

'May the Lord be with you and may you prosper'
1 Chronicles 22:11



Wednesday 4th October 2023

PARENT Q&A AND CONSULTATION PROCESS OUTCOMES REGARDING THE JUNIOR COLLEGE MOVE FROM THE HERITAGE BUILDING TO THE SCHOOL BUILDING

QUESTIONS REGARDING THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

- **What is the decision made by the Board?**

On the 1st of March 2023, the Board received a request from St Mary and St Mina's Parish Council for the Cathedral to occupy the Heritage building, which is one section of the premises used by the College. This decision requires the Junior College to move from the Heritage building to the School-funded building on the Parish site. **After thorough consultation, independent legal advice and feasibility studies, the Board has agreed to give back the Heritage building to the Parish and move the Junior Students to the school-funded building as the space is bigger and allows for refurbishments and improved learning to occur.**

- **How was this decision made?**

This decision was not taken lightly and it **included continuous communication and consultation with all parties;**

- The process has taken over 6 months;
- the process included consultation with all stakeholders including the P&F representatives;
- the Board sought and commissioned legal advice;
- the Board sought and commissioned an independent financial feasibility study;
- the Board has commenced the search for sites for the future of the Junior College.

- **How were parents included in this decision-making process?**

Parents and the P&F committee were included in at least eight consultation points, including;

- The Board wrote to all Primary campus parents in **March 2023; May 2023 and September 2023;**
- Each correspondence asked parents to submit any questions and concerns to which a previous Q&A and this Q&A have been compiled and sent to parents to respond to their questions and concerns openly;
- The Board **corresponded with the P&F on 27 April 2023 and met with them on 1 June 2023.** The P&F raised concerns and these were addressed as shown in page 3 of this document;
- Upon request from a number of parents, a **meeting with all parents is scheduled for the 17th of October.**

- **Was legal advice sought during this process?**

Yes, Legal advice was provided in relation to the whether the proposal had the potential to offend section 83C of the Education Act 1990 (NSW). The advice is subject to legal privilege. Attached is a copy of the brief provided and the scope of advice sought.

- **Will the Board accommodate a face to face meeting with all parents?**

Yes, a meeting is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 17 October 2023 at 6:00pm. Parents will be asked to put forward their questions in advance to ensure they are all answered on the night. An earlier meeting was also proposed but the Board was advised that as some families may be away during the school holidays.

- **Can we see the consultation process outcomes?**

Yes, as communicated to all junior parents through Sentral on the 12th of September, **please refer to pages 2 & 3 for the consultation process and points raised by the Staff and P&F Representatives and their solutions.**

