University of Tasmania graduates receive scholarships to study at Oxford

Two University of Tasmania graduates will undertake the opportunity of a lifetime as recipients of a scholarship to study theology at the University of Oxford.

Adrian Staples and Harrison Virs were today awarded the scholarships by Reverend Professor Michael Tate AO.

The Michael Tate Oxford Scholarship, named after University of Tasmania and University of Oxford alumnus Father Michael Tate, will enable the students to travel to the UK in October and undertake the nine-month Postgraduate Diploma in Theology and Religion offered through Oxford’s Blackfriars Hall.

“I am delighted to present these scholarships to such high-achieving alumni, and look forward to seeing the impact this opportunity has on them, professionally and academically,” Father Tate said.

Launched last year, the scholarships are valued at up to $65,000 each, and cover fees and associated expenses, travel costs and living allowances for at least one year.

For Hobart local Harrison Virs, the scholarship will enable him to further his passion for studying theology after graduating last year from the University of Tasmania with a Bachelor of Arts with Honours.

“Studying at the University of Tasmania gave me an excellent platform in historical methodology, and I am extremely grateful to Father Tate for the opportunity to take my studies further,” he said.

Adrian Staples, a Tasmanian solicitor and Doctor of Philosophy, will use the scholarship to study the relationship between religious, moral, and secular authority.

“This is an incredible opportunity to study with leading thinkers and policy makers in the fields of social justice and humanitarian rights, for which I am most grateful,” he said.
About the Michael Tate Oxford Scholarship:

The scholarship was created by Father Tate with the intention of enabling high achieving students to pursue studies in theology at Oxford.

It is available to any University of Tasmania graduate, or current honours or postgraduate student, wishing to undertake the Postgraduate Diploma in Theology and Religion at Oxford.

The diploma offers an intensive period of study in Christian theology, with the option to explore other world religions.

The scholarship launch follows Father Tate’s distinguished career as a politician, priest, diplomat and academic, having received two honorary doctorates, and an appointment as Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) to honour the role he played as Federal Minister for Justice.

About the recipients:

Harrison Virs, Bachelor of Arts with Honours

Harrison Virs matriculated from The Hutchins School, before pursuing a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Tasmania where he majored in History. He graduated in 2016 with First-Class Honours, and will be using his time at Oxford to broaden his knowledge of key theological concepts within the western Christian church.

Adrian Staples, Doctor of Philosophy

Adrian Staples matriculated from Guilford Young College and went on to study a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Tasmania, graduating with Honours in 2008. He then pursued a Doctor of Philosophy, completing his thesis on the work of Martin Heidegger and the philosophy of language in 2013. Adrian then undertook a Bachelor of Laws, graduating with Honours in 2015, before completing his Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice at the University’s Centre for Legal Studies in 2016.

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