



Charles Sturt
University

Bathurst 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 3: Bathurst CMP that will guide development of the Bathurst campus over the next 15 plus years.

Project methodology

The Phase 3 process followed a rigorous program of inquiry and engagement. Development of the Bathurst CMP was guided by regular touchpoints with the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), the Bathurst Campus Master Plan Working Group (WG) of 28 members and the Project Control Group (PCG) of six 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 Bathurst CMP could only be achieved with a 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, and is the largest university in regional Australia.*

Our campuses are places where a range of activities and people converge. There are many on-campus partnerships, which are critical to the delivery of teaching, research and community-based activities.

To support faculty-driven research, there are three research institutes with varied interests and activities. Specifically, Bathurst's activities and functions are influenced by the Artificial Intelligence and Cyber Futures (AICF) research institute.

Campus context

The Bathurst campus is located two kilometres outside the Bathurst CBD. The campus itself spans approximately 90 hectares, which includes:

- teaching and learning facilities
- research facilities
- industry and community partnerships
- library and learning commons
- student accommodation options
- childcare
- sporting facilities
- a community health precinct
- a full range of support services
- the Wiradyuri Elders Cultural Hub
- the Wammarra First Nations Student Centre.

The Bathurst campus dates back to 1895 when the Bathurst Experiment Farm was established for agricultural studies. Soon after this, the Bathurst Teaching College was established on the same site, further cementing the significant role of higher education at the foot of Wahluu (Mount Panorama) in Bathurst.

Part of the Bathurst community

Bathurst is Australia's oldest inland European settlement and a prominent hub for agriculture, education and motor racing events. One of the fastest-growing inland centres in NSW, Bathurst has a projected population increase of 64 per cent to 56,560 by 2041[^].

The *Vision Bathurst 2040* Regional 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 a key investment site that can support additional employment and investment.

Furthermore, a campus presence in Bathurst is one of four mandated campuses in the *Charles Sturt Act 1989* (No. 76), so its ongoing presence and relevance to Bathurst and the region at large is ensured for the future.

*Regional Universities Network

[^]Bathurst Regional Council, 2024

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

35 working group members and participants

Participants wish to see:

- more of the university's functions moved near the library as the natural campus centre
- better wayfinding and clear signage on campus
- increased biodiversity zones and natural ecosystems
- a campus that considers the broad range of needs for our diverse student cohort.

Phase 1: portfolio-wide survey insights

110 staff and 50 students at Bathurst campus

Students, staff and community wish to see:

- a livelier, better-connected campus
- modernisation of sport and recreational facilities, with upgrades to gym facilities
- greater opportunities 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 further options for entertainment and community events
- refreshed buildings that deliver human-centred learning
- uplifted, innovative and inspiring work environments.

Stakeholder interviews

17 Bathurst community members

The Bathurst community wish to see:

- a welcoming and accessible space for the whole community
- campus events and improved facilities, not just for education but for social and cultural interaction
- upgraded student accommodation to attract commercial conference spaces on campus
- facilities to support more industry partnerships.

Cultural engagement

Djinjama

During the development of the Bathurst CMP, we engaged with Djinjama, an award-winning cultural design and research practice. Djinjama conducted small-group consultations with First Nations Charles Sturt staff, and undertook a self-guided tour of the campus and its surrounding context. Using this context, Djinjama developed a Country and Culture Opportunities report and Cultural Master Plan.

Unfortunately, engagement with local Wiradyuri peoples from the Bathurst area was not possible.





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

Do better with less

Many Australian higher education institutions are streamlining operations by consolidating campuses and reducing Gross Floor Area (GFA). A strategic review of Bathurst's Fit-for-Purpose Asset Audit highlighted redevelopment opportunities. These ranged from high-scoring assets to be maintained and enhanced, to lower-scoring facilities to be considered for demolition in coming decades. Clusters of lower-performing buildings were identified as key redevelopment sites.

Building research capacity

On the Bathurst campus, our AI and Cyber Futures (AICF) Institute is leading the way in supporting Charles Sturt towards meeting the standards for an Australian university by creating impactful, sustainable, responsible and inclusive technology and artificial intelligence research. There is a strong opportunity and need to build research capacity and innovation precincts around AICF on the Bathurst campus, with fit-for-purpose facilities that integrate with the campus's other activities.

Expanding partnerships

More universities are starting to engage 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 Bathurst campus is a keen focus on strengthening and expanding engagement and our network of partnerships.

Bringing people together

Creating a social heart for people to easily gather and connect is the number one priority for the Bathurst campus, as identified by students and staff. Delivering a better, more vibrant place means boosting amenities and acting as an 'attractor' to bring 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



Focus on the core

The primary manoeuvre and driver of the CMP structure is to consolidate the current dispersed form of the Bathurst campus. Over time, activities currently spread throughout the approximately 90-hectare campus area will be migrated into a consolidated and densified campus core called the quadrangle, centred around the Bathurst campus library as a geographic, administrative and spiritual core.



The five-minute campus

This powerful vision proposes to improve daily experience of the campus population. The future uplift to the quadrangle is organised around enhancing the immediate one-minute radius to provide a density of people, pedestrian activity, and diversity of uses and users.



Integrating with the surrounding community

Bathurst campus is ideally located amongst local health and education ecosystems. With Bathurst's population forecast to grow by 64 per cent by 2041, and available land potential for partnership growth on-site, Charles Sturt occupies a strategic position for an integrated university experience that extends beyond the campus.