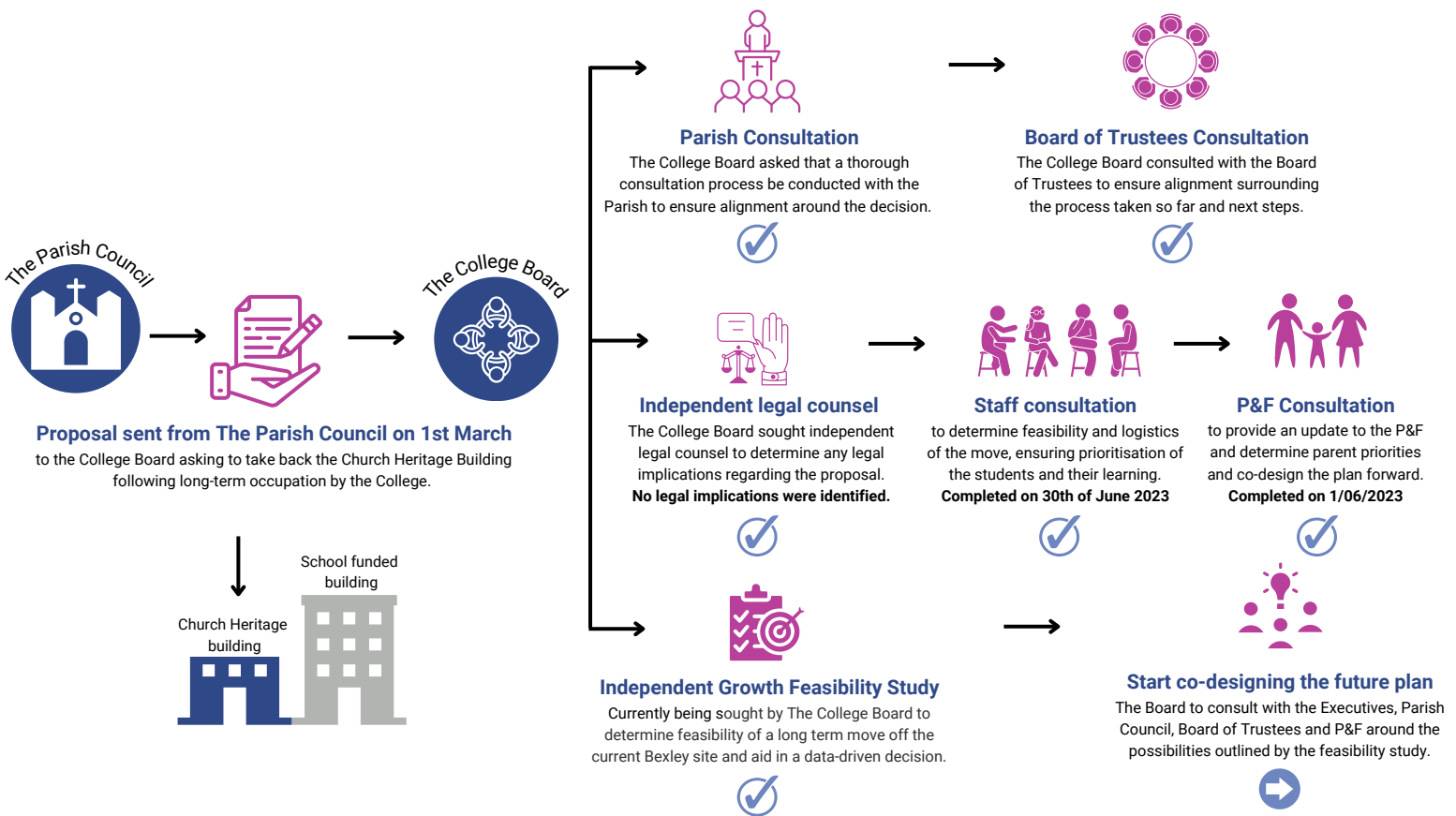
- **Does the Board have the support of the Board of Trustees for this move?**

Whilst the Board works in line with NESAs as an independent governing body for the Colleges, **the Board has consulted the Board of Trustees, who support the decision-making process and the outcomes reached,** please refer to page 4 for an official statement from Rev Fr. Joshua Tadros, the Papal Legate.



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PARISH PROPOSAL CONSULTATION PROCESS



INDEPENDENT FEASIBILITY STUDY & NEXT STEPS

An independent cashflow feasibility study was carried out by an accounting firm to examine the current and future projections of the College, therefore ensuring data-driven and practical decisions are made when searching for a new suitable site. The feasibility study generally considered the following parameters:

- Projected College Operating Income
- Projected College Operating Expenses
- Net Year on Year consolidated cashflows
- Student growth potential in the next 1-10 years
- Required land features and specifications
- Land purchase cost
- Breakeven projections

After the study, the Board, in collaboration with Diocese representatives, held detailed conversations with the bank to understand the funding opportunities possible when identifying suitable sites. This step informed the Board about the affordability range for either existing or redevelopment of those rare finds, and the appropriate next steps to take when they do come up for sale.

Please note, it will take time to secure a suitable site followed by detailed planning and construction works. Given this is a priority, the Board is now actively searching for a suitable site. Your patience and prayers would be highly appreciated.



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CONSULTATION OUTCOMES WITH STAFF, PARISH, & P&F REPRESENTATIVES

Following close consultation with the Junior College Staff, the Parish and the P&F representatives, the below points were highlighted and addressed to ensure a smooth transition out of the Church heritage building and into the College funded building.

Initiatives by the Parish

- **Ventilation, Cooling & Heating** | To ensure adequate air conditioning and heating for the entire building, the Parish is purchasing and connecting an electric substation. Each room will be able to have its own temperature control and will not be affected by Parish use.
- **Hall use** | Since the current hall will be split into three separate, permanent rooms for Kindy, Yr 1 & Yr 2, the Parish will be merging the existing rooms in the heritage building into one big hall that the College can use when required. There will be a written agreement as to when the College will require access including for morning assembly and afternoon dismissal.

