

# Media Release

**The Hon Gayle Tierney MLC**

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for Training and Skills

Minister for Higher Education



Tuesday, 11 May 2021

## **NATIONAL-FIRST INDIGENOUS THEOLOGY COURSE AT NEW CENTRE**

First Nations people will be at the heart of theological training at a new Indigenous Studies Centre, funded by the Andrews Labor Government.

It will be housed at the heritage-listed monastery at the University of Divinity St Paschal's precinct, which will undergo an \$877,700 refurbishment.

The Indigenous Studies Centre is being developed in collaboration with Indigenous staff and, in an Australian first, will feature theology courses taught by Indigenous people using Indigenous perspectives and Indigenous teaching methods.

Students of all backgrounds can enrol in programs exploring theology from Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and world Indigenous perspectives.

Trawoolway woman Naomi Wolfe is Academic Dean of the University of Divinity's Indigenous Studies program and said the collaborative learning approach would break-down cultural stereotypes and barriers.

Architects Smith and Tracey and builders Renew Constructions have been tasked with modernising the monastery, which was built by the Order of Friars Minor in the 1930s. The redevelopment will feature improved learning, research and administration spaces and is expected to be completed in August.

The Labor Government contributed \$500,000 to the project in a joint effort by the University of Divinity, with contributions from their partners.

It is one of many proposals from universities to the Victorian Higher Education State Investment Fund, which was developed in response to the significant impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the sector.

The \$350 million Fund is supporting universities with capital works, research infrastructure projects and applied research focused on boosting Victoria's productivity and economy as the state recovers from the pandemic.

### **Quotes attributable to Minister for Training and Skills and Higher Education Gayle Tierney**

*"This is a truly unique project that reframes the way universities deliver learning and research in Victoria – in collaboration with First Nations people."*

*"The new facilities are just one example of our unprecedented investment in the higher education sector – to ensure it's strong and agile as we emerge from the coronavirus pandemic."*

### **Quote attributable to University of Higher Divinity's Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Sherlock**

*"The St Paschal's precinct is an incredible piece of the state's history – and we are thrilled to see it reinvigorated as a modern hub for the University of Divinity community."*