



ACADEMY

OF MARY IMMACULATE

28 February 2026

Mr Steven Avery
Executive Director
Heritage Victoria
1 Spring Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Email: Heritage.Permits@transport.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr Avery

Re: P40433 – Convent of Mercy and Academy of Mary Immaculate (AMIF), 88 Nicholson Street, Fitzroy (H0507)

I write in relation to a masterplan that has been prepared to support the revitalisation of the Academy of Mary Immaculate, Fitzroy (AMIF). Specifically, I write regarding works proposed as part of permit application P40433 which relates to the adaptive reuse of buildings at the site, including the former convent (aka the Goold residence).

Having regard to Section 101(2)(b) of the *Heritage Act 2017*, 'the extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or registered object'. I wish to communicate that the proposed works are critical for the ongoing economic viability of the Academy within the independent secondary school sector.

The relocation of the Sisters of Mercy from the property in 2020 represented a defining shift in the story of the campus. For the first time in over a century and a half, the entire campus became dedicated solely to educational activities. The transfer of the convent by the Sisters of Mercy to AMIF was a meaningful and symbolic act, placing the stewardship of an historically significant building in the hands of the Academy. With this came not only an opportunity, but a responsibility to ensure that the place continues to serve a purposeful role within a functioning, contemporary educational environment.

In response to this moment, AMIF initiated a thorough planning exercise to determine how the site could best operate as a contemporary school while respecting its historic character - PMDL-McGlashan Architects were engaged to undertake a detailed audit of the campus, a process

THE CITY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

which confirmed that the school is constrained by insufficient teaching areas, a lack of specialist facilities and limited flexible indoor and outdoor spaces.

This process was not motivated by expansion for its own sake, but by a clear need to respond to practical challenges that currently limit the school's ability to operate effectively and challenge its long-term viability. AMIF exists within a congested secondary school environment, where families are presented with a wide range of options across public, Catholic, and private institutions. In this context, enrolment decisions are increasingly shaped by the quality of the physical learning environment, as much as by reputation. Parents now place significant weight on the condition of buildings, the adaptability of classrooms, access to wellbeing facilities, and the overall experience of the campus. Schools that fail to invest in contemporary infrastructure risk becoming less attractive to prospective students.

Although AMIF has a strong standing in terms of its educational offering, the physical layout and condition of its campus currently place it at a disadvantage. Many of the buildings were constructed for earlier models of schooling and do not easily support contemporary teaching methods. The existing room configurations are often too rigid, too small, or poorly arranged to facilitate collaborative learning, digital integration and flexible use. Modern education increasingly relies on spaces that can be easily reconfigured, support different learning styles, and accommodate independent and group-based activities. These are attributes that the current campus struggles to provide.

There is also a greater contemporary focus on student wellbeing, inclusion, and accessibility than when much of the campus was originally built. Accessibility has been one of the main considerations underpinning the need for redevelopment and the key drivers of the proposed works. Large parts of the campus, especially the heritage buildings have undergone incremental change and were designed before contemporary accessibility standards, resulting in physical barriers such as level changes, limited lift access and constrained circulation that restrict equitable use of the site. The proposed works will improve movement, connectivity, and access across the campus, ensuring all students, staff and visitors can readily engage and use existing and adapted buildings on site. Accessibility improvements are therefore fundamental to justification for the proposed development within the campus.

Schools are now expected to offer a variety of environments that cater to different needs, including quiet study areas, social interaction zones, outdoor learning settings, and spaces that support mental health and emotional development. At present, AMIF lacks adequate diversity of such adaptable spaces, limiting its ability to fully meet these expectations. Without substantive improvements, the school would be increasingly out of step with accepted standards of modern educational design.

A major concern identified through the planning process is that the campus is operating beyond its intended capacity. The site was originally planned for a smaller student body, yet enrolments have grown beyond that level. This has created pressure on classrooms, shared facilities, and outdoor areas. Teachers are required to make compromises in how spaces are used, and students do not always have access to appropriate learning or recreational environments. This situation cannot be sustained over the long term without compromising educational quality.

From a financial perspective, addressing this issue is fundamental to the Academy's survival. AMIF must be able to demonstrate that its facilities align with what families expect. If not, it risks losing students to better-resourced competitors. Such a decline would directly threaten the Academy's ability to remain financially secure and continue delivering its mission. It would also risk terminating the site's association with the provision of education, an activity that has been provided since 1853 and is central to its heritage significance.

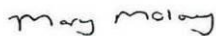
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The works including adapting the existing building to meet contemporary safety accessibility and operation standards, enhancing existing amenities and infrastructure, and updating and optimising the existing outdoor landscaped areas within the campus for educational and recreational purposes. All these works including the conversion of the former convent into a library, are critical elements of the broader strategy to secure the reasonable and economic use of the site. Rather than pursuing demolition or major new construction, AMIF has chosen to repurpose an existing heritage building in a way that serves both practical and conservation objectives. The convent provides an opportunity to establish a central learning hub that can support a variety of educational activities, from individual study to group collaboration and larger learning sessions. This aligns with current understandings of school libraries as dynamic, interactive environments rather than purely archival spaces.

It is important to understand that refusal of this application for works would affect the reasonable and economic use of the registered place.

AMIF looks forward to continuing to work constructively with Heritage Victoria to achieve an outcome that both safeguards the heritage of the site and supports the long-term future of the Academy in its historic home.

Yours sincerely



Sr Mary Moloney
Principal