

10th April 2024

Architectural Design Statement

Project: **Midcoast Christian College, Forster**
New 2 storey school with Administration, Classrooms, amenities and associated external works

Address: Southern Parkway, Foster NSW

1 Introduction

This Architectural Design Statement has been prepared on behalf of Midcoast Christian College, to support the lodgement of the Development Application (DA) to Midcoast Council.

This DA relates to the construction of a new two storey K-Yr 8 school with administration and classroom buildings with play areas and carpark. The buildings comprise of 9 new purpose-built general learning areas (GLA'S), 3 specialist classrooms with associated support facilities, library and administration. The carpark will incorporate a kiss and drop bay and parking for the school. The buildings are integrated into the existing southern Parkway streetscape.

The new buildings are sited towards the northern boundary of the site with the open stormwater easement running along the southern boundary.

The site is surrounded by one and two storey residential buildings and adjoins a large Aged Care Development.

This report has been structured against the principles outlined in Schedule 8 Design Quality Principles in Schools – Chapter 3 of the SEPP (Transport & Infrastructure) 2021.

Design Quality Principles

Principle 1 – context, built form and landscape

Schools should be designed to respond to and enhance the positive qualities of their setting, landscape and heritage. The design and spatial organisation of buildings and the spaces between them should be informed by site conditions such as topography, orientation and climate.

Landscape should be integrated into the design of school developments to enhance on-site amenity, contribute to the streetscape and mitigate negative impacts on neighbouring sites.

School buildings and their grounds on land that is identified in or under a local environmental plan as a scenic protection area should be designed to recognise and protect the special visual qualities and

natural environment of the area and located and designed to minimise the development's visual impact on those qualities and that natural environment.

- The proposed school is located within a greenfield site along Southern Parkway, Foster and is to be named Midcoast Christian College. The proposed buildings are designed to respond to the constraints of the site, in particular the large stormwater easement running along the southern boundary of the site and flooding restrictions. The buildings are limited to 2 storey, the architecture consistent with other educational establishments and to the surrounding residential landscape including the adjoining large Aged Care Development. The design, by necessity of its function and location, references the educational context of the building within the site and within the suburb and utilises and incorporates the materiality and landscaping of the existing area to breakdown and integrate its form and scale into the existing landscape.
- The buildings have been designed, when viewed from the northern elevation, to architecturally moderate between the existing adjacent Aged Care Development and the residential context of Southern Parkway. The Aged Care development consists of single storey buildings with a steep roof (equal to 2 storey). The proposed buildings are located furthest from the residential buildings to minimise impact on the residences. They also provide a buffer to the amenity of the Aged Care Development.
- The Administration building addresses the street with a street presence designed to be welcoming and enabling way finding. The buildings are 2 storey in height in compliance with the building height limit for the site to allow for visual connection with the existing residential.
- Utilising architectural treatments such as verandahs and awnings to breakdown the bulk and scale of the building as it transitions towards the ground further connects the building to its surrounds.
- Distributing the classrooms into 3 buildings to enable view corridors into the rest of the campus and thus reducing the bulk further addresses the context of the site.

Principle 2 – sustainable, efficient and durable

Good design combines positive environmental, social and economic outcomes. Schools and school buildings should be designed to minimise the consumption of energy, water and natural resources and reduce waste and encourage recycling.

Schools should be designed to be durable, resilient and adaptable, enabling them to evolve over time to meet future requirements.

The proposed design incorporates the following environmental and sustainable features:

- North & West facing design with screens & overhangs providing shelter and shade;
- Awnings and verandahs along the length of the east and South elevation of the building have been provided to give shelter in wet weather;
- The proposed buildings comprise of clear rectangular footprints with a gridded, repetitive, large span concrete support structure. The internal wall structure is light weight stud partitioning to allow for the future ease of adaptability and longevity of the structure.
- The introduction of new full height sliding doors to enable cross ventilation and for cool summer breezes to flow through the new building on all levels.
- The full height internal sliding doors to allow for flexibility of use, specifically catered to meet the challenges of a vast curriculum of specialist subjects.
- Natural light and ventilation to all learning spaces via windows; and
- The proposed external building materials palette includes off form concrete, prefinished lightweight fibre cement panels, Colorbond cladding & Aluminium cladding, windows and screens. These materials are selected for their appropriateness to the educational & residential setting, robustness for utilisation within their educational context, durability and low maintenance.

Principle 3 – accessible and inclusive

School buildings and their grounds should provide good wayfinding and be welcoming, accessible and inclusive to people with differing needs and capabilities.

Note. Wayfinding refers to information systems that guide people through a physical environment and enhance their understanding and experience of the space.

