

St Basil's denies rumours of redundancies and closure



St Basil's Homes for the Aged in Victoria, the site of Australia's deadliest coronavirus outbreaks so far, is not in danger of closure.

Fr Evmenios Vasilopoulos, the Archdiocesan Vicar of the Northote district, who is the current Chairman of the nursing home following the resignation of Konstantinos Kontis in September 2020 told Neos Kosmos that rumours of an imminent closure are groundless.

"There is no uncertainty surrounding St Basil's nursing home in Melbourne, and there is no chance that it will close," Fr Evmenios said, pointing to inaccuracies in the article in The Age which suggests that the future of the facility is in doubt following the federal government's Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's notice that St Basil was "not eligible to receive Commonwealth subsidies for any new care recipients" for six months.

St Basil's spokesperson told Neos Kosmos that the facility will be eligible for Commonwealth funding from June.

The spokesperson also refutes claims in The Age which state that the Greek

Orthodox church, the owner of St Basil's, slashed the annual rent it receives from the nursing home by \$650,000 last year. "Over the past six years, the church has taken payments from St Basil's totalling \$16.7 million," reports The Age.

St Basil's spokesperson states: "St Basil's occupied the property for many years without making any contribution to the Archdiocese – effectively rent-free if you like. The amounts paid to the Archdiocese in the most recent years have been made up of both rent and an extra portion for rent that was not paid in those previous years."

The same source said "no organisation under the auspices of the Archdiocese is under any obligation to submit any funds at all if it is unable to because of financial hardship."

The facility is currently operating with 42 residents from 117 before the first coronavirus case was documented on 8 July before the health department became aware of it six days later. On 23 July all staff at the facility were considered close contacts and had to be replaced, resulting in confusion for residents and their families. During the height of the COVID-19 crisis faced by aged care facilities there were 94 infections by staff members, 94 positive cases detected in residents and a total of 45 deaths. There were a total of 223 confirmed cases which came from the St Basil's cluster.

Following the departure of Mr Kontis from the board and the retirement of the Director of Nursing Vicky Kos after long service, Fr Evmenios hopes St Basil's could turn over a new leaf and looks forward to better days ahead.

St Basil's financial report mentions redundancies, however St Basil's spokesperson said "there have been no redundancies and no plans for future redundancies."

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