



Charles Sturt  
University

# Wagga Wagga campus master plan



## Local context

In May 2023, Charles Sturt University commissioned Hassell to undertake a three-phase project which combines strategic and master planning manoeuvres to guide the future of Charles Sturt campuses:

- Phase 1: portfolio plan.
- Phase 2: Wagga Wagga campus master plan (CMP).
- Phase 3: Bathurst campus master plan.

This is a summary of the Phase 2: Wagga Wagga CMP, which will guide development of the Wagga Wagga campus over the next 15 plus years.

## Project methodology

The Phase 2 process followed a rigorous program of inquiry and engagement. Development of the CMP was guided by regular touchpoints with the Wagga Wagga CMP working group, which comprised 22 members representing a range of interests across the university's functions.

### Consultation and engagement

The consultation and engagement process has followed on from the successful consultation and engagement process delivered for the Phase 1: Portfolio Plan, which involved the completion of 107 consultation sessions and eight site visits.

This Wagga Wagga CMP could only be achieved with robust consultation program at the centre of the process, creating a final document that has truly listened to its closest stakeholders and been driven by the direction they want to see.

## A university for the regions

Each campus has a unique local identity and character, and a place in the community that has meaning to its culture and historical service to its community. Charles Sturt campuses are spread across a vast geographical area. The university occupies 2,944 hectares across New South Wales (NSW), and is the largest university in regional Australia.\*

Our campuses are places where a range of activities and people converge. There are a range of on-campus partnerships, which are critical to the delivery of teaching, research and community-based activities. Three faculties facilitate teaching, learning and research. To support faculty-driven research, there are three research institutes with varied interests and activities.

## Campus context

Wagga Wagga campus is located six kilometres outside the Wagga Wagga CBD. It is our largest campus, spanning more than 2,000 hectares, which includes:

- teaching and learning facilities
- research facilities
- industry and community partnerships
- library and learning commons
- student accommodation options
- a 2,000-hectare farm
- a veterinary clinical centre
- an equine centre
- a dental and oral health clinic
- a full range of support services
- Ngunggilanha First Nations Student Centre.

The campus has the second-longest history of any Charles Sturt campus. Over time, it has retained strong teaching, agriculture and animal focus. Based at the heart of the food bowl of Australia, the campus' agricultural identity is highly relevant to its surrounding community and economic activity.

### Part of the Wagga Wagga community

Wagga Wagga is a major regional city and a prominent hub for agriculture, education, military and culture. It is the largest inland city in NSW and is planning for a long-term population of 100,000 people.

The Wagga Wagga Local Strategic Planning Statement is supportive of Charles Sturt in its role supporting the city. It identifies Charles Sturt as a critically important precinct and as a key investment site which can support additional employment and investment.

\*Regional Universities Network



## Higher education sectors trends

The higher education sector is facing a macro economic environment heavily impacted by COVID-19 and the post-pandemic environment, which has had the same dramatic impacts on universities across Australia. Charles Sturt is no exception, with the below trends being the themes that are expected to impact the university the most in the coming years.



### International students cap

The Government and Opposition have announced policies in relation to capping international students. Depending on how the policies are implemented, they may harm regional universities or provide opportunities due to caps placed on larger metropolitan universities.



### Commonwealth 2024-2025 budget

The Treasurer delivered the Federal Budget in May 2024 and included funding to support some of the University Accord Recommendations while excluding other key recommendations.



### Australian Universities Accord

In February 2024, the Australian Universities Accord final report was released, containing 47 recommendations for Government consideration and aims to create a long-term reform plan for the higher education sector to meet Australia's future skills needs.



### Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The rapid advancement of AI provides increasing opportunities for business-as-usual activities, student, learning, engagement and interaction with our communities.



### Declining demand

A decreasing demand for higher education can largely be attributed to the rising cost of living, growing scrutiny on relevance of university degrees, a stronger job market, increasing cost of university fees and the attractiveness of vocational educational and training courses.



### Densifying campuses

Pressures faced by students and staff are amplifying the need for a greater sense of belonging and connection on campus.



### Skills shortage

Skills shortages across occupations such as trade workers, health professionals, community service workers and taxation accountants are persistent, with an inefficient labour market response.



### Financial pressures

Growing operation costs and requirements to implement radical process improvements are key factors that are creating increasing financial pressures. There is a particular concern for regional universities as opportunities to diversify income and funding are limited.

