



Set for a revamp: The renovation and restoration of St Mary's Cathedral has been further boosted by the federal budget. PHOTO BY IER ROSE/REUTERS

Cathedral gets another booster

Federal Government chips in another \$1m from budget

■ By Anthony Barick

The Federal Government has allocated an extra \$1 million to the restoration and extension of St Mary's Cathedral as part of last week's Australian Government Budget.

Archbishop Barry Hickey welcomed the news when WA senator and Human Services Minister Chris Ellison announced the grant, which puts the Federal Government's contribution to St Mary's at \$4 million and will increase the almost 900-strong capacity seating to 1200.

The Archbishop recently announced that \$15 million has already been raised, including the WA State Government's \$2 million contribution and he is now appealing for \$10 million with the total project costing \$25 million.

The gothic-style cathedral is a combination of two buildings in Victoria Square - the first opening in 1865 and the second, built to replace the first, opened in 1930.

Due to the Great Depression the two became one, and the completed cathedral, expected to be ready next year, will include elements of the 19th, 20th and 21st century architecture.

It also includes artistic features including the massive depiction of the Crucifixion with a stained glass window version of Leonardo

da Vinci's fresco of the Last Supper in its lowest panel; a reproduction of Murillo's The Immaculate Conception originally painted by a nun in Rome and presented to the Cathedral by Pope Pius XI; and a mosaic chapel floor made in Venice. Senator Ellison said the extra \$1 million grant recognises the massive amount of work needed to complete work on the Cathedral, adding that increased building costs caused by WA's construction boom have impacted on St Mary's project.

"This latest grant will help to reconcile these escalating costs," Senator Ellison said.

Dean of St Mary's Cathedral Mgr Thomas McDonald said he asked the Federal Government for extra funds due to spiralling costs of building materials, especially steel.