



*5th February, 2012*

## **PRESS REPLY TO THE TIMES OF MALTA**

**With reference to MEPA's refusal to grant permission for primary school to be built next to St Augustine's College in Pieta.**

**The new primary school formed part of the Church's – and national – education reform. How has the refusal of the permit affected the plans?**

**Will the Church appeal Mepa's decision?**

**If the appeal is refused, does the Church have a backup plan such as applying to build the school in another location?**

**How has Mepa's refusal derailed the timeframes of the Church's educational reform?**

Unfortunately the planning to have the system up and running by scholastic year 2013/14 is going to be delayed. The fact that it took MEPA a year and a half to have the report ready so as to be discussed and decided upon has already jeopardised the agreed planning together with the Education Authorities of the intake of students in year 1 and year 4 for scholastic year 2012/13. Because of this delay coming September St. Augustine wasn't in a position to take its cohort of 150 students as it did last year. Parents who wanted their children to have their education in a school with a particular ethos felt frustrated, disappointed and stripped off a right that is theirs.

At the moment the Maltese Augustinian Province of which St. Augustine College falls under its jurisdiction is considering all possibilities. For the time being all options are kept open. The Augustinian Friars and the educational community at St. Augustine College firmly believe in the benefits and the great sense of social justice that the proposed reform in the education system will yield once it is in place.

It is very remote at the moment to think of a backup plan. The Augustinian Friars purchased the land with the intention that eventually it will be of use to further developments of the existing College. Having a feeder primary school constructed miles away from the secondary school will give way to first a duplication of Human resources as some teachers and members of staff could not be shared between the two schools, and secondly waste of land as probably new land will need to be purchased and developed. The Augustinians are of the opinion that purchasing and developing new land is not tenable. The area earmarked for the development of the primary school is within an enclosed area, part of it is occupied by a tennis court and a couple of meters away from the existing secondary school.

From the aforementioned timeframes have already been delayed. Thanks to the minor seminary for the present scholastic year the first cohort of 150 students have been hosted at tal Virtu' in Rabat. Unfortunately for the coming scholastic year 2012/3 no students can be enrolled, this giving rise to parents frustration especially those who have their siblings already attending St. Augustine College. The biggest problem is where to host the 150 students together with their teachers.