



C.A.R.A.

**COLLINGWOOD AND ABBOTSFORD
RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION INC.**

CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE FARMLANDS

Media Release – For immediate release - 5 MAY 2011

In response to strong public interest opposed to a proposal to build on open public space utilised as heritage farmland by the Collingwood Children's Farm (CCF) since its formation, a coalition has been created by it and the Collingwood and Abbotsford Residents' Association (CARA). This body will coordinate the effort to fight the proposal. "Our aim is to save the farmlands. There's been a strong mandate given to us by the public through a wide variety of feedback to the Farm and CARA, so this is a logical progression", informs Alex Walker, Farm Manager. "Over 2,000 people have signed a petition against the proposal, and we keep getting more signatures daily. The comments online show how strongly the public feels about this issue. No-one wants to see the Farm lose any land".

"We are seeking an immediate meeting with the Minister for Planning, Matthew Guy MLC", states CARA President, Fred Allen. "The management of the Abbotsford Convent appear hell-bent on not only ignoring strong public sentiment firmly against the proposal, but the fact that they were given responsibility for preserving, not destroying, this unique public asset. It seems ridiculous we are once more having to fight to save the cultural heritage values of the site". Fred was key in the fight to save the St Heliers Carpark from development through launching legal action, "and again, we are exploring all avenues for blocking this proposal, including legal means", informs Fred.

The proposal has garnered a great amount of public interest, given that it seems incongruous with the community desire (and long battle) to see the Convent's unique heritage values preserved and respected for the enjoyment of all Victorians.

"Whilst we sympathise with Sophia Mundi, the business operations of it as a private school should not excuse the taking of any land away from the Children's Farm. Of great concern is the fact that the proposal (to Heritage Victoria) contained errors of historical fact and accuracy, as well as not including important design elements. How can a proposal be correctly assessed without full disclosure? And if the real issue of finding space for students at the Convent is that it's full of expensive (to restore) heritage buildings, well I'm sorry but that's what the Convent is – a heritage site. As a tenant they always knew this fact before they moved here in 2006. So had it always planned to put new buildings on public open space used as farmland?", Alex states.

According to correspondence from the Minister for Planning, Matthew Guy MLC, a decision by Heritage Victoria is expected some time in May.

Media contacts

Alex Walker – CCF Farm Manager 0417 115 326 Fred Allen – CARA President 0438 518 154