Schools should actively seek opportunities for their facilities to be shared with the community and cater for activities outside of school hours.

The proposed new buildings sit within the access and wayfinding framework of the school. The proposed new COLA will ensure slope grades and surfaces will meet the latest code compliance. The verandas around the new buildings will also serve to strengthen the wayfinding visual cues on the current site.

The proposed new buildings connect to the new central COLA as well as the proposed two storey administration building providing a seamless and access-compliant transition from one building to another. The vertical circulations have been improved within the site with a new accessible compliant lift, designed for equitable access through the campus. Prominent and identifiable external stairs are also proposed for the campus which are access compliant, to improve access across the site. Accessible compliant amenities are also provided on every level with same aim of achieving equitable access.

Principle 4 – health and safety

Good school development optimises health, safety and security within its boundaries and the surrounding public domain, and balances this with the need to create a welcoming and accessible environment.

The proposed new buildings and their associated site works have been designed to ensure the safety and security of its students are being maintained and improved. The following design features have been included as follows:

- The proposed new buildings are sited behind the effective line of security (fencing) along Southern Parkway.
- All balustrades along the suspended walkways on Level 1 will not have any climbable elements.
- Cross ventilation is encouraged through every classroom.
- Large covered and uncovered play areas are provided with easy access and supervision.

Principle 5 – amenity

Schools should provide pleasant and engaging spaces that are accessible for a wide range of educational, informal and community activities, while also considering the amenity of adjacent development and the local neighbourhood.

Schools located near busy roads or near rail corridors should incorporate appropriate noise mitigation measures to ensure a high level of amenity for occupants.

Schools should include appropriate, efficient, stage and age appropriate indoor and outdoor learning and play spaces, access to sunlight, natural ventilation, outlook, visual and acoustic privacy, storage and service areas.

- The new building works will provide a range of learning and social gathering spaces for the Midcoast Christian College community both within and outside of the new building.
- The external areas have been designed to integrate into the streetscape with front facade providing additional covered and uncovered informal assembly and social gathering spaces. The COLA/gathering spaces respond to the different year groups and social dynamics of the students, whilst also being able to combine to form an informal year group gathering space. The covered

gathering space is also connected to the verandahs, enabling extension of social gathering spaces possible. The Kindergarten students would have their own secure play area directly accessible from their indoor learning area.

- As previously noted, all new learning and gathering spaces have good ventilation, supervision and outlook over the existing surrounds and school facilities.
- Sufficient Amenities, storage and service areas are provided throughout the school.

Principle 6 - whole of life, flexible and adaptive

School design should consider future needs and take a whole-of-life-cycle approach underpinned by site wide strategic and spatial planning. Good design for schools should deliver high environmental performance, ease of adaptation and maximise multi-use facilities.

- The proposed buildings comprise of clear rectangular footprints with a gridded, repetitive, large span concrete support structure. The internal wall structure is light weight stud partitioning to allow for the future ease of adaptability and longevity of the structure.
- The full height internal sliding doors to allow for flexibility of use, specifically catered to meet the
- Services are independently located at the perimeter of the building for ease of access, service and replacement.

Principle 7 – aesthetics

School buildings and their landscape setting should be aesthetically pleasing by achieving a built form that has good proportions and a balanced composition of elements. Schools should respond to positive elements from the site and surrounding neighbourhood and have a positive impact on the quality and character of a neighbourhood.

The built form should respond to the existing or desired future context, particularly, positive elements from the site and surrounding neighbourhood, and have a positive impact on the quality and sense of identity of the neighbourhood.

- As previously noted, the proposed building is designed to respond to the site's settings of an educational establishments in a residential area. The design, by necessity of its size, function and location, references the educational context of the buildings within the site and within the suburb and utilises and incorporates the materiality and landscaping of the existing surrounds to breakdown and integrate its form and scale into the landscape.
- The height of the buildings is consistent with the surround single and two storey residential buildings.
- The scale of the 2 storey buildings is broken down with fenestrations, verandahs, awnings and open stairs. The building of prominence from the street is the Administration block with the entry defined by awning and is a welcoming entry to the school. Most of the buildings are not easily visible from the street.
- The material selections are based on the visual characteristics and appeal especially to the school community, appropriate for an educational establishment with constant impact on them and ease of long term maintenance.

4 Conclusion

The proposed development of Midcoast Christian College will provide purpose-built learning facilities for their students that is well integrated into new school facilities and landscape, allowing the students to be able to extend their learning beyond what is possible. The buildings will also allow the school to meet the growing demands of the community to accommodate students in an environment designed for the contemporary educational needs of tomorrow's leaders.