## What we've heard

### Working groups and workshops

42 working group members and participants

Participants wish to see:

- a balance between people-centric and nature-centric approach to campus design
- accommodation that offers range and affordability
- future-forward teaching and learning spaces with considered informal working environments
- a campus that delivers more than just core functions – one that also forms a place for collaboration and socialising.

### Phase 1: portfolio-wide survey insights

171 staff and 101 students at Wagga Wagga campus, 61 community members

Students, staff and community wish to see:

- a livelier, better-connected campus
- modernisation of sport and recreational facilities, with upgrades to the gym and pool facilities
- more opportunity to connect with the natural landscape with more outdoor study, work, social and recreational spaces
- more food retailers and a licensed bar/restaurant with a wider range of opening hours
- vibrant events programming with more options for entertainment and community events
- refreshed buildings that deliver human-centred learning
- uplifted, innovative and inspiring work environments.

### Stakeholder interviews

Wagga Wagga community organisations

Community organisations wish to see:

- the development of the CMP to respond to user needs in both the short and long term
- a partnership between the university and Wagga Wagga City Council to deliver sports and recreational assets
- service delivery and retail offerings for the surrounding growing suburbs
- a central heart of campus, intersecting learning and recreation.

### Cultural engagement

Wiradjuri community members

Members would like:

- confirmation Wiradjuri peoples will be the first point of contact regarding First Nations matters and caring for Wiradjuri Country within Charles Sturt
- to see that the use of First Nations language is not only seen on campus, but reciprocated through actions
- to ensure there are First Nations led cultural burns on both hills of the campus every year
- to see Yindyamarra Hill enhanced with signage, pathways around the hill, seating and shelter.







# Campus drivers and opportunities

A broad range of drivers and opportunities influence the direction and vision for the future campus.

## Culturally responsive design

The design for the Wagga Wagga campus requires demonstrable cultural responsiveness, enabling equity and inclusion. Culturally responsive design specifically in relation to the CMP, integrates responsiveness to Wiradjuri and culture and country in the design, architecture, landscape, urban design and planning.

## Do more with less

Many Australian higher education institutions are streamlining operations by consolidating campuses and reducing Gross Floor Area (GFA). The scale of the Wagga Wagga campus' vast landholdings, expansive facilities and assets, no longer aligns with the current model of delivery, on-campus attendance and activity. Campus consolidation will offer cost savings and maximise the sense of activation and vibrancy.

## Building research capacity

On the Wagga Wagga campus, our Gulbali Research Institute is leading the way in supporting Charles Sturt towards meeting the standards for an Australian university by creating impactful, integrated agriculture, water and environment research. There is a strong opportunity and need to build research capacity and innovation precincts around the Gulbali Research Institute, with fit-for-purpose facilities that integrate with the campus' other activities.

## Expanding partnerships

More universities are starting to engage more deeply in the development of both commercial and industry partnerships. These collaborations can extend beyond traditional models, encompassing research, training, commercial offerings and infrastructure development. A prominent theme for Wagga Wagga campus is a keen focus on strengthening and expanding engagement and their network of partnerships.

## Bringing people together

Elevating campus vibrancy is the number one priority for Wagga Wagga campus, as identified by students and staff. Delivering a better, more vibrant place means boosting amenities and acting as an 'attractor' that brings people together on campus. To achieve this, the campus should not only provide its core teaching, learning and research functions but also diverse spaces for socialising, shopping dining, relaxation, exercise, study and networking that will encourage more people on campus and to stay longer.







## Healthy and inclusive spaces

More than ever, students and staff are looking for campus environments that contribute positively to their health, wellbeing, sense of comfort and safety, and sense of belonging. Buildings and spaces need to deploy design strategies aimed at improving access to daylight, sustainability, connections with nature, thermal comfort, noise, air quality, aesthetics, employee engagement and access to amenities.

## Strategic direction



### Retreat and consolidation

The largest manoeuvre and driver of the CMP structure is to break from the current dispersed and segregated form of the Wagga Wagga campus. Over time, activities currently spread throughout the approximately 200-hectare main campus area will be migrated into a consolidated and densified campus core, called the Northern Hub. A planned and managed retreat from the Boorooma Precinct and the Wine and Food Precinct will facilitate densification in this area.



### The five-minute campus

This powerful vision proposes to improve daily experience of the campus population. The future Northern Hub is organised around creating a five-minute walkable radius to provide a density of people, pedestrian activity, and diversity of uses and users.



