

# THE CATHOLIC PARISH OF IVANHOE

## PARISH MASTER PLAN

### 1. OBJECTIVE

The objective of our Parish Master plan is to create an environment that enables the majority of our Parishioners to fulfil our Mission of Inclusiveness, Hospitality and Service.

### 2. BACKGROUND

In the early part of last century, the centre of the Catholic Church in our region was St John's Heidelberg. As the population grew, the Ivanhoe region established three separate parishes independent of Heidelberg; St Bernadette's West Ivanhoe, Mary Immaculate Ivanhoe, and Mother of God East Ivanhoe. Each of these parishes also established their own parish primary schools. The region had three churches and three primary schools within 2.5km of each other.

The cluster was established in 1999 after several years of consideration. In 2005, it became the Catholic Parish of Ivanhoe.

In 2007, the decision was taken to adopt one mass centre at Mary Immaculate Ivanhoe because it was central to the region and to ensure more meaningful and effective liturgy with falling mass attendances and reduced available clergy.

As a result of concern expressed by sectors of the parish community it was decided to review the decision to adopt one mass centre and further consider views expressed by parishioners, look closely at the facilities available and reconsider the available options.

### 3. PARISH PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The decision has been made to continue as is with each of the single stream parish primary schools. The decision is driven by two primary factors: -

- (i) Each of the schools is viable and numbers are growing. There is no shortage of students and each school has an excellent reputation in the region.
- (ii) Because of property values and the density of development in the region, it is very difficult to find a site at the right price large enough and central to bring all three schools together.

Note: That of the three schools, St Bernadette's has some potential for further expansion, the other two schools are land locked.

### 4. SCHOOL/CHURCH RELATIONSHIP

Each of the schools has an important connection with their respective churches that is seen as being an integral part of a continuing Catholic primary school relationship.

Mother of God not only relies on the church over the road for its religious education programs but also needs the facilities at times for other curricular activities due to the small site that the school occupies.

St Bernadette's has more indoor activity areas but is still reliant upon the church for its religious education programs.

Mary Immaculate whilst a short walk away from the church uses the Mary Immaculate church in a similar way to St Bernadette's.

### 5. SCHOOL/CHURCH SYNERGY

One of the many significant changes in the Catholic church in Melbourne over the past twenty years is that the continued interest and patronage of the primary schools has not been matched with continued interest and patronage of attending mass regularly.

The survey recently conducted tells us that bringing up children in the Catholic faith and accessing sacramental programs for children is important to you.

Peak Christian celebrations such as Christmas, Easter and First Communion are very well attended and require large churches to accommodate all attendees; on the other hand many regular Sunday masses are poorly attended.

## **5. SCHOOL/CHURCH SYNERGY (con't)**

This creates a dilemma for facility planners wanting to maximise utilisation of facilities. It also creates a dilemma for our already under resourced ageing and overworked clergy.

One of the primary recommendations of the Master Planning exercise is to encourage, promote and foster renewed relationships between the Parish and school communities so that the Parish is seen as an extension of family and that the synergy between church and school is strengthened.

## **6. PARISH SURVEY**

A Recent parish survey was undertaken to gain better insight into the needs and aspirations of our Parish community. The survey was well supported with 277 respondents. The areas identified by the survey that are in need of more attention and are of most concern to parishioners are children, Sacramental planning, The faith journey and liturgy. This master plan puts in place the framework to address these issues. It will then be up to parishioners and parents to come together to support our priests and teaching staff to bring the plan to life.

## **7. CLERGY**

The reduction in the number of Diocesan Priests in Melbourne and their increasing age is a dilemma for master planners. Should parishes be master planning to suit the current shortage of Priests or should an assumption be made that this problem will be solved by stronger lay involvement in the parishes? In the master plan the answer to this question has been addressed as follows: -

Short Term 2009 – 2010 It is assumed that the current Mass times can remain until Father Len Thomas retires in 2010.

Medium Term 2010 – 2015 It is likely that one of the Masses will be cut out and there will be One Mass at each of the three Churches per weekend. During this period it seems inevitable that occasions will occur when services will be held without a Priest. The Ivanhoe Parish needs to put in place a procedure to follow on such occasions.

Long Term beyond 2015 Difficult to predict but more than likely there will be many services conducted without Priests. The constant throughout these periods is the retention of the churches and the intention to conduct services out of the local Christian communities using lay people to provide more and more support as required to replace the declining and ageing Priests.

## **8. LITURGY**

The majority of parishioners at each of the three churches have expressed their desire to continue weekend Masses at their respective churches. The challenge this brings is to develop strong liturgies within the three churches that reflects the one Catholic parish of Ivanhoe. The survey told us you wanted the liturgy to be more engaging and accessible for young people and children. Being inspired and sustaining personal faith were important to you. It is intended that a liturgical committee be set up to plan, manage and implement liturgical services for weekend Masses, special religious events such as Christmas, Easter, First Communion and Confirmation and also support families planing weddings, funerals and baptisms. It is up to lay parishioners to become more involved and play a more responsible and meaningful role if our churches are to survive and thrive. It is intended that the Liturgical Committee will have at least one representative from each of the School Communities so that the integration of school religious celebrations are strengthened and communication between Parish and school is improved.

## **9. KOREAN COMMUNITY**

The Ivanhoe Parish master plan sees the Korean community as a critical and vital component in the long-term development of the wider parish community. They are a young, enthusiastic and vibrant Christian community willing to integrate into the parish and this integration is most welcome. Shared use of parish facilities will be encouraged whilst at the same time respecting the need for the school to function independently and efficiently. Whatever changes need to be made to facilities to accommodate the Korean community's growing numbers and programs will be planned and undertaken with planning approval and approval of the wider parish community.

