



**Catholic Archdiocese of
Canberra & Goulburn**

23 September 2025

Fr Tru Nguyen MSC
Moderator
West Belconnen Catholic Community
25 Blackham Street
Holt ACT 2615

Dear Fr Tru,

The Archbishop has asked me to respond to your communication of 3 September on behalf of the West Belconnen Catholic Community of which you and Fr Chung are the canonical stewards *in solidum*.

Following receipt of your letter together with the feedback that you have provided both himself and the Vicar General, it is evident that your community has embraced the Archbishop's request to engage in consultation regarding his proposal that the Parishes of St John the Apostle, Kippax and St Thomas Aquinas, Charnwood be united in a new parish entity. His Grace has asked that I convey to you and the communities his appreciation of your efforts and the openness to the stirrings of the Holy Spirit that have been prompted.

In order to better respond to your communications and to facilitate future planning, the Archbishop formally consulted with the Council of Priests for a third time on 11 September 2025 (CIC 515 §2) regarding his proposal and the response of your communities.

The Council engaged in significant discernment about the proposal for the unification of the two parishes. They supported the Archbishop's proposal and also provided support for the proposed name which you have indicated emerged from community consultations and was broadly supported by parishioners.

Therefore, His Grace has asked me to communicate the next steps to you.

1. As you are aware, a parish is a certain community of the faithful within a diocese that is a juridic person under the Law. As such it is perpetual in nature (CIC 120 § 1



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and CIC 515 §§ 1- 2) which can only be altered for a just cause. Therefore, His Grace will, in coming weeks, issue a decree of extinctive union and merger to take effect on 1 January 2026. The decree will outline the processes undertaken and the necessary canonical steps to give effect to the decision.

As a result, the Parish of St John the Apostle, Kippax and the Parish of St Thomas Aquinas, Charnwood will be merged to form the new Parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, West Belconnen.

2. The Parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart will continue to have two mass centres in the Churches of St John the Apostle and St Thomas Aquinas.

Alterations to these arrangements should only be made with the prior approval of the Archbishop, that is both Churches should remain open and in consistent usage for the people of God.

3. It is the Archbishop's intent, following consultation with your superior, Fr Hackett MSC to appoint you as the inaugural parish priest of the new parish. Such appointment will take effect on 1 January 2026 for a period of six years.
4. In line with the current arrangements for the Kippax parish, since the new parish is entrusted to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, the first collections from both parishes will form the 'sustentation fund' for clergy assigned to the parish; the second collection is the patrimony of the new parish from which the obligations of the parish must be sourced. Further details about new financial arrangements are included below.
5. The territorial boundaries of the new parish will be the extant boundaries of the two current parishes combined; the ecclesiastical goods of each parish will be merged and you will be the canonical steward of these goods to be overseen with the diligence of a good householder (CIC 1284 §1).
6. Therefore, it is appropriate at this time that you undertake a full audit of the ecclesiastical good of the two extant parishes in order to ascertain the situation and goods of the new parish. The Archdiocesan Financial Administrator can be of assistance in this matter. Necessarily the new entity will need to ensure financial stability. A record of the audit should be retained in the Parish records and a copy forwarded to me for inclusion in the Archdiocesan records for the new parish.



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7. The schools of St John the Apostle, St Thomas Aquinas and St Francis Xavier College will be within the new parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and will be your responsibility to nurture and provide pastoral care to these communities. You should ensure a continued close working relationship with each of the Principals. In due course a formal communication will be provided to the Principals.
8. With the creation of the new parish, all positions in the old parishes will cease and new roles will need to be developed. That is, it will be for you to form, in accord with universal and particular law, a single parish pastoral council and a parish finance council that will assist you with your pastoral responsibilities and stewardship.

A second dimension of this will be the need to establish new procedures and working arrangements within the new parish. Together with the Archdiocesan Financial Administrator and the Archdiocesan Pastoral Support Team, principally, Ms Boyd, you should undertake an assessment of the parish's resources and requirements. New position descriptions will need to be developed and advertised for any roles that will serve the new parish.

As is the case with each transition of parochial leadership in our parishes, the Archdiocese is requiring parishes to utilize the parish support team to assist with the processing and reporting of parish finances. This will include the transfer of the first collection from the new parish to the nominated MSC Account (23048S11: ref West Belconnen) – clearly the reference will change from Charnwood to West Belconnen from the date of the erection of the new parish. Current arrangements with respect to Kippax parish and the first collection will cease at 31 December, 2025

Existing employees positions will effectively cease on 31 December 2025 unless they apply for and are successful in gaining one of the new positions. Should they choose not to apply or be unsuccessful, the Archdiocesan provisions related to redundancy will be applied.

To ensure transparency and constancy, the recruitment processes should be overseen by the Archdiocesan Financial Administrator.

9. To meet the requirements of the union being seamlessly in place by 1 January 2026 I propose the following timeline for your consideration:
 - a. Acknowledge receipt of this letter by Thursday 25 September



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- b. Inform staff of the parishes, personally and with support from the Parish Support Team, by Friday 26 September of the union and the implications for them.
- c. Inform parish councils and parish finance committees by email on 26 September of the union and the need to form new entities by the end of this year.
- d. Inform the parishes on the weekend of 28 – 29 September (and continue including in Bulletins for some weeks) of the union and the new parish name. Further details can be provided in coming weeks as they become clearer.

10. Fr Tru, the Vicar General will be in touch with you shortly to discuss further logistical details associated with this union.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick McArdle'.

Patrick McArdle
Chancellor