

## **Expansion plans will modernise theological college to reach wider community**



One of the key components of the \$27 million long-term plan to upgrade the Archdiocesan site in Redfern, Sydney, includes a significant upgrade to the infrastructure of St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College on the site.

The plans promise great benefits for the college to bring it in line with 21st Century needs and to meet accreditation requirements that the college must follow, the Sub Dean of the college, Associate Professor (Theology) Philip Kariatlis told Neos Kosmos.

"When the college was established in 1986, it was for young men who were preparing for the priesthood. Today there is a much wider pool of students that includes men and women, professionals, such as lawyers and doctors, and people who wish to discover more of their Greek identity," said Dr Kariatlis.

He said Archbishop Makarios of Australia made it clear at his enthronement in June 2019, that the college would be at the forefront of his plans.

"In the last one-and-a-half years there have been numerous changes, with more students enrolling," Dr Kariatlis said. "While many theological colleges experienced

a decline in numbers because of the COVID-19 pandemic, our numbers went up.

“The curriculum has been broadened to offer distance education with synchronous Zoom and we now have international students attending courses (online). We are applying to bring in more international students and to connect with other theological colleges worldwide.”

There are currently 75 students (full time and part-time) enrolled at the college but the plan is to attract more than 100 students a year.

To achieve this the college will be expanding its facilities. At present, classes can only accommodate 10 students at a time, this number is set to increase with the planned renovations.

The upgrades will include updated facilities for electronic learning that will enable the college to reach out to students in other parts of Australia and to the world beyond. The facilities will be open to more students from the other churches of Orthodoxy, as well as other Christian denominations.

“The library as it is now cannot do that and the new facilities will offer more space and allow us to broaden our offerings,” Dr Karialtlis said.

The new library facilities will allow for the loan of electronic books that will expand the college’s outreach capabilities beyond the confines of the buildings to students in other parts of Australia and the world beyond.



Architect Angelo Candalepas' rendering of the courtyard with the Great Hall and Museum to the left, and the entrance to St Andrews Theological College to the right. Photo: Candalepas Associates.

Modern Greek language courses have been introduced this year as part the plan to draw young Greek Australians to the college and to encourage the use of its facilities as a social meeting place that will encourage a reconnection with their Greek identity.

"Two students went to the Archbishop to ask that a coffee shop was included in the new facilities. The young like their coffee and they can meet, talk and connect."

"It is the dream of the Church to allow for a centre where people can connect with the spirit, their identity and also as a social meeting place for the broader community.

The college will also produce up to four publications a year that will range from



weighty theological matters to publications that will promote understanding among children.

Dr Kariatlis said the applications for the changes had been submitted for approval and it was hoped that the first phase of the masterplan would be completed by 2024 in time for the 100th anniversary of the Greek Orthodox church.



A student at the college, Timothy Klintsaris, said that “The expansion of the College will have an incredible impact most obviously in terms of theological education, but also in community outreach.”

“As the College will be forming the future clergy and lay leaders of our Church, its renewal will mean higher quality resources and education for them and by extension the entire Church in Australia,” said Mr Klintsaris.

Eleni Mavrolefteros said the college’s expansion would give students access to better facilities that would enhance their learning experience.

“More modern classrooms and a library that support the needs of students in the 21st century. There are so many people including children and young people who will benefit from Greek language courses. The whole community will be able learn and experience the resources and artefacts of the library and museum,” she said.

“Our College is a hidden gem that you don’t realise is hidden until you’re in the box with it. So many people don’t know it exists in Australia but when you go outside Australia everyone knows our lecturers and we get to be taught one on one with them,” said Ms Mavrolefteros.

Another student, Dimitris Mavromatis, said that the expansion of the College would provide a “more robust educational and spiritual experience whilst learning Theology.



“With upgrades to the learning facilities, classrooms and library, this will bring St Andrews into a new space where they will be able to reflect the needs of the 21st century learning environment, supporting online library resources, development of online learning materials, synchronous Zoom classes, and more of the like.”

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