

Speech for Official Opening St Fidelis Junior Learning Areas

Friday April 29th, 2022

Good Morning everyone, we welcome you to the Official Opening and Blessing of the re- development of the St Fidelis Junior Learning Spaces.

What an honor it is to have our Spiritual, State, and Educational leaders with us today.

A special welcome to our special guests this morning:

- The Most Reverend Peter Comensoli, Archbishop of Melbourne. We are honored to have his presence with us.
- The Honorable James Merlino MP, Deputy Premier and Minister for Education
- Ms Lizzie Blandthorn State MP for Pascoe Vale
- Mr Jim Miles -Executive Director Melbourne Archdiocese of Catholic Schools (MACS)
- Fr Greg Bourke our Priest in Solidum
- Mr John Mills Regional Manager for the Northern Region for Melbourne Archdiocese of Catholic Schools
- Other distinguished guests, parents, teachers and most importantly our St Fidelis Students.

We are here today to officially thank the Victorian Government represented by Mr. James Merlino and Ms Lizzie Blandthorn for the generous Capital Grant of \$1.955 million dollars provided to St Fidelis at the end of 2019 under the Capital Funding Program and for the additional grant of \$25,000 for the Shade Sail we are sitting under today.

The grant has been highly valuable in ensuring our school has the facilities required to continue to provide quality Catholic Education for families in the St Fidelis Parish and the learning environments conducive to the 21st century.

Gratitude is acknowledged for the involvement and support of the MACS Capital Grants Committee directed by Mr. Jim Miles the Executive Director of MACS.

The Capital funds have allowed us to transform a very tired, dated, drafty, 94 year old building and outdoor area into a magnificent, vibrant, flexible and engaging learning environment for the students, teachers and families of St Fidelis.

At St Fidelis, we believe that contemporary learning is underpinned by teaching methods and spaces that are personalized, engaging and motivational. These learning spaces complement current and evolving methods of teaching.

The physical environment has been designed for contemporary learning and teaching in the 21st century. All the classrooms have been upgraded to comfortable, inviting areas with adaptable learning spaces, which enables student centered learning and teaching.

In today's interconnected world learning is no longer boxed in four walls. Students today are required to be inquirers, flexible thinkers, self managers, good communicators, collaborators, learn with and from each other, and connect to the global world through the use of technology.

In this environment students engage in teacher and student directed teaching and learning. This includes independent project work, group work and opportunities for innovation, creative thinking and problem solving.

For staff these new learning spaces have freed up their thinking and new way of facilitating instructional teaching and learning. These facilities support our Professional Learning Community, it enables us to collaborate, share best practices, and integrate 21st century skills into classroom practice. The moveable furniture and walls are easily reconfigured for different size groups, explicit teaching and promotes social interactions.

The new Learning spaces including this magnificent outdoor covered area has allowed students and teachers to utilize this outdoor area for various learning experiences such as: Literacy and Numeracy

lessons, Mediation sessions, Whole School assemblies or just sitting and building relationships with their friends. This shade cloth has been a most welcomed addition to our school.

These projects are not possible without close collaboration, in this case by staff, parents, students, the parish, wider community and significantly with the government.

Further acknowledgments need to be given to the members of my **School Advisory Board led by Mr Christopher Dickinson**, past and present for their encouragement and support with the grant application.

To the architects, Geoff Lavender and his team from **Centrum Architects** and in particular Keryn Herriman our sincere thanks for listening, designing and bringing our Vision to life. Thank you for the understanding, you had for this unique environment and the needs of the school throughout the project.

To Eddie and his team at **Raysett Constructions** who were amazing in keeping this project happening during the pandemic and being respectful of the running of the school. Your patience as I continued to ask questions and make changes was most appreciated.

A special mention to **Andrew Guglielmino, Capital Delivery Officer, Infrastructure**, who was the link between MACS, Raysett Constructions, Centrum and

myself. Andrew's patience, support and guidance through the project I will be forever grateful.

Thank you to my staff for their support throughout this project. Not only did they have to deal with COVID, remote teaching, relocation of classrooms, they did a wonderful job in keeping the children engaged with their learning and first and foremost looking after their wellbeing during this time.

Thanks to the families for your support with all the working Bees to pack up a school and put it back together without your support it would have been a much harder task.

Last but not least to the wonderful **children of St Fidelis**. This building is amazing but without you bringing this building alive, it is nothing by bricks and mortar.

So thank you for your hellos, your laughter, your innocence, your sense of curiosity, your questions and your smiles.

You all make my day and I am very privileged to be your Principal.