

## VILLA LA SALLE

### Retirement Living Complex

#### Southport. Queensland, Australia

In keeping with our Districts throughout the world, the District of Australia has been taking steps to provide for the ageing Brothers. Our Oldest Brother, Br. Anselm Hallam, will celebrate his 90th birthday next year.

Up until a few years ago, the elderly Brothers, when they could no longer teach or perform some helpful task in the school, have always preferred to remain within an active community. This has been Br. Anselm's choice and he is a member of the Revesby community.

In the past, when the time came for more adequate care than could be given in community, the Brothers were willing to transfer to a Nursing Home staffed by Religious Sisters. This has always been a successful move for them, and they rapidly adjusted to their changed circumstances.

Over the last decade and more, those Brothers who are no longer teaching or in school related endeavours, but are still able to look after themselves and even engage in other apostolates, have had special arrangements made for them to live in a retirement community. Some 12 years ago, a house for retired Brothers was built on our "Oak-hill" property at Castle Hill. This has accommodation for 15 Brothers. At the present time, additions are being completed to provide Nursing Home facilities for those who need 24-hour care and supervision.

Other accommodation for elderly but active Brothers was provided in one of three houses on a site at Southport, Queensland, belonging to our Boys Town operation at Beaudesert. Southport is on the coast, Beaudesert is some 70 km inland. This property was the original Cable Station (the "All Red" route from England, through Canada, to Fanning Island in the Pacific Ocean, on to Norfolk Island, and finally Southport.) which operated from 1901 to 1962.

The Trustees of the De La Salle Brothers acquired its 1.2 hectares in 1964 (on which the three above-mentioned houses stood). The central house had been the receiving and transmitting office and equipment; another house was the Manager's residence; and the third one was for the telegraphic staff's residential quarters (there was a staff of 22).

The property had been acquired as an annexe to Boys Town. This was a successful experiment for giving a week's experience of a new and exciting environment for each of the seven Boys Town Cottages (House Parents and twelve boys). Youth Groups from Brisbane and other towns often sought the use of "Camp La Salle" (as it was called) for special live-in session. During the long vacations experienced Brothers, assisted by Brothers Scholastics, volunteered to take children from the State schools for Religious Education and holidays.

During the early Eighties, the Brothers gave considerable thought to the Camp La Salle site. The wear and tear of some twenty years of use necessitated considerable work if the "Camp" was to continue. Many similar youth camps were now available and Brothers were in short supply. The Brother Visitor and Council came to the decision, in 1981, to continue to use one of the houses for the elderly Brothers –the winters were very mild and the climate eminently suitable for retirement living–. The entire property was not needed for this special purpose, and so it was a question of selling part of it, or using it for some other purpose. It was decided to develop the remainder of the site for Retirement Living units for people who would appreciate the type of advantages which could be offered –a Chapel, Daily Mass, resident Chaplain, Anointing of the Sick and Elderly each month, Reconciliation twice weekly, a community of Retired Brothers, and all the amenities of gracious, secure and peaceful living.

Br. Peter McIntosh was entrusted with the initiation and development of the scheme –which saw the removal of the three buildings and the construction of an entirely new complex of sixty-one self-contained units and fifty-one studio apartments, landscaping, administrative and recreation areas, and many associated facilities. The staged development was completed over five years, residents moving in as soon as each stage was ready.

The Brothers' Residence, Chapel, and hostel dining room and kitchen, were the last stage to be occupied in late 1986 and a community of Brothers was established. This became four in 1988 and six in 1989. Two more Brothers will join the community in 1990, one in charge of Nursing Care and other for Pastoral duties. Meanwhile, elderly Brothers from southern colder States come to the Villa for part of the winter months.

At the time of writing, each of the Brothers is able to make a contribution to the life of the Villa –sacristan, Art tuition, Brothers' dining room care, District publications, bursar, bookkeeping. Five are over 70, and one is in his middle sixties.

The Brothers take their meals in the hostel residents' dining room on weekdays, taking their places as assigned by the kitchen staff. Their presence is very much appreciated by the residents.

In holiday periods, Brothers from other distant communities make use of the accommodation for rest and recreation after their apostolic work in the schools or elsewhere. It is an eminently suitable place for Brothers whose health, physical or mental, requires a period of quiet and rest before resuming their apostolic work.

Villa La Salle has a full-time Manageress and Assistant. Theirs is the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the entire complex –financial, kitchen and dining room, gardens, maintenance, etc.

Mass is offered each day by the resident Chaplain at 9.00 a.m. with an average congregation of twenty-five residents. The sacraments are available as outlined earlier.

An additional 45 self-contained units are being constructed at the present time and are scheduled for completion in December.

The Feasts of St. De La Salle and our Lasallian Saints and blessed are celebrated as they occur through the year, so that the Residents become more aware of the Lasallian spirit and endeavours. As the complex develops the Brothers' contribution to the life and welfare of this project can be better assessed.

**Brother Baptist Will**