Out to tender

The design and documentation process that commenced in December 2009 with a series of ‘vision workshops’ has recently concluded with the issue of tender documentation for the National Life Science Hub main building, glasshouses complex and phytotron.

To get to this point has required a significant amount of effort and input from a broad group of stakeholders both within and external to the University. A series of detail user group meetings were held between January and June, which looked at aspects of the building ranging from overall footprint and scope, to detailed room and equipment layouts, maintenance and operation. Input from the meetings was gathered, analysed and used to inform the final design, under the overall direction from the Project Control Group.

A big, big thank you to all participants for their time and input over the past year. There have been some difficult decisions but all have been made in the best interest of CSU and the project for maximum benefit.

Revitalising the precinct

The sitting and massing of the Life Sciences Building responds to the master planning aspirations of the University and its vision for this facility to be the first step in a re-invigoration of the Agriculture precinct. Initial precinct analysis identified a paucity of quality outdoor space, and a lack of development density which would otherwise encourage a culture of pedestrian activity.

With the diversion of Nathan Cobb Drive to the eastern edge of the precinct, the new Life Sciences Building is sited to enclose and terminate a new landscaped pedestrian avenue connecting many of the existing buildings and capable of expansion eventually back towards the centre of the campus.

The majority of the building is single storey. This has been identified as the most economical construction approach and, as is appropriate for a research facility, it allows easy trolley movements throughout. This also allows the Life Sciences Building to stretch between existing points of intensity in the precinct—connecting to the Sutherland Labs and glasshouses, to the existing lab stores and back of house facilities, and to the veterinary sciences buildings and proposed precinct parking. In this way, the project builds on the existing precinct facilities, rather than attempting to construct a self contained facility (an unfeasible approach given the project budget).

The project’s four functional strands - research laboratories, teaching laboratories, support spaces and write-up - can be read in the articulated roof form. Roof heights modulate to allow linear roof top plant and skylight along the length of the building elements. At the entry the roof is raised to form a veranda, its consistent height linking internal and external spaces. Importantly, this element is scaled both to the building and to the wider science precinct.
The building does not sit (as many modern buildings do) as a metal object hovering within a landscape, but rather as a series of long, low walls anchored into the earth.

The Main Building

A large outdoor covered entry and foyer create a welcoming entry point to users and visitors. This area is the hub – a nexus between research, teaching, offices and support zones which facilitates and supports potential interactions between users. The outdoor space houses outdoor furniture and student lockers, and provides a key point for informal gatherings.

Where to from here?

The tender is due to be awarded during November. The ring road and precinct car park are the first items to be built as the new building will close off the existing road access. It is planned to have these items completed by the end of February.

The Phytotron and Glass House should be completed by the end of 2011 and the main building by April 2012.

Due to the complex nature of the building and extensive commissioning requirements, formal occupation by users is likely to occur in June 2012.

Temporary Fleet Parking

The construction area for NaLSH will impact on the Transport compound and as such a temporary area is being developed to the west of the Stores building.

An agreement has been reached with DII to use this land on a temporary basis until we vacate in June 2012. Traffic and parking will be problematic for this developments and more information will be available in the next edition.

Rhizolysimeter

Work is underway on the Rhizo (opposite Veterinary Clinical Centre on Agricultural Avenue) and is expected to be completed by the end of March 2011.

Zauner Constructions of Albury have been awarded the contract and site establishment has occurred and earth works are underway.

This project is effectively “underground” so don’t expect to see any fancy new buildings pop up. All that will be above ground will be the gantry crane for lifting the cores in and out the mainout shelter and transportable office/amenities building.

The Rhizo component of the over NaLSH project comprises approximately $2.5m of the total expenditure.
Stage 1 (SP1)
Roads & car park

Stage 2 (SP2)
Phytotron & glass houses

Stage 3 (SP3)
Main science laboratory building

Stage 4 (SP4)
Landscape work main spine & adjacent areas