



14 July 2023

JOINT STATEMENT FROM

Bishop Greg Bennet
Catholic Bishop of Sale

&

Mr Paul Velten
Director of Catholic Education
Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Ltd

Community Update: Our Lady of Sion Convent and former Sion Campus, Sale

In our last report to the community in December 2022, we announced that a Preliminary Proposed Masterplan had commenced to thoroughly investigate the possibilities of transforming the historic site into a state-of-the-art education facility while preserving its rich history.

Since then, extensive work has continued behind the scenes. The appointment of a heritage advisor has been made along with the appointment of consultant specialists in various fields such as structural and civil engineering, electrical and mechanical engineering, building surveying, landscape architecture, acoustic engineering, and quantity surveying. A specialist slate installer has been engaged to inspect the condition of the existing welsh slates and a three-dimensional scan of the existing convent has been undertaken to better inform design decisions.

Consultations have been undertaken with staff at St Thomas' Primary School, Sale and the Sisters of Sion. These consultations will continue.

As a result of this work, the architects have now moved into the detailed design phase, which considers in far greater detail the impact of design and engineering decisions on the Convent and surrounding site. They have also commenced engagement with Town Planning.

While the project is still in the preliminary proposal stage and subject to further development and regulatory approval, investigations are progressing.

While much work still lies ahead, we are delighted to share some of the architect's most recent concept drawings which provide insight into the opportunities to transform the site into a contemporary learning environment with the Convent and Chapel a centrepiece.

As custodians of this heritage site, we have been very aware of the opportunity presented to us to create buildings of beauty that will enable those in our community to grow in their love of Jesus in an enriching environment.

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 that connection would be strengthened.

We look forward to providing updates to our parish and school communities through the planning phase as we progress investigations into continuing the 125-year tradition of Catholic education on this historic site.

Background and Timeline:

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.

- November 2020: The site became vacant following the formal relocation of the Catholic College Sale Junior campus. Many expressed their dreams and hopes for the future use of this treasured local landmark.
- August 2021: The Bishop of Sale, through his Diocesan Committee chaired by the former Member for Gippsland South and parishioner of St Mary's Cathedral, the Honourable Mr Peter Ryan, began exploring possible uses of the convent building. Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Ltd (DOSCEL) engaged specialist consultants to explore the possible relocation of St Thomas' Catholic Primary School, Sale to the Sion Campus site.
- November 2021: A community survey was undertaken to gather feedback on re-locating St Thomas' Catholic Primary School to the Sion Campus site.
- October 2022: It was announced that through the work of DOSCEL and the Diocesan Committee, consideration would focus on the development of the whole site as a state-of-the-art education facility with the Convent building which includes the Chapel being the centrepiece of the school.
- December 2022: Early conceptual designs for a Preliminary Proposed Masterplan were developed by a project architect for consideration and assessment.
- January - June 2023: Extensive investigations continued and a range of consultant specialists including engineers, surveyors and a heritage advisor were appointed.
- June 2023: Preliminary Proposed Masterplan moved to Detailed Design Phase. Architects commenced engagement with Town Planning.

Sion convent and campus site

Below: Preliminary whole site overview showing Convent and proposed new school building.



Sion Convent and campus site
Preliminary Design - Axonometric Building Plan Cuts, June 2023

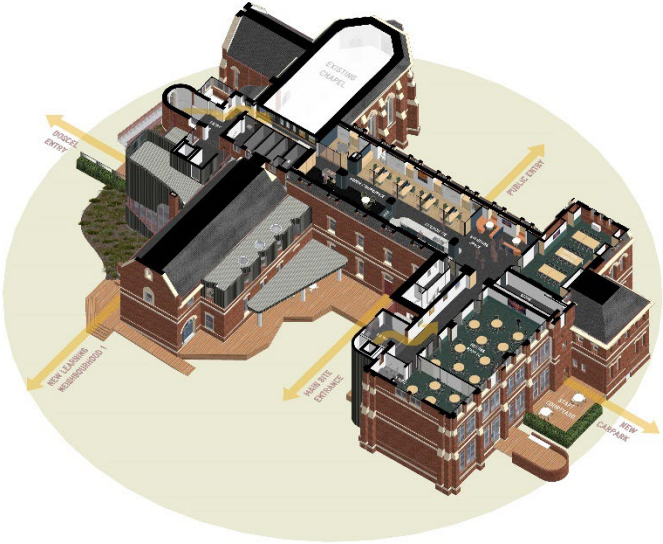
Below: Convent – Proposed Ground Floor Plan.
New Specialist spaces and Administration



Below: Convent – Proposed First Floor Plan.
New Senior Years Learning Neighbourhood



Convent – Proposed Second Floor Plan.
DOSCEL office, teacher training and collaboration



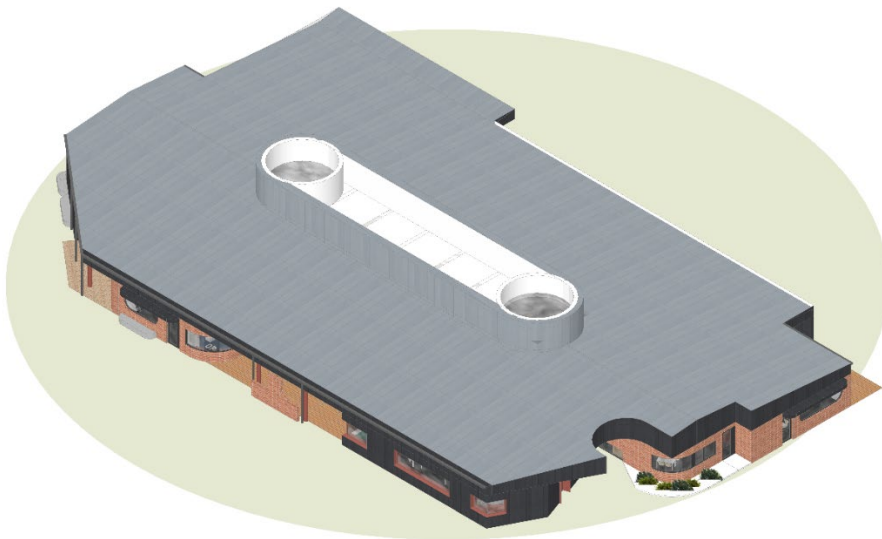
Below: Convent – Transformation/Refurbishment Building.



Below: New Building - Proposed Floor Plan.
New Junior Years Learning Neighbourhood



Below: New Building - New Junior Years Learning Neighbourhood Building.



**For latest Project Updates on Our Lady of Sion Convent and Sion Campus
go to:**

<https://www.doscel.catholic.edu.au/media/sion-campus-update>

Media Inquiries: Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited (DOSCEL)

Media and Communications Team 0417 534 232