Ronald McDonald House

State-of-the-art Design and Materials Take Centre Stage at New Ronald McDonald House

Ronald McDonald House South Brisbane has not only been built with functionality in mind, but designed unlike other inner-city high rises, with roofing material used as exterior walls to give it a 'home away from home feel'.

Award-winning architecture firm BVN looked to Queenslander homes for inspiration which typically comprise of three main features: a garden, a metal roof, and either brick or weatherboard cladding. The new building design is focused at reinterpreting these features within a larger building typology to create a finer grain and domestic tectonic.

Unlike other institutional buildings within the precinct, it was particularly important the new Ronald McDonald House—the latest offering from the non-profit organisation helping to house seriously ill children and their families—have a large expressed roof which wrapped over the top and down the building sides. Visible from the street, this roof typology clearly marks the building as a home for visiting families.

"We wanted to create a building that didn't feel like either a commercial tower or an institutional facility," said BVN Senior Practice Director Terry Braddock. "This led to the careful selection of materials to reflect what is most commonly used in Queensland domestic buildings—principally single houses."

Looking to Stramit, Australia's premium rollformer of steel building products, Stramit Speed Deck Ultra® cladding manufactured in BlueScope Colorbond® Aries from the metallic paint range was chosen for the roof and wall cladding.

"The use of this roofing material over a continuous height of 11 storeys is unusual for an inner city high rise building," said Braddock. "It is a highly cost effective method of dressing an otherwise blank boundary wall condition."

> *"With the design focusing on families and children, the importance of high-quality, durable and safe materials used for the building construction was vital."*

Visually appealing, strong, lightweight and weather resistant, Stramit Speed Deck Ultra® cladding is ideal for large roofing applications. Its large water-carrying capacity and weather-tightness allow for it to be used in very low roof pitches—and with Queensland's harsh climate the need for such a high-performance, advanced material was a must.

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"Speed Deck Ultra® was chosen for its cost efficiency and being a trusted, quality product that is carefully tested and accepted in the industry," said Braddock. "The product achieves a valuable mix between design aesthetic and cost, while the large spans covered quickly."

Stramit Technical Services Consultant Ken King says the FarLap® joint system was used to achieve a step of 22mm between the wall sheets, enabling the architect's requirements to use the roof cladding as exterior walls.

"So it was decided to install the Speed Deck Ultra® and the FarLap® joining system at every second floor," said King. "This also enabled the contractors to have shorter sheet lengths to work with in a vertical situation."

Ronald McDonald House South Brisbane, on the Brisbane River, Queensland and directly opposite the Lady Cilento Children's Hospital, currently offers family accommodation of more than 70 rooms, consisting of a range of unit types, from family studios to self-contained and accessible arrangements. It is the largest development type of its kind in Australia with a total of 112 units.

Braddock describes the project design as personal and specialised, with a tailored brief provided. "The design brief called for a facility that felt like a home away from home for families with a child who is seriously ill and undergoing specialised treatment at nearby hospitals. The main aim was to make families as supported and comfortable as possible in a setting that feels both familiar and domestic."

The building features multiple children's games and play areas, several shared domestic scale kitchens and dining areas, lounge spaces, an outdoor recreation and play section, quiet zones with computer facilities for adults, a roof-top function space and many more inclusions adding to the 'home away from home' feel.

"The design of the building has been undertaken in a manner which promotes the gathering of families together within the building," said Braddock. "This includes the provision of communal areas on every level building, and the main lounge and dining area being visible from the main entry."

Designing and creating a structure that isn't just aesthetically pleasing but also functional is no easy feat, but the Ronald McDonald House South Brisbane has managed to break the mould—pleasing not just design enthusiasts but also countless families and children.

"To see our vision for such a special place come to life with the help of so many hardworking and passionate teams has been a memorable and treasured experience for everyone involved in the project," said Braddock.

PROJECT TEAM

Developer: Ronald McDonald Charities

Architect: BVN

Engineer: Cardno

Project Manager: Aurecon

Main Contractor: Watpac

Steel Fabricator: Taringa Steel

Steel Suppliers: Stramit and BlueScope