

THE **ABBOTSFORD** CONVENT FOUNDATION

MEDIA RELEASE

July 14, 2011

ACF approves new plans for Steiner school – with conditions

The Board of the Abbotsford Convent Foundation has approved new plans to extend the Sophia Mundi Steiner School, subject to a number of conditions. The conditions include guaranteed public access to the school's outdoor recreational areas after school and at weekends.

The new plans involve building four new classrooms in the current school playground, which is consistent with the Convent Master Plan approved in 2005. The school would also create a new playground area on the disused swimming pool site to the immediate west of current school tennis courts. Finally, the school would lease the small cream brick non-heritage building to the north of the school to build science and physics laboratories for students.

The chairman of the ACF, Mr Hayden Raysmith, said the proposal would help secure the future of the Steiner school which was a foundation tenant at the Convent and was a good fit for the Convent's culture because of its innovative approach to education and its emphasis on the arts.

Mr Raysmith said the Board insisted on strict conditions because of concerns about the growth of the Steiner footprint at the Convent. The conditions will be part of new leases for the school.

"One of those conditions is that Steiner signs an undertaking which accepts that there will be no further expansion of the school at the Convent," Mr Raysmith said.

"Our support is also dependent on support for the application from the Collingwood Children's Farm as the Convent's closest neighbour to the new facilities."

"And the school must deliver on allowing public use of the playground, tennis courts and the Nun's Walk down to the bike path."

The ACF's agreement is also conditional on approval from Heritage Victoria and any other relevant authorities as well as evidence of Steiner's ability to meet the commercial terms of all its leases and there would be a tree replanting program to compensate for the loss of some trees because of the development.

Mr Raysmith said the community benefits from the proposal included access to recreational facilities and new buildings which would remain Convent assets forever.

The 150 square-metre non-heritage cream brick building, known by some as "the blonde building", has been used for low-grade storage for many years, Mr Raysmith said. The courtyard outside the building will remain a public area. Students will use an elevated walkway near the fence line of the Goats Paddock to move between the school and the blonde building.

More details of the proposed development will be on the Heritage Victoria web site shortly.

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