

Friday, 19 November 2021

Construction underway on final stage of Launceston's new campus

Construction has started on the largest building of the University of Tasmania's new Launceston home at Inveresk Precinct where students and staff will learn and teach for generations to come.

The Willis Street building will support the future of science and health across the region, with purpose-built facilities to support truly distinctive, in-person and interactive learning experiences and research connected with industry.

With state-of-the-art nursing simulation labs, exercise science equipment, allied health clinics and more, this highly sustainable and innovative building will help deliver practical, face-to-face education and job-ready graduates.

The \$97m development is part of the Launceston City Deal and connects to the city with the forecourt and main entrance on Cimitiere Street. The new pedestrian and cycle bridge will cross Boland St and the river, creating a continuous journey between the city and the Inveresk Precinct.

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Launceston), Professor Dom Geraghty, said the building would enable new ways of learning, teaching and researching.

"Everything you'll see inside this building is purpose-built for hands-on, interactive learning that is connected to the health and science jobs and research that is important to our region," Professor Geraghty said.

The building, to be known as The Shed in a nod to the past when two large railway sheds stood nearby, will be a place that brings students and staff, teachers and researchers, industry and community together to connect and together shape the future.

It will have two wings: one which focuses on students and staff, the other on laboratories and research. They are connected by a bright, large atrium as a central meeting place, which will be open and welcoming to the public for small to large gatherings.

Designed by John Wardle Architects, the building features extensive use of Tasmanian timber and is constructed using local materials and labour.

A truly sustainable building, The Shed will be built with 35% less embodied carbon than similar buildings constructed using conventional materials and techniques and will draw on less power once complete – it will be low carbon and low energy.

Local construction firm Fairbrother anticipates more than 200 workers and contractors, including apprentices, will deliver the project. Fairbrother Chief Executive Officer Kurt Arnold said the company was excited to be involved in another innovative, landmark University of Tasmania project that was so important to Northern Tasmania.

“Through this project, Fairbrother continues and grows its investment in Tasmania’s construction industry – employing local tradespeople and engaging Northern Tasmanian subcontractors, specialists and suppliers,” Mr Arnold said.

“Importantly, the Willis Street building provides a unique and challenging project on which to train our young apprentices – the future of our industry. This project provides two years of certainty, and not only allows us to retain our highly skilled workforce, it also provides opportunities for skilled tradespeople and industry professionals to join the team and be part of the journey.”

The Shed focuses on encouraging community and industry collaboration. It includes:

- Simulation facilities for nursing and allied health
- Food science facilities including a sensory lab to provide hands-on skills and testing
- State-of-the-art teaching and research laboratories
- Allied Health clinics to support new courses in Physiotherapy, Speech Pathology, Occupational Therapy, Exercise Science and Dietetics
- Spaces which enable community health education programs for children and older adults, professional development workshops, sports science testing and wellbeing initiatives
- An open central atrium showcasing core themes of food science and health, used for interactive events and forums to encourage community learning and research activities
- Nationally registered, fully accessible changing place facilities available for public use
- Extensive landscaping with active recreation spaces
- A nutrition bar style takeaway café
- Showers, bike storage and a parenting room

The University will transition to Inveresk in stages starting with the Library early next year and the River’s Edge building in 2023. The Willis Street building will be open from early 2024.

The urban realm outdoor spaces across the precinct will open next year and the refurbishment of existing buildings will be complete by 2024.

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