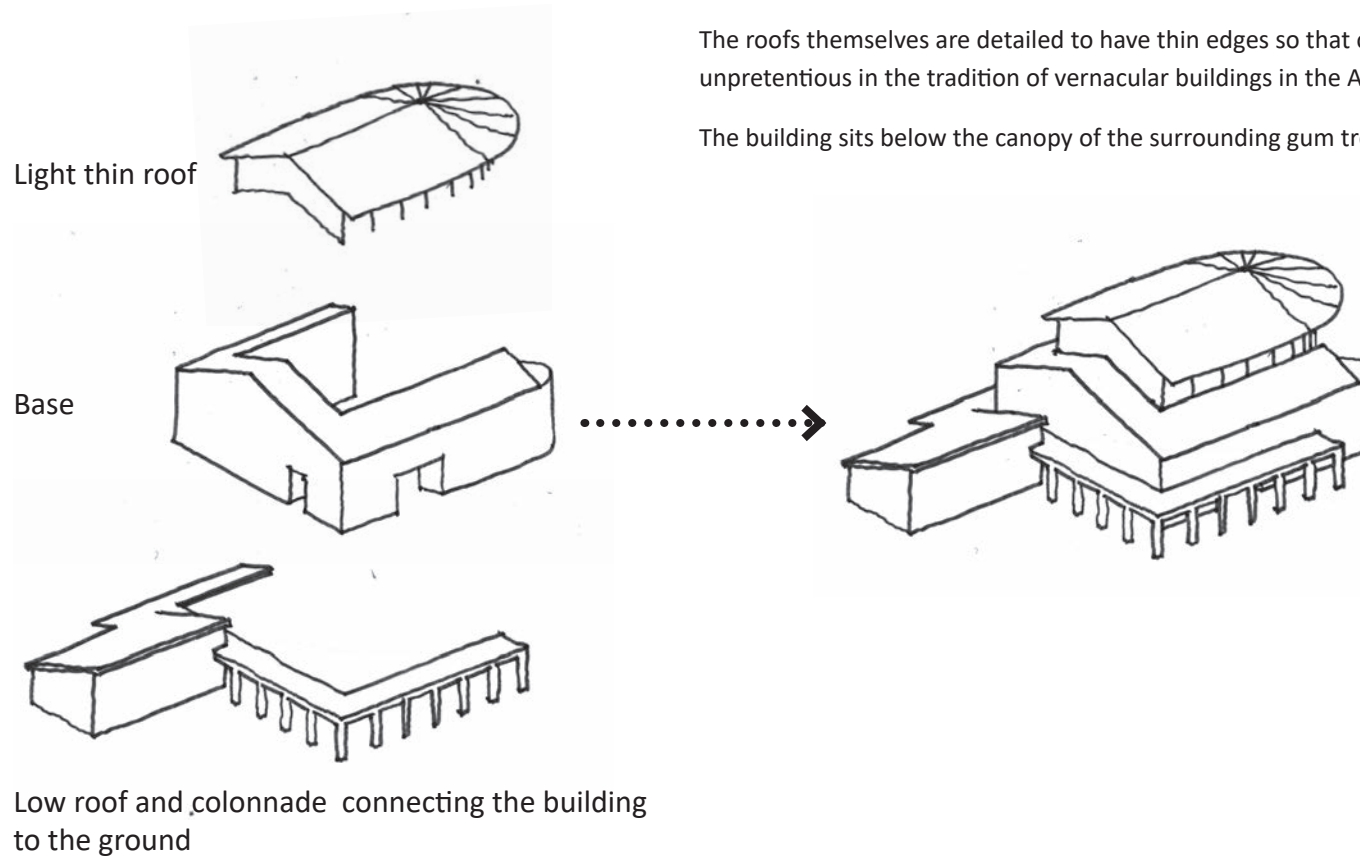


6. A tiered structure

Overall the form of the building is tiered, set down from the road the building steps up to the base of the clerestory windows. These support a roof that floats above the main form and admits filtered light into the main chapel and from one side of the structure to the other through the structure beneath the roof.

