

THE **ABBOTSFORD** CONVENT FOUNDATION

NEWS FROM THE CHAIR



August 23, 2011

New director continues Board renewal as ACF plans for the next five years

The Abbotsford Convent Foundation has appointed a new director, Mr David Laidlaw, a partner and former Chief Executive Officer of the leading law firm, Maddocks.

Apart from his admirable legal skills, David brings a strong background in the arts and community development. A former national student arts leader, David has served on a number of arts company boards and was instrumental in developing his company's support for Australian artists, including its sponsorship of artists selected to represent Australia at the Venice Biennales.

David is the fourth new Director appointed this year following the announcement late last year that the Board would be refreshed and renewed to meet the challenges of the ACF's second five-year business planning period.

All new directors have been selected through a robust process managed by the Board's governance committee, which has analysed the skills of the Board to identify gaps that need to be filled for the tasks ahead. They have taken into account recommendations from an independent review of the Board completed in 2008. All Board positions are honorary and are limited to two three-year terms unless unanimously extended by a meeting of the Board.

I regret to announce that Dr Catherin Bull AM has resigned from the Board to concentrate on matters in her new home in Queensland. Dr Bull has been an outstanding Board member whose expertise, credentials and advice on landscape design and architecture – as well as a host of other issues – is acknowledged as world-class. We will miss her sage advice, but will gain from the comfort that one of her former students and protégés from the University of Melbourne, Libby Ward-Christie, joined our Board earlier this year.

The Board and management of the ACF have been thrilled by the response so far from the public consultation on the draft Business Plan. The process included a public meeting at the Convent last month. The period for comment finishes next week. The Board will then consider the responses and redraft the Business Plan. A summary of the responses will be published on the web site.

The Board remains determined to fight strongly for the best traffic management and parking plan for the precinct.

The ACF was disappointed that the City of Yarra decided this month to push ahead with the development of a child care facility on the Lourdes site. In our view, the decision is a lost opportunity to fix the number one problem in the precinct: traffic management and parking.

The Council's plans for traffic and parking, in our view and in the view of our traffic consultant, will reduce parking spaces and make things worse rather than better.

The Board will not allow the ACF's car park to be used in a way that makes things worse. Our CEO Maggie Maguire was instrumental in forming a new Peninsula Stakeholder Group with representatives of the peninsula's organisations to form a united voice on traffic and other matters of common interest. Maggie has also joined two City of Yarra working parties on Lourdes and traffic to argue for better solutions.

Tenants and local residents can rest assured that the ACF will do all its power to achieve the best possible result. More information on the Lourdes issue is elsewhere on the ACF web site at <http://www.abbotsfordconvent.com.au/news/lourdes-development>

The Board is delighted to announce that it is now in a position to proceed with negotiations for a new five year lease for Lentil As Anything. In taking this step the Board acknowledged the hard work of Lentil as Anything in clearing debt and meeting compliance obligations as well as the assistance of two Board members, Patricia O'Donnell and Anthony Cullen, in working with Lentil as Anything to get to this point.

The Board decision follows a 12-month period of restructuring of the restaurant's operations, introduction of new management, and initiatives to ensure compliance with various laws, regulations and lease requirements.

Lentil As Anything is a wonderful fit for the Convent, with its emphasis on community and sharing and music. But the Board has a duty to make sure that all tenants operate according to appropriate standards and comply with their lease obligations.

Finally, it was reported to the Board that a staff member of the ACF had been dismissed for providing unsatisfactory responses to an internal investigation into a car sales operation. The activity has been reported to Victoria Police, which is investigating the matter. The ACF will review the issue when the police investigation and any subsequent court action is completed.

The dismissal of the employee was particularly disappointing because he was engaged under a convicted person's rehabilitation program which the ACF was trying to support as part of its broader social responsibility objectives.

Hayden Raysmith AM
Chair
Abbotsford Convent Foundation