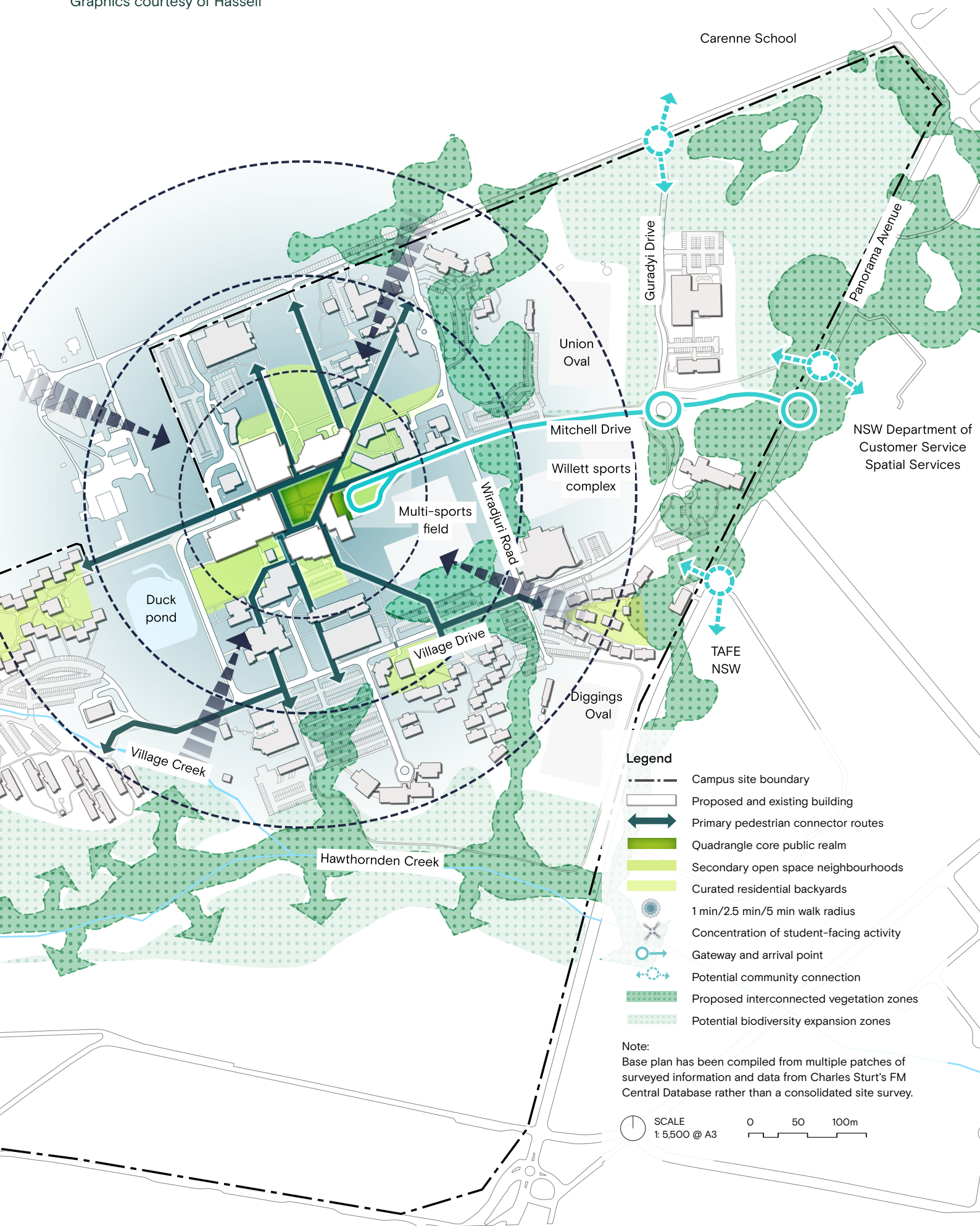


Protecting Country with connected biodiversity corridors

The campus is located amongst a rich natural landscape that encompasses small creeks flowing west to east, following the elevation of Wahluu (Mount Panorama) into the Bathurst valley. A review of existing biodiversity clusters and fragmented habitats has informed the strategies for reinstating and reconnecting original ecologies through the creation of urban and semi-urban ecological corridors and maximised green space, particularly along Hawthornden Creek and in the small watery wetlands to the north.

Site-wide strategic direction

Graphics courtesy of Hassell



Campus vision

Master plan structure

At its core, this master plan aims to create an environment that brings people together on campus, re-invigorating vibrancy, and the staff, student, partner and visitor experience. It establishes the overarching structural foundation and identifies key manoeuvres that will define the identity and environment of the future Bathurst campus. A range of projects are proposed to improve the campus including refurbished facilities, public domain works to enhance connections and access routes, and placemaking insertions.

A place for people to love

The future for Bathurst campus focusses on vibrancy and intensity through critical mass organised around the library lawn or, 'the quadrangle'. As a significant, central green space, the quadrangle – and the immediate buildings that surround it – became the obvious location for enhancing activation and community. Through consultation, it was clear that the quadrangle plays a large role in influencing pedestrian movement, linking destinations and encouraging the use of outdoor space. This master plan aims to optimise the way people move and gather on campus.

Making the most of the existing campus

A key priority that emerged in this master plan is the adaptation and retrofitting of current buildings, which offers sustainable outcomes and preservation of the character and history of the community. Overall, this shifts the direction of the master plan to utilising and optimising existing spaces, and achieve genuine affordability and sustainability outcomes.

The purpose of this document

The Campus Master Plan outlines the strategic planning and development intentions for the Bathurst campus for the next 20 years and beyond. It is an overarching visionary document that has the flexibility to adapt to the changing tertiary 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 quadrangle uplift concept as a place for gathering

Graphics courtesy of Hassell



Welcome the community

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



Care for place

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



Promote belonging

Provide spaces that foster genuine occupation to support social communities, drive vibrancy, and promote the appreciation and learning about Country.



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Find out more

→ csu.edu.au/campus-master-planning

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