Initiatives by the College

- **Remedial works** | The new building will undergo waterproofing work as covered by insurance.
- **Playground surfacing** | New playground surfacing will be placed in the carpark area.
- **New furniture** | New furniture will be put in place for Kindy, yr 1 and yr 2 classes.
- **New Library layout** | To insert floating shelves to allow more room for reading groups.

Combined Initiatives

- **New entrance & reception** | An exclusive entrance will be created for the College.
- **Toilet access** | The boys toilets will have a new opening from the side to allow exclusive College access.
- **Increased playing area** | The Parish will get rid of the ceramic tables on the side of the College to allow for fake grass to be placed by the College, new seating and a Vege patch for the Junior students.
- **Public access** | The Parish & College are installing modern, automated access controls with access cards which will allow certain groups access to certain areas. This will reduce the need for keys and for Parish personnel to be present on the grounds.

Additional ideas by the Staff

- **Storage** | Lockable storage compartments will replace existing unused lockers in order to store sports equipment, music equipment and art equipment.

The layout on the following page was designed by staff and agreed upon by the P&F representatives to ensure students continue to receive a high standard of education in a nurturing environment.



BEHOLD, HOW GOOD
AND HOW PLEASANT
IT IS FOR BRETHREN
TO DWELL TOGETHER
IN UNITY.



It was lovely for the Junior College Staff, Executives, Board members and Parish representatives to come together and collaborate on innovative solutions to create win/win outcomes for the College and the Parish.

3rd October 2023



Dear Beloved Students, Parents, and Staff of St Mary & St Mina Coptic School,

May the peace of our Lord be with you all.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6

I wish to express my wholehearted support for the NSW Coptic Orthodox Board of Education. As an independent governing body, they have proven to be the most successful Board to date, governing our schools with a collaborative, united, evidence-based, strategic, and Christian approach.

They have adeptly addressed numerous historical challenges, always prioritising the best interests of both students and staff. In addition, they have worked diligently to accommodate the needs and requests of parents, the Parish, and the broader community.

Please be assured that the Board's utmost priority is the welfare of our students. They are committed to providing the best possible education within a nurturing Christian environment. The Board's decisions are made after thorough consultation and extensive advice-seeking. Furthermore, they have always been open to answering questions and are proactive in addressing any concerns. To this end, they have organised an additional meeting for parents to ensure clarity and correct any misinformation with accurate facts.

The Diocese fully supports the resolutions made by this independent governing body.

May God continue to bless and guide their tireless efforts as they nurture and expand our esteemed Colleges.

Fr Joshua Tadros

Papal Legate and Chairperson of the Diocesan Board of Trustees for the Coptic Orthodox Church Diocese of Sydney and its affiliated regions.



QUESTIONS REGARDING THE LOGISTICS & SPACE ASSOCIATED WITH THE MOVE

- **Is there a reduction in the floor space associated with the move?**

No, in fact the new space is bigger. Currently, most of the top two enclosed floors of the New Building are not being utilised. The Heritage Building inclusive of the toilet block is 769.87 metres squared. The New Building excluding the roof space is 886.83 metres squared. The College will continue to have access to the toilets in the Heritage Building and the College will continue to have access to the bottom floor of the Heritage Building for assemblies, liturgies, before school drop offs and after school pick-ups.

- **Are the children going to move into demountable?**

No, the children will not be moving into demountable, this was a suggestion by a concerned parent, but there is enough space in the Main School Building to accommodate all children.

- **Is the space going to be cut in half?**

No, this is incorrect. The Main School Building is bigger than the Parish Heritage Building and the College will still have access to some of the Heritage building for assemblies. In addition the existing hall downstairs will be turned into three classrooms, please see the drawing on page 6.

- **Is the learning environment going to be compromised?**

No, in fact the new building is subject to improvements. In addition to increased floor space the following is proposed:

- new playground surfacing
- new furniture
- the insertion of floating shelves in the library
- new entrance and reception
- modification of the toilet access
- increased playing area
- increased security to limit public access to the school
- increased storage.

- **Will the school still have access to parts of the Heritage Building?**

Yes, The school will still have access to some parts of the Heritage building, where a new hall will be created in the Heritage building that will accommodate for morning and afternoon assemblies.

