

Media Release

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PARTNERSHIP TO DELIVER NEW SCHOOL FOR STRATHALBYN

A new \$30 million school will be established in Strathalbyn.

The investment by Catholic Education South Australia (CESA) will deliver South Australia's first Catholic school in Alexandrina Council region.

In partnership with South Australia's largest home builder, the Hickinbotham Group, the school will support existing families and new home buyers in the fast-growing Alexandrina region.

The primary school will be a campus of St Francis de Sales College and will cater for students in Reception – Year 6, with the possibility of expansion to Year 9 depending on enrolment demand.

Located in Hickinbotham's Aurora master-planned community on the edge of Strathalbyn's town centre, plans for the first stage of the eight-hectare campus, subject to council approval, include contemporary learning spaces, sports facilities and an oval.

Strathalbyn's population is forecast to grow by approximately 1800 people over the next seven to 10 years, with nearly 800 new homes planned across several developments. These include 300 new homes to be established at Aurora, off Sandergrove Road.

The partnership between CESA and Hickinbotham Group follows their previous success together establishing Xavier College at Two Wells. Xavier College has played a significant role in the success of Two Wells, which is now one of Adelaide's youngest, most affordable and fastest growing urban regions.

Enrolments at the Two Wells campus of Xavier College have grown from 145 to more than 700 students in three years, with plans to grow to 1200 students. In 2023, Xavier College was named South Australia's fastest growing regional school across its three campuses.

The Strathalbyn campus of St Francis de Sales College is expected to open in 2029. Parents who wish to express an interest in enrolling their children can go to www.stfrancis.catholic.edu.au/strathalbyn or contact the school on (08) 8393 1000.

Comments from Catholic Education SA Executive Director, Dr Neil McGoran

"This new school development is part of our commitment to expanding Catholic Education pathways and building an even stronger focus on student learning and quality teaching in the Adelaide Hills.

“We have over 100 Catholic schools across the State. Each one offers students the opportunity to be thriving, capable learners as well as well-rounded caring community-minded people.

“St Francis de Sales College has a strong reputation in the local community and this new school will enable us to work in partnership with families from Strathalbyn and the surrounding areas to provide their children with an excellent Catholic education.”

Comments from St Francis de Sales College Principal, Andrew Baker

“Our College already embraces the Strathalbyn community with two buses transferring students to our Mount Barker campus each day. I am confident that local families will welcome the opportunity to have a Catholic schooling option in the heart of their community.

“We have been experiencing strong enrolment growth at our Mt Barker College for some time. In recent years, enrolments have grown by over 30 percent. In 2020, we had around 695 students. With our 2024 midyear Reception intake, we will grow to 980 students, with enrolments expected to exceed 1,000 in 2025.

“In the last five years, we have opened our ELC and new primary school facilities to meet growing demand. We’re committed to providing the same educational excellence and quality learning opportunities in Strathalbyn.”

Comments from Hickinbotham Group Managing Director, Michael Hickinbotham

“It’s one thing to build a home; it’s another to support the evolution and growth of a community. The team at CESA understand and share Hickinbotham’s vision to facilitate positive social outcomes for the community of Strathalbyn.

“South Australians want well-planned and sustainable neighbourhoods that are welcoming, safe and secure for their families and will provide high-quality and supportive education for their children.

“Families living in Aurora will be part of a vibrant community in which children can walk to and from school. Hickinbotham is also nearing completion of a \$2 million ‘learn through play’ playground at Aurora, based upon the work of former thinker-in-residence Professor Fraser Mustard, which will open later this year.

“We look forward to continuing our partnership with CESA to establish St Francis de Sales College as part of our wonderful new community at Strathalbyn.”

Comments from Alexandrina Mayor, Keith Parkes

“Strathalbyn is a growing community and schools are an important infrastructure component in servicing growth areas. Council looks forward to working with Hickinbotham and Catholic Education SA to provide further education and recreation opportunities for Strathalbyn and the broader district.”

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