### Integrating with the surrounding community

Wagga Wagga City Council's identified 'Northern Growth Area' is located adjacent to the Charles Sturt campus and is planned to include approximately 14,000 new houses. This is recognised as a significant opportunity for the university to connect with the community, becoming an important destination for community members through the provision of retail, food, beverage, social infrastructure, sport, recreation and open space.



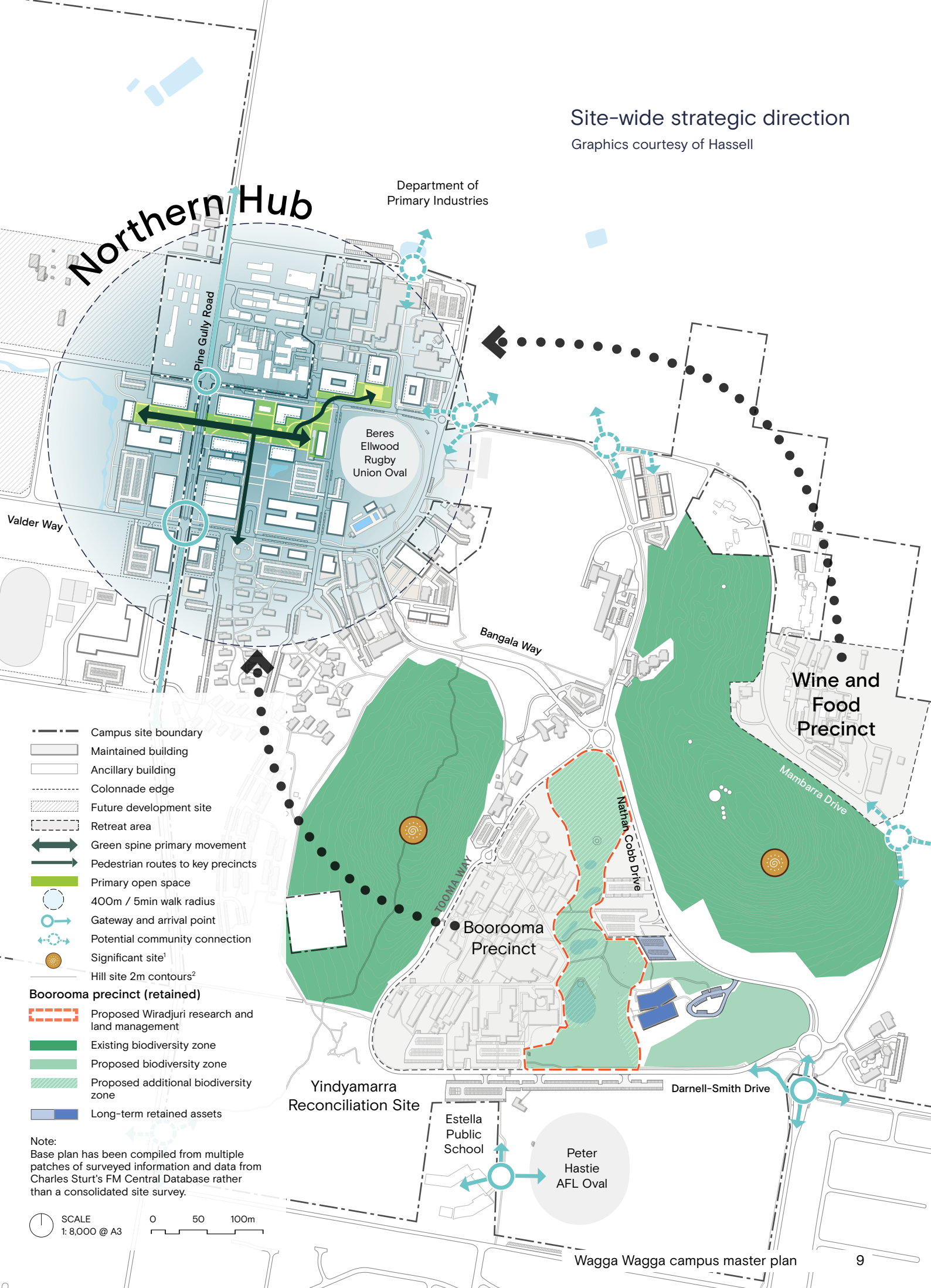
### Respecting the campus two hills

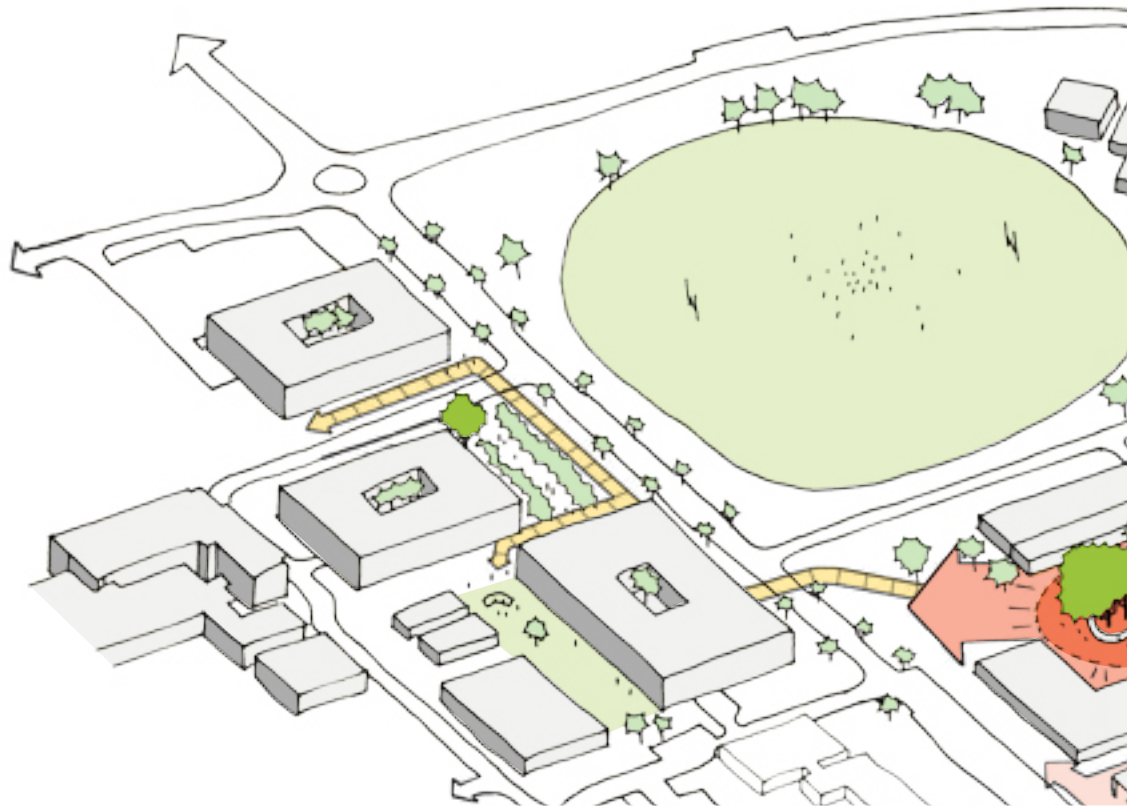
The campus is located on and between two hilltops, the Two Sisters, both of which are significant Wiradjuri sites. Appropriate respect of these hills has helped inform the strategies for provision of biodiversity zones and degree of community access to natural amenity. Yindyamarra Hill is understood to be a corroboree site and holds the Yindyamarra Reconciliation Site.



# Site-wide strategic direction

Graphics courtesy of Hassell





## Campus vision

Fundamentally a place for people, this Master Plan has been designed to bring people together. This will be achieved by:

- welcoming the community
- promoting gathering by providing the right facilities and infrastructure in the right spot
- caring for place, its Country, character and history.

Students and staff seek a sense of community and engagement on their campuses. Charles Sturt leaders recognise the need to lift the campus experience and prioritise face-to-face education as a cornerstone of the university offering.

A high-quality built environment is integral to attracting and retaining top talent, and to encourage them to attend the campus. It is critical to ensure that places are planned, designed and implemented to promote not only exceptional teaching, learning and research, but also a lifestyle offer to match.

## The purpose of this document

The Campus Master Plan outlines the strategic planning and development intentions for the Wagga Wagga campus for the next 20 years and beyond. It is an overarching visionary document that has the flexibility to adapt to the changing academic environment.

The CMP will be used to help make decisions on estate projects and operational decisions relating to the estate, and guide where we invest our capital resources and funding.



## The Northern Hub concept as a place for gathering

Graphics courtesy of Hassell



### Promote gathering

Provide spaces that promote togetherness and support the knowledge and social ecosystems.



### Welcome the community

Embrace our community in all its forms – students, staff, partners and visitors.



### Care for place

Care for the campus, respect its history, promote its ecological system, and connect and restore Country.





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Find out more

→ [csu.edu.au/campus-master-planning](https://csu.edu.au/campus-master-planning)

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