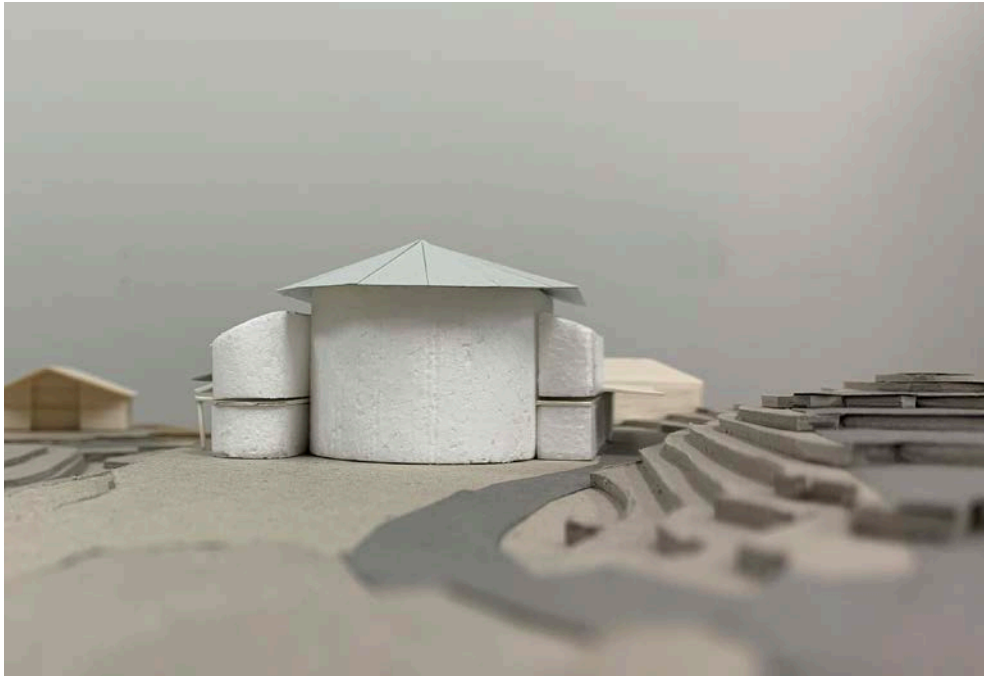
The roofs themselves are detailed to have thin edges so that overall the edges of the building are delicate and unpretentious in the tradition of vernacular buildings in the Australian Bush.

The building sits below the canopy of the surrounding gum trees.





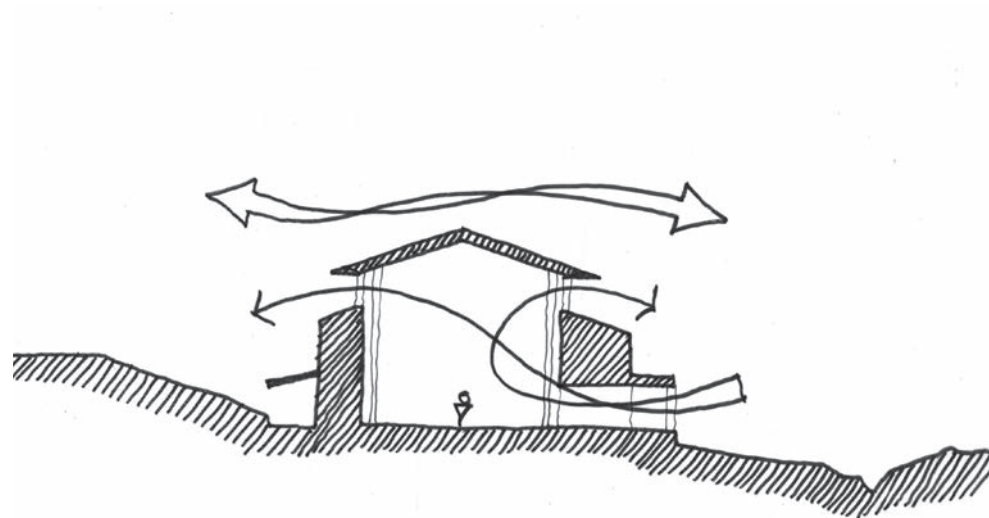
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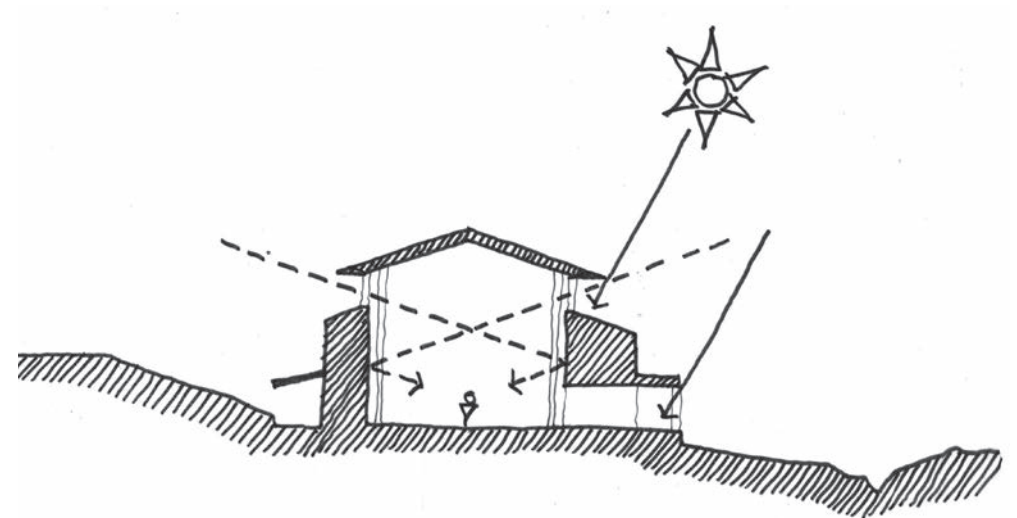
7. Internal environmental quality

