

# ✠ MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS CHURCH ✠

September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As many of you already know, I serve on three committees outside of my ministry here in Altona:

- the Archbishop's 'Planning, Building and Finance Committee' which reviews and then approves (or not) Church and School building projects, as well as land purchases, sales and leases,
- the 'Diocesan Pastoral Development Fund' which assist with loans, or grants, to Church communities which are (mainly) in the growth areas of Melbourne,
- Caritas Australia, which is the Catholic Church's 'Overseas Aid and Development Agency' and is part of Caritas International. In Australia we are best known through Project Compassion each Lent.

These committees have informed some of my work over the years. So, when I came to Altona in February 2018, I already knew the area well as my parents had lived here for many years after they had sold the family home in Williamstown; I already knew much about the Church and School community; I already had an awareness that some careful forward planning needed to be considered.

You will remember that in 2019 I began a conversation about future possibilities. These discussions, and meetings, came to a pause because of the death of my parents and then the ongoing effects of the COVID lockdowns.

Over the past few months, two ideas have been presented to me and I would now like to hear your comments and suggestions.

St John of God Health Care is Australia's largest not for profit healthcare provider. Now, through St John of God Accord they have expressed an interest in the Presbytery corner (my residence) as a possible site for 6 independent living units for people with a disability. This land title sits between the Church and McBain Street, and between the Hall and Railway Street North. This possible project does not impinge on school land; however the steel storage shed would need to be moved forward and off the Church land title.

At the moment, they are actively looking for Church owned sites across Melbourne. In their thinking, we are in an ideal position because of our proximity to shops,

services, public transport and beach. The benefit for the Church community would be in the form of a long term ground lease, and the opportunity to assist with the ordinary daily needs for those with a disability. Any income could be used towards the wage, or stipend, of a pastoral worker for this local Church community.

Catholic Care is another Catholic Church Agency: they have expressed interest in 51 Sargood Street (the old convent site) for use as Community Housing. This land title sits next to, and is independent of, the school grounds. Catholic Care is also actively looking for Church owned sites across Melbourne, and they too, believe we are in an ideal position because of our proximity to so much.

Any possible building project in Sargood Street, would be managed, and run, by Catholic Care. Potentially, it could enable us to provide low cost secure housing to some of our own elderly, as well as others in need. It would also provide a long term ground lease.

While I was Parish Priest of Castlemaine (1993-1999), Project Partnership (Victorian Government) approached that Parish about the possible use of vacant Church land to the south of the School property. Before I left at the end of 1999, eleven retirement units had been built on a 50 year ground lease. That Parish is now able to provide secure housing to some of their elderly parishioners.

Both these ideas offer enormous benefit for the wider community, and they both sit clearly, and easily, within the ministry framework of a Catholic Church community. Both these ideas would enable this local Church community to provide Pastoral ministry, and extra services, for many years to come.

So, I would now invite written and signed, comments and suggestions from the 2021 school parents and guardians. But please remember, at this stage we are in the realm of ideas, possibilities and concepts. Nothing has been signed: nothing has been agreed.

Please email, or post, your ideas to me by Friday October 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Archpriest Michael Kalka  
Parish Priest