



Building serenity...

Australia's first government-accredited Buddhist College has opened in Wollongong, south of Sydney. The \$40 million Nan Tien Institute (NTI) is being hailed an architectural and engineering milestone that pushes the boundaries of construction. The opening of the facility comes after 15 years of planning, design and construction work and marks the realisation of a vision by the monks of the Nan Tien Temple. The Buddhist Temple, which is the largest in the Southern Hemisphere, was established 30 years ago.

Designed to foster Buddhist beliefs

The NTI is a state-of-the-art facility incorporating an education campus, art gallery and cultural hub. At the heart of the project was a desire to educate using Buddhist values as a base, centring on centuries-old traditions and beliefs. The result is a spectacular building that is a work of art that enhances the surrounding community.

Precast for form and function

Architecture firm Woods Bagot created the signature form of the building and it was soon apparent that precast concrete offered the design flexibility and high quality finishes required for such a project. National Precast Member, SA Precast was brought on board.

Precast manufacturer

SA Precast

Builder

Richard Crookes
Construction

Engineer

Brown Consulting &
Medland Metropolis

Architect

Woods Bagot

Client

Fo Guang Shan
International Buddhist
Association

www.nationalprecast.com.au





The design inspiration for the Institute is a lotus flower. There are four separate spaces, or pods, centred around a public space and all connected by internal bridges.

SA Precast's Drafting and Production Manager Troy Pincin says the distinctive design incorporated curved walls and window openings. His team relished the challenge. "From a manufacturing point of view, because of lot of panels were radiused and curved and they also had returns for door and window openings, the formwork became quite tricky. It certainly stretched the imagination of people here in terms of how to actually build the moulds and support the concrete in its curing state". In total there were 169 panels with 13 different radiuses.

The sculptural forms of the pods were made by pouring concrete into custom-made steel and timber moulds to form unique shapes, with the pattern of the timber boards imprinted onto the concrete and visible in the final pod facades.

Journey from factory to Wollongong

The precast needed to be transported 1400kms from Adelaide to Wollongong. "It certainly had its challenges because of the complexity of the shapes that we were delivering," said Mr Pincin. "In terms of delivering, it wasn't a real issue for us. There was more difficulty in trying to find the best way to load the pieces onto the trucks to keep them safe and transport them with a minimal amount of damage". Precast also ensured relatively fast construction. The project took just 52 weeks, which is a quick timeframe for a building of this size.

The final result is a stunning structure that perfectly reflects the Buddhist feel the monks were after. SA Precast Managing Director Claude Pincin says in 51 years in the business, this was one of the most challenging projects he's encountered. It was worth the effort. His team is deservedly proud of the magnificent and unique structure that is already receiving international acclaim.

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