The volume of the space ensures that there is a high quantity of fresh air available for when large numbers of people arrive at the same time.

The height also supports natural ventilation by creating low and high level ventilation openings, improving comfort.

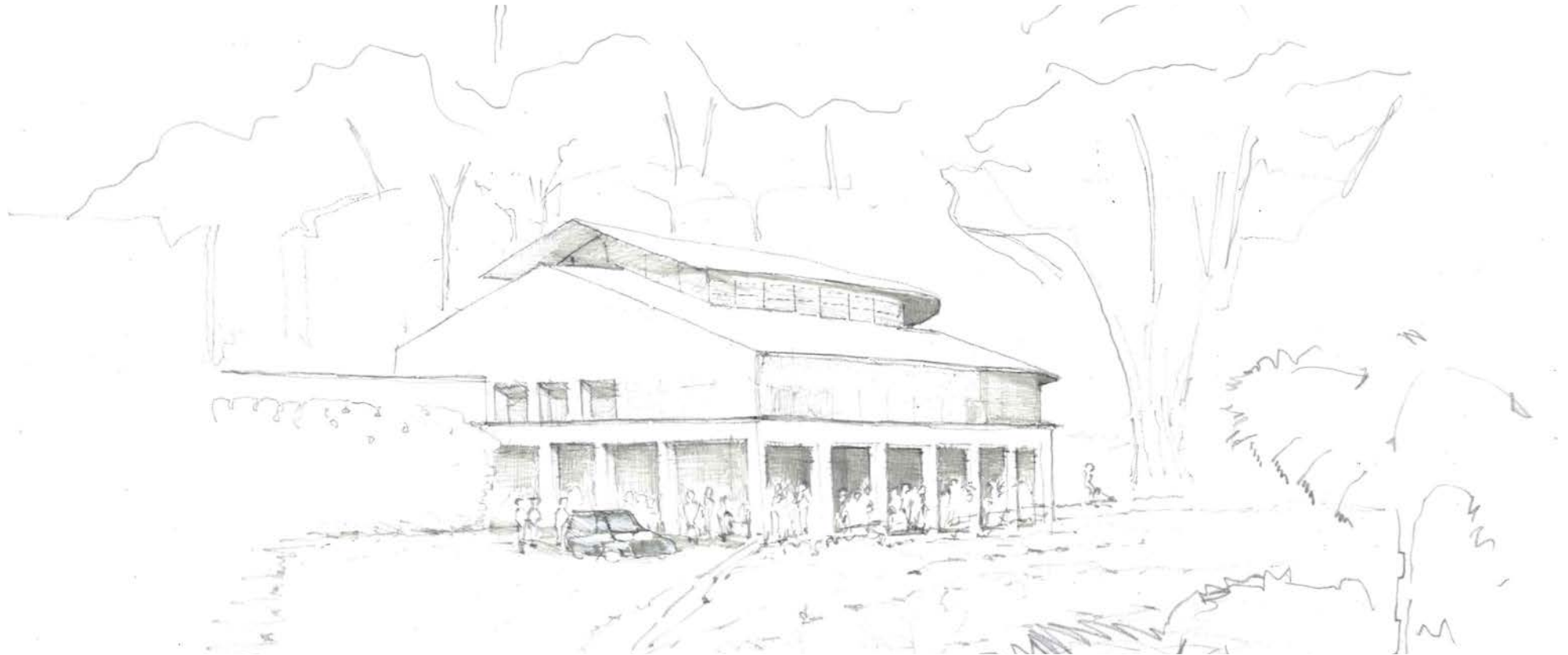


The clerestory windows combined with the overhanging roof and timber structure reflects light down into the space creating a calm, transcendental dignity in the space.



8. Conclusion

The design of this building begins with the grief-stricken person and seeks to support and enable them in this most important and vulnerable moment. It draws on the whole history of humans response to death and the creation of sacred spaces to honour the dead. The building does not seek to be the focus, but rather create spaces of sufficient gravitas and immutability to provide people with a structure, order and orientation that enables them to honour those they love with dignity in a profoundly disorientating moment.





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