



6 August 2021

JOINT STATEMENT FROM

Bishop Greg Bennet
Catholic Bishop of Sale

& Maria Kirkwood
Director of Catholic Education and
Chief Executive Officer – Diocese of Sale
Catholic Education Limited

Re: Our Lady of Sion Convent and former Sion Campus, Sale

The Our Lady of Sion convent building in Sale is a much-loved local landmark with historical significance for Catholics, the Catholic education community, and the broader community in Sale.

Until recently, the site of the former convent was part of the Sion Campus of Catholic College Sale. Stewardship of the beautiful, historic building has now become the responsibility of the Catholic Diocese of Sale, while the land and buildings surrounding the former convent will be managed by Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Ltd (DOSCEL).

We are committed to maintaining this location as a special place where our community can experience the love of Jesus in an enriching environment.

As part of that commitment, we are pleased to announce that in the coming weeks we will convene a committee, chaired by the former Member for Gippsland South and parishioner of St Mary's Cathedral, the Honourable Mr Peter Ryan. The committee will explore potential future uses for the Our Lady of Sion convent, and provide recommendations regarding possible partnerships with organisations aligned to a broad Catholic educational vision of welfare, outreach and mission. The committee will work with the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion, and key stakeholders. Any future refurbishments to the building will comply with the heritage overlays.

In parallel to the work of the committee, DOSCEL will soon begin a detailed planning process for the land and buildings surrounding the convent. The foremost option under consideration is the relocation of St Thomas' Primary School to the Sion site. Existing facilities at the Sion site, such as the school building and grounds, have potential to be refurbished and re-purposed for St Thomas', to serve the parish community into the future.

Redeveloping the Sion site for St Thomas' Primary School would ensure that the 125-year tradition of Catholic education in this location continues. St Thomas' Primary School was led by the Sion Sisters when it opened 50 years ago, so in one sense, the primary school would be returning to its spiritual home.

A working party made up of representatives from the DOSCEL Secretariat and staff from St Thomas' Primary School, in consultation with Parish Priest Fr Peter Bickley, will look at all aspects of the proposed relocation before a final decision is made.

If the relocation goes ahead, it is likely to take at least three years to complete the planning and construction of facilities for St Thomas'.

DOSCEL and St Thomas' are committed to keeping the St Thomas' school community informed over the coming months. We will work with the school community and other key stakeholders to address any concerns about the proposed relocation.