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School plans revealed

First glimpse of Catholic Education primary at Palms site

THE first glimpse of a state-of-the-art new Cairns primary school has been unveiled as excitement builds for an educational facility with direct university links.

The \$300m-plus residential and tourist park redevelopment of the former Paradise Palms golf course is one of the region's most controversial projects, with opponents now fundraising to mount a legal appeal against its approval.

That dispute has not stopped the Diocese of Cairns from pushing ahead with its plans to build a primary school that will feed students into the new Newman Catholic College on James Cook University's Smithfield campus.

Plans lodged with Cairns Regional Council reveal a 378-student, two-stream school will be built, with the option of expanding to a 567-student three-stream school as demand grows.

A childcare centre catering for up to 120 children is also included, with the school initially needing 40 staff and an extra 20 when expansion goes ahead.

The childcare centre is likely to operate as a kindergarten and as outside school hours care, with the possibility for long day care.

PPNQ Developments managing director Darren Halpin, who owns the property and is overseeing the overall Palms project, said he had been talking to education providers for two years.

"There is now, and will be going forward, huge demand for schooling in the northern beaches community — and this new school will help satisfy that," he said.

Cairns Catholic Education Services executive director Bill Dixon agreed demand was on the rise.

"We have signed a contract in relation to this site and it is subject to due diligence. We are moving through the process as required," he said.

The Diocese of Cairns has 30 schools across Far North Queensland including 15 in Cairns, but only has one school in the northern suburbs — Holy Cross School at Trinity Park.

Newman Catholic College is set to open on the JCU grounds in 2022.

The diocese's 30 schools have a total of about 11,500 students from Thursday Island to Tully.

The Palms project includes 295 residential lots, a water park, a caravan and villa park, and 34ha of open space.

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