

Date of Issue: Thursday 8 August 2019

Subject: New Catholic college in South Mackay

Catholic Education has commenced preliminary planning for a new Catholic college in south Mackay following identified future demand for Catholic secondary schooling in the region.

Most Rev Michael McCarthy, Catholic Bishop of Rockhampton, made the announcement in Mackay last week after reviewing results of a demographic study commissioned by Catholic Education which determined a need for additional secondary provision in Mackay within the next few years.

“Following consideration of the study’s recommendations I have indicated my support for further investigation and planning to proceed,” Bishop McCarthy said.

“It’s with great pleasure and excitement that I share this news with the Mackay community as we work to continue the strong tradition of Catholic schooling as a choice for parents seeking a faith-based Catholic education for their children,” Bishop McCarthy said.

The location of the new Catholic college will be the site of the “Sugar Research Institute” building on Nebo Road and surrounding 3.9 hectare parcel of land.

Known for many years as a place of learning and research, this location would continue a proud tradition of educating future generations of students in Mackay, according to Bishop McCarthy.

“It is significant that the field of scientific endeavour and other STEM subjects will continue to flourish and develop on this site as the next generation and those beyond take us forward into a new era of learning,” Bishop McCarthy said.

Bishop McCarthy said the strong connection to the sugar industry which paved the way for development and progress in the beautiful Mackay region, also echoed historic links with Catholic Education.

A great patron of the Catholic Church and of Mackay, Irish sugar planter TH Fitzgerald, and pioneering Catholic priest Fr Pierre Marie Bucas worked together to establish the town’s first Catholic school bringing a group of Mary MacKillop’s Sisters of St Joseph to Mackay to run the school in 1872 on land donated by Fitzgerald.

“We are delighted and honoured to continue such close ties with Mackay’s sugar industry and contribute to the ongoing development and progress of this wonderful community,” Bishop McCarthy said.

Diocesan Director Catholic Education Leesa Jeffcoat said she was confident the lengthy process of planning and development would proceed and hoped to open the new school for the commencement of the 2022 school year.

Cont/...



“Clearly there are many Diocesan, Local and State government planning and associated approvals to be sought before further progress can be made. We will work with all parties and authorities to meet necessary requirements and look forward to welcoming our first cohort of students at the beginning of 2022,” Miss Jeffcoat said.

“We are delighted to be able to provide a new college for Mackay families and we take this opportunity to say thank you to this dynamic, vibrant community for the continued support and patronage of our Catholic schools which has continued for well over a century,” Miss Jeffcoat said.

Miss Jeffcoat said a steering committee comprising local Parish and community representatives would now be established chaired by Assistant Director Schools: Northern Region, Michael McCusker to oversee the next stages of development.

“I very much look forward to updating the community as we progress through the next phase of planning and on to construction.” Miss Jeffcoat said.

.../ENDS