- **Is there currently any room in the New School Building?**

Yes, there is nearly two floors in the New School Building that are not being utilised at all and the Hall downstairs will be turned into three classrooms. On the meeting with all parents on the 17th of October, we will take parents in the new building and show how it will be better utilised and what the move will look like.

- **How will we ensure no public access to the school?**

In collaboration with the Parish, a **new security access system is being installed** so that only staff can access the College premises.

- **How will the existing hall be used?**

The existing hall downstairs will be split into three classes- Kindy, year 1 and year 2. Sound proofing materials and glass partitions will be built in to ensure a suitable and safe learning environment. This provides the same space as the existing Kindy, year 1 and year 2 classes.

- **Will the wellbeing and learning of our Children be compromised again?**

We understand that in the past, the children's learning was compromised when both junior and senior Colleges were in the one site for over two years, **this Board however, is ensuring that the learning and mental health of the students and teachers will not be compromised as better facilities will in fact be available in the New Building.** In addition, this process included staff consultation to ensure all their needs are addressed adequately prior to the move.

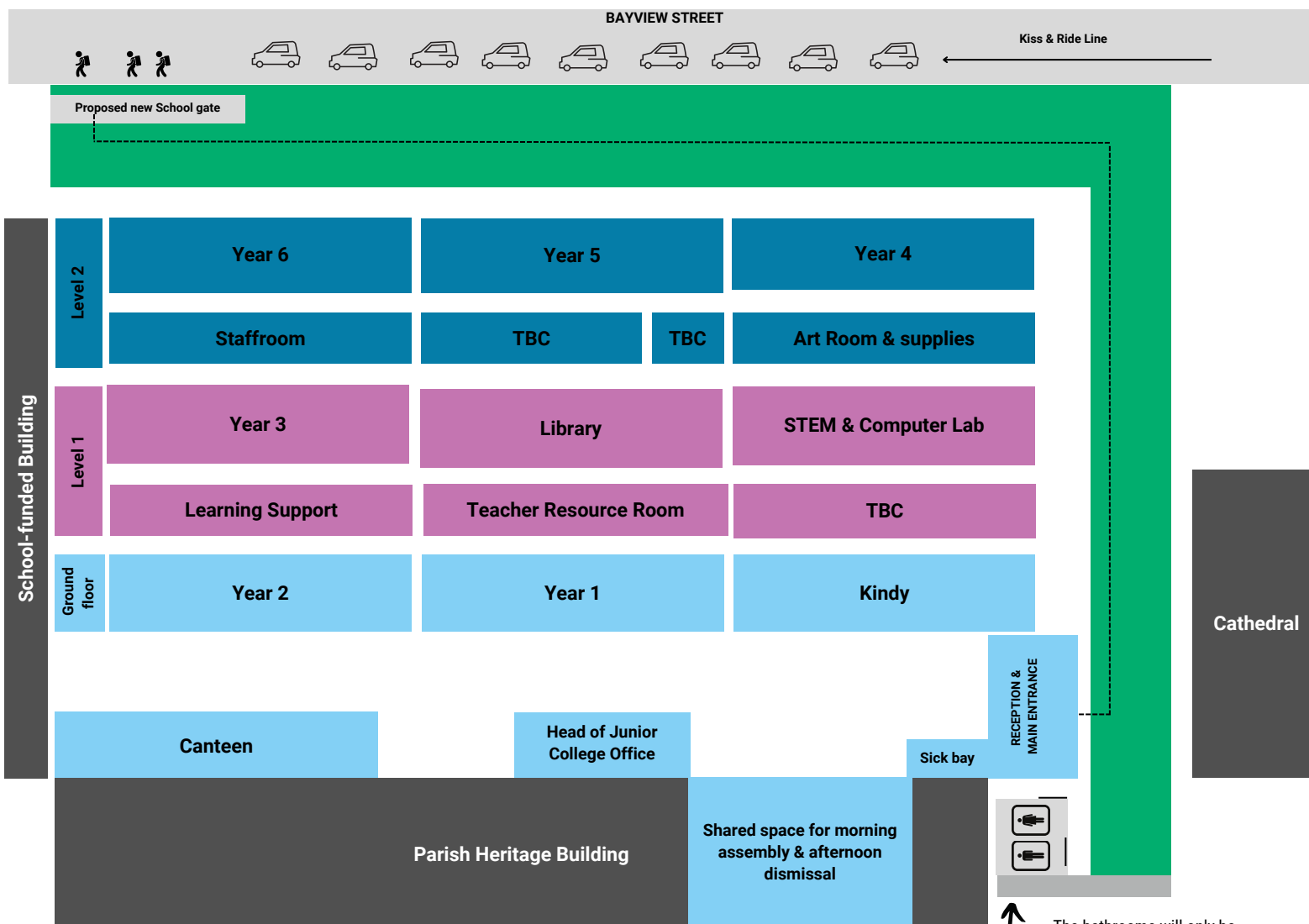
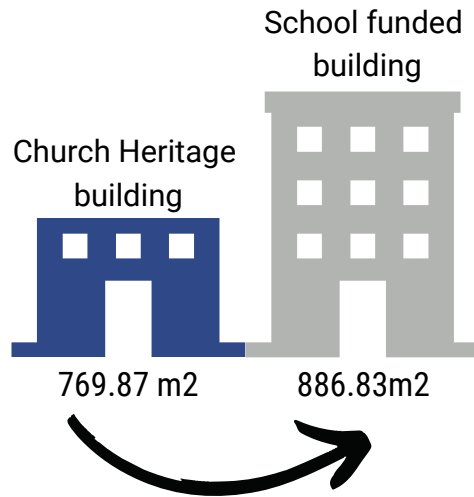
- **Will the students need to move out shortly?**

