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MEDIA RELEASE

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ABBOTSFORD CONVENT ADDED TO NATIONAL HERITAGE LIST

The Turnbull Government is pleased to announce that Melbourne's Abbotsford Convent will be added to the National Heritage List, becoming the 111th place on the List, the highest heritage recognition in Australia.

Abbotsford Convent has outstanding heritage value for illustrating the provision of welfare in Australia and the role of religious and charitable institutions in Australia's social history during the 19th and 20th centuries.

For more than 100 years, the inner city Melbourne Convent provided shelter, food, education and work for tens of thousands of women and children experiencing poverty, neglect and social disadvantage.

Established in 1863 in one of the then poorest districts of Melbourne, harsh conditions and hours of long work at the Convent offered few comforts but provided shelter for desperate women and girls through the great Depression, two World Wars and other social upheavals.

Both those seeking shelter and the nuns themselves experienced stark conditions, including hours of low paid, physically grueling work, confinement and long periods of silence. At its peak, more than 1,000 women and children lived within its walls.

When we reflect on our nation's heritage, it is important we remember many people have been affected by its dark chapters. The Convent laundry and asylum buildings are an important physical record for those Australians and their families known as the Forgotten Australians.

The harm of institutionalisation and the trauma experienced by many residents is acknowledged as part of the Convent's heritage. Visitors are encouraged to learn about its complex history.

Today, the Abbotsford Convent is owned by the not-for-profit Abbotsford Convent Foundation and its 11 historic buildings and gardens are now a large multi-arts precinct at the heart of a thriving community. It includes 100 studios, two galleries, cafes, a radio station, a school and green open spaces in a busy urban environment. The listing also includes areas formerly controlled by the Convent including the Good Shepherd Chapel and Collingwood Children's Farm.

The historic Convent joins our most significant natural, Indigenous and historic sites that help define who we are as a nation.

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