## 10. CHURCH COMMUNITIES

When the decision was taken to adopt one Mass Centre at Mary Immaculate, the church communities at both St Bernadette's and Mother of God expressed disappointment. The close family, parish, community connections are considered so important and the prospect of losing them and reluctance to change were major factors. You told us in the Parish survey that sourcing a church with personal connections was very important to you. It seemed to many parishioners that the very essence of lifelong parish, family community connections were being taken away without good reason. The question being repeatedly asked was "Why in this day and age when more than ever we need strong supportive Christian communities are we proposing to disband them?". The Intention of course was that this would not happen. Everybody would gravitate to the new, vibrant parish centre in Ivanhoe.

The master plan for facilities outlined on the next page addresses this issue and respects the views of those parishioners who were opposed to the one Mass Centre concept.

## 11. FINANCIAL VIABILITY

The Ivanhoe parish is asset rich and cash flow poor. We own or control three churches, three primary schools, three halls, three presbyteries and four tennis courts. We currently have \$85,000 in the bank – the same amount as four years ago. If we were to employ a Pastoral Associate, we would have no option other than to have a sacrificial drive to increase income to support a reasonable salary. Only urgent and essential maintenance of facilities have been undertaken over the past ten years. If for example we were to replace the rotting fascias and repaint externally at Mary Immaculate church, the majority of our \$85,000 would be required.

Another primary recommendation of the master planning exercise is to have a major sacrificial giving campaign in 2009 to boost income so that recurrent maintenance and capital works can be undertaken.

To undertake the planned capital works in the parish, property will have to be sold to fund such ventures. The facility master plan outlined below addresses this issue.

## 12. FACILITIES MASTER PLAN

The following facilities master plan has been developed after a thorough assessment of all buildings, their condition, size, site, topography location and environment. Architect FPPV represented by Kevin Fish Director has assisted in determining the outcome. The plan is as follows: -

(i) St Bernadette's Tennis Courts (see front cover)

It is proposed that this facility be redeveloped into a small retirement community consisting of 10 residential units and a community centre. The parish as owner of the land would borrow funds from the Catholic Development Fund to build the units and sell them under a lifetime lease arrangement with ageing parishioners given first priority.

The facility would remain in parish ownership with income derived from the resale of units providing an income stream to the parish after reimbursing the previous owner. A management agreement would be entered into with either Catholic Homes or Southern Cross Homes to manage the day-to-day activities of the community. The parish would need to put a committee in place to manage the development and ongoing investment of the facility.

The proceeds from the initial sales of these units would be used to undertake other projects in the parish.

(ii) Mother of God Church

It is proposed that this facility be retained and refurbished as a Sunday mass centre by providing a new metal deck roof, audiovisual, carpets, repainting, pew restoration and re-configuring the altar and baptismal areas. When the refurbishment is complete, weekday activities by the school community would continue. In the short term the church will be required to accommodate two classes from the school while the school is refurbished.

## 12. FACILITIES MASTER PLAN (con't)

### (iii) Mary Immaculate Church

It is proposed that this site be redeveloped in two parts: -

(a) The western half to provide a new church space, parish administration office, multi purpose and meeting area creating a new Parish Centre. The multi purpose area will be located adjacent to the church space to enable larger congregations to be accommodated as required.

(b) The eastern half to be developed into a multi use facility including ground floor shops, first floor offices and upper floor apartments with a basement car park.

A concept perspective is shown on the cover of this report. The development will fund the new Ivanhoe Parish Centre. The commercial arrangements would be designed to maximise the long term returns to the Parish.

### (iv) St Bernadette's Church

It is proposed that this facility be retained and refurbished by providing better heating, audiovisual and a bigger narthex or gathering area at the entrance to the church.

### (v) Mother of God Presbytery

It is proposed that this facility be retained and refurbished as required as the priest's residence.

### (vi) St Bernadette's Presbytery and Convent

The current needs of the Christian Brothers will be respected.

It is proposed that these facilities be assessed in more detail to maximise the use of land and facilities to meet the needs of the school and Korean Community.

Agreement will need to be reached with the Korean Community regarding the provision of facilities for their use.

## 13. THE WAY AHEAD

The master plan sets the scene for a reinvigorated parish of Ivanhoe into the future. The following objectives can be met: -

(i) A new vibrant Parish Centre in Upper Heidelberg Road that will be the heart of the parish. All the current activities plus coffee shop drop in centre, Christian bookshop and new church for regular religious services and for quiet reflection. A welcoming Christian centre of activity to be enjoyed on a regular basis by all parishioners and the wider community. The formal welcoming place for the Ivanhoe Catholic Community.

(ii) Retention and upgrade of Mother of God Church.

(iii) Retention and upgrade of the Parish Presbytery in Wilfred Road as the main place of residence for our Parish Priest.

(iv) Retention and upgrade of St Bernadette's Church, and convent to meet the growing needs of our school and the Korean Community and for the use of all parishioners.

(v) The development of a small retirement community on the St Bernadette's tennis courts site to service the increasing need of our ageing parishioners.

It is an ambitious master plan that will need to be undertaken in stages over the next five years. It will primarily be driven by availability of funds, our ability to develop and sell units and property to repay loans and evidence of increased lay participation to provide more meaningful and relevant liturgy particularly for our younger parishioners.

The intent is to ensure the long term financial future of our parish using today's commercial opportunities to build on the foundations set by parishioners who established the original Ivanhoe parishes.

As Father John Cunningham regularly reminds us, it is people who make vibrant Christian communities, not buildings. The challenge for all of us is to work co-operatively as one Parish to bring the Kingdom of God in a more meaningful way to Ivanhoe.