

## **Historic Milestone with Cathedral Precinct Build**

The first Roman Catholic Cathedral in Australia in over a century to be master-planned from its inception as a complete, integrated cathedral precinct has been marked with the appointment of an international award-winning architect.

The Cathedral Precinct Project, in the Diocese of Broken Bay, has appointed Níall McLaughlin Architects led by recent recipient of the Royal Institute of British Architecture Royal Gold Medal, Níall McLaughlin. The Royal Gold Medal is one of the highest international architectural honours.

The Project will transform the Waitara 7.7 hectare site into a landmark spiritual and civic destination, providing a spiritual focal point for the faithful in the Diocese which covers an area of 2,763 square kilometres across the three Deaneries from the upper Central Coast, the North Shore, and Northern Beaches.

Celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary since being proclaimed a Diocese in April 1986 by the then Pope John Paul II, Broken Bay now serves around 250,000 Catholics.

Níall McLaughlin Architects (NMLA) was selected to design the Precinct following an invited international process by the Diocese under the leadership of the Most Rev Anthony Randazzo DD JCL.

Following his recent appointment by the Holy Father Pope Leo XIV as Archbishop and Prefect for Legislative Texts, and now serving as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Broken Bay, Archbishop Randazzo said the Project remains a primary priority for the Diocese.

“The Cathedral Precinct is a home for faith, a place for community, and a commitment to the faithful of today and for future generations,” Archbishop Randazzo said.

“The vision for the Precinct, and its design will represent a visible and living heart for diocesan life, where worship, formation, pastoral care, outreach, and administration come together in service of Commission, Community, and the Common Good.

“While my responsibilities have expanded to serve the universal Church in Rome, my commitment to this vision is unwavering. The appointment of Níall McLaughlin Architects signals we are moving ahead with confidence to create a community legacy for generations to come.”

Níall McLaughlin also spoke of the Project during his address on Monday evening at the Rothwell Public Lecture series at the University of Sydney which highlights world leading architects.

A London-based Irish architect and a professor at The Bartlett School of Architecture, Níall McLaughlin is recognised for his focus on material, craft, light and form, and the relationship between buildings and their surroundings.

His vast distinguished body of work includes the Bishop Edward King Chapel in Oxford, The New Library Magdalene College, Cambridge, the Auckland Castle Faith Museum, and The Museum of Jesus' Baptism in Bethany, Jordan.

“We are delighted to work on this significant project to help create an enduring spiritual, civic, and cultural precinct that places the faithful at its centre,” Níall said in Sydney.

A defining feature of the Project vision is the creation of a "virtuous circle" of Catholic life, where the precinct seamlessly integrates spiritual growth with a lifelong journey of learning. By connecting the new spiritual heart to a modern education campus - including the facilities at St Leo's Catholic College - the Project establishes an holistic path from baptism through to early learning, primary, and secondary education. This integrated approach ensures the Cathedral is a living centre that serves all ages of its community.

The architectural vision draws deep inspiration from the Hawkesbury River watershed that unites the Diocese's 26 parishes. The design envisions a congregation ebbing and flowing beneath a forest of timber framing, contained by sandstone structures of local bluffs and caves.

With the spirit of *Laudato si'* (the second encyclical of Pope Francis on care for our common home) deeply embedded, the design highlights responsible, sustainable materials that complement the natural setting.

Working alongside the Australian company Hayball as Executive Architect, NMLA's design will prioritise people and permeability. The Precinct is designed to knit seamlessly into the existing neighbourhood through generous public spaces including a new Cathedral forecourt with a café and bookshop.

The site will co-locate a Pastoral Centre, a Parish Hall, and a new home for CatholicCare, providing vital support for seniors and people living with disabilities. There will also be residences for the Bishop and clergy as well as Diocesan offices.

Environmental stewardship is also key; the existing Blue Gum High Forest will be preserved as a public amenity, featuring new roof gardens to promote biodiversity.

Design processes will now move into preparation for approval pathways, which will determine building timelines.

The Project, which will evolve over the next several years, will be realised through a multi-stream funding strategy, incorporating institutional capital, and a dedicated appeal for philanthropic contributions.