In collaboration with the staff at the College, a transition plan will be designed to ensure a smooth transition into the new building. **The students will move into the new building by the start of 2024.**



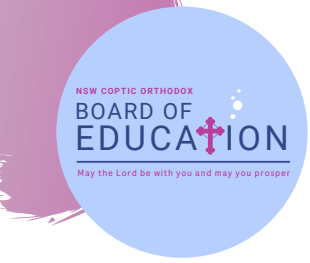
PROPOSED CO-DESIGNED LAYOUT OF THE JUNIOR COLLEGE

The following visual is the first draft layout of where the classes will be in the the School's funded building as co-designed by staff and discussed with the P&F representatives on the 1st of June 2023.



Please note that the College will still be able to use part of the Heritage building.

The bathrooms will only be blocked off from the heritage building so that they can only be accessed by the College students.



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QUESTIONS REGARDING THE FUTURE GROWTH OF THE COLLEGE

- **Has the Board considered paying the Church to rent the Heritage building?**

Yes, the Board has considered this and a rental appraisal was conducted. After the appraised figure was inserted into the financial feasibility study, it was found that this would hinder the College's future growth and its move to a new site and hence this option was not pursued.

- **Will this move hinder the College from growing?**

It is clear that the College will not be able to grow on its current campuses. We therefore conducted a financial feasibility study to determine the feasibility of moving to a different site. As a result **we have started the search for a new suitable site to accommodate the Junior College and potentially the Senior College.**

- **Is there a plan to purchase a new site for the College?**

As part of the independent financial feasibility study that was conducted, **the Board has explored the College's financial capacity to purchase a new site and has put this in the College's plans and commenced the search for a new site.** The Board of Trustees will be supporting the Board to increase the College's buying capability, but the College will be financing the new site.

- **Would a new site accommodate the Junior College alone or both the Junior and Senior College?**

Considering the Senior College is close to reaching full capacity, **it would be ideal to purchase a site that can accommodate for both our Junior and Senior Students.** However, the current priority is to accommodate for the Junior College.

- **Has a new College site been found?**

Whilst the Board has received numerous possibilities of sites and has commenced making some offers, **a suitable site has not been found as yet, but we are continuing the search** and will keep the parents updated when a suitable site has been found. If parents have seen any suitable sites, please advise Mr Francois David and he will advise the Board.

- **How will this affect our future relationship with the Church?**

In the words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, *"Every city or house divided against itself will not stand"* Matt 12:25. **Giving back the heritage building is a way to unite rather than divide, a way to show love rather than derision, a way to give back rather than constantly take.** We believe this process of collaboration with the Church has already improved our relationship with the Church and we pray that staff and parents showcase to the children that love and kindness is far greater than any other feat. *"But the greatest of these is love"* 1 Cor 13:13.

If you have any further comments or questions, please continue to send them through [this form](#) and please continue to pray for the College, for unity, wisdom, growth and prosperity.

Kind regards,

The NSW Coptic Orthodox Board of Education