

## Marymead CatholicCare's affordable housing units on Strangways Street

The Development Application (DA) for the 54 affordable units on the site of the presbytery next to Holy Trinity church is open for public comment.

We described the initial plans in our newsletter for June 2025.

Overall, the Curtin Residents Association supports this development. It provides a good number of affordable apartments (25 one-bedroom, 24 two-bedroom, 5 three-bedroom plus one resident caretaker's apartment) in three closely connected blocks. It has 59 resident parking places for its 54 units (not counting the caretaker) and 12 for visitors, although this is disappointingly 12 less than the normal expected for residents in multi-unit developments: two- and three-bedroom apartments should expect more than one car, and essential workers, shift workers among them, cannot rely on our inadequate public transport system. The DA includes a traffic report which notes that the public carparks around Curtin shops are just across the road. That's true, but as frequent users we notice that these places are already under stress. The traffic report used a survey of parking demand around the shops based on a single Sunday in winter. We believe this does not come anywhere close to seeing the surges in demand on school days and working days during the week.

Despite the ACT Government's positive policies to support electric vehicles there are no charging points for electric vehicles in the Marymead CatholicCare complex. We expect the number of chargeable EVs will steadily increase, and this will flow into affordable secondhand markets, meaning that there will be many EVs in this building well before it reaches its planned 50-year life. Providing some electric vehicle charging points is an essential step to future-proof the development.

The height of the building is 5 storeys of apartments, which is one storey more than zoning normally allows but below the zoning-allowed total height in metres. The highest is below the level of the

Architectural rendering showing the development from Strangways Street.



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## *Caring for Curtin*



*Above:* Architectural rendering of the new buildings as seen by a cockatoo in a tree in the western open space.

*Left:* The development from a similar viewpoint above the Statesman hotel.

church spire. Most of the apartments face away from the nearby school, looking into the western open space. The architecture is interesting, much

better than the big blank glassy blocks seen in many other developments around Woden.

The development will remove a number of existing trees but with planned new planting should reach 39% tree canopy cover, which is more than the ACT overall target. (We think 40% is an absolute minimum.) But many of these are small trees that are not sufficient to shade the west-facing windows for the main buildings. (To see the incoming sunshine, look at the unshaded sides in the shadow diagrams for 3 pm in summer). There are some existing old trees in the public space beyond, but we think that there should be better shade cover for these apartments.

The Development Application (number 202644959) can be accessed at ACT Planning here: [www.planning.act.gov.au/applications-and-assessments/development-applications/browse-das/development-application-details?da-number=202644959](http://www.planning.act.gov.au/applications-and-assessments/development-applications/browse-das/development-application-details?da-number=202644959).

In the DA the Development Outcomes report is weak on supporting evidence for many of its claims. The Design Review Panel report spends most of its effort on architectural quality outcomes, which introduces quality into the approval process. The building indeed promises to look interesting, rather than being a slab of glass façade or resembling a set of shipping containers, like many commercial developments.

The closing date for submissions on the DA is Thursday 2 April.