TERM TWO SUMMARY CONCERNING ST JOHN’S FUTURE PLANNING:

A Communications Group was formed following the Community Forum held February 23rd in the school library. The following people were asked to be a part of the group – Jo Dennington (Kinder Parent), Lisa Rourke (Parish Pastoral Council), Natalie Bradshaw (School Board), Chris Favaloro and John Calabres (Parish Finance Committee), Christine Dunk (School REC). Our P&F President and School Board Chair were informed of developments during the term.

The group advised on information to go onto the school website about the building project, helped in summarising the survey results and assisted in the construction of Frequently Asked Questions which appear on our website. These have been updated to answer questions that have arisen from the survey.

Our survey attracted 22 responses from the community. The key points were as follows:

- The majority of surveys recognised a need for parking but did not see a need to remove the current grassed surface, as play on a softer surface was seen as more preferable for the children.
- Safety measures need to be fully considered if the area is to be used as a car park during the week and the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was seen as very important.
- Survey responses noted the potential of the area at the front of the Church for parking.
- There was a need for a general explanation concerning the reasons why a Development Application (DA) was not being considered for this area and some confusion about this issue.
- Surveys saw the potential of using the money to be spent on the car park as being more appropriately spent on improvements to the Parish/School Hall.
- There was excitement expressed about new classrooms.
- Some surveys showed preference for a raised building as opposed to single storey building.
- Further information was required in relation to the relocation of classrooms during construction.
- Clearer drawings of the whole site plan were requested in terms of describing the areas to be developed and the location of fencing and colouring of areas was confusing.
- Throughout this process, the Parish has maintained its need for adequate and accessible parking for parishioners and its willingness to provide shared space for use by the school.

What has happened as a result of the survey?

The survey and the initial meeting with the community prompted the exploration of alternative ideas to a hard surfaced car park and the Parish Council and Catholic Schools Office have been included in the exploration of them. Leadership of the P&F and the School Board have been consulted about the ideas during the term prior to proceeding with inquiries. The Parish has consistently preferred a partial hard surface, partial grassed option explained on our web site but has allowed enquiries to be made and expressed openness to an alternate plan having heard the feedback from the surveys and the forum.

Three alternatives for retaining the grass were presented for consideration. The first looked at the use of mesh underneath the grass as a means of absorbing the weight of a car and of protecting the roots of the grass. This was eliminated as it was not guaranteed safe to use as a play surface for children.
The second considered a relocation of the hard surfaced parking area. This was eliminated as the plan did not provide sufficient number of spaces and it narrowed the play area considerably. It did not link the school effectively with the Church.

The third consideration was the replacement of the current grass with a stronger, better established root system. The grass would rest on a non-compactible based that would drain efficiently and be able to maintain a strain of grass with a thicker root system. This idea involved taking out the existing grass surface, installing a non-compactible base and replanting a recommended species of kikuyu grass. This idea was rejected due to concerns about ongoing maintenance and ease of access to the Church during wet weather.

The decision was therefore made to proceed with planning a shared hard surface play and parking area as well as creating a grassed surface for play by removing the access road to the hall.

A fourth idea was to investigate consideration of parking spaces at the front of the Church within a landscaped setting. This will be subject to town planning advice.

**What is happening about the Parish / School Hall and Learning Spaces?**

Plans to replace the hall floor, carry out painting and minor improvements to sections of the hall are in place but did not progress during Term Two. Classroom learning environments are in still in the design stage.

**Informing the community:**

Information about the progress of plans has appeared in school newsletters; been communicated at Parents and Friends meetings and to the leadership of the P&F and School Board. The Parish Council has been constantly informed of actions being taken. Information about building design progress will appear fortnightly in our school newsletter from Term Three.