



THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY  
ABERCROMBIE PRECINCT REDEVELOPMENT

STAGE 3A APPLICATION  
Landscape Design Statement

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The Landscape Design supports the Project's Value Proposition of "establishing an environment that will foster the next generation of creative business thinkers in Australia".

The overarching landscape concept is for an external environment that supplements and connects the spectrum of learning and social spaces created by the architecture.

The spatial and material resolution of the landscape for the new Abercrombie Precinct Redevelopment will :

- provide inspiration, respite, amenity, functionality and privacy, as appropriate to each landscape space.
- provide landscape continuity for the site, its adjacent buildings and the wider context
- maximise accessibility, clarity and ease of movement
- contribute positively to the Abercrombie Street and Codrington Street streetscapes and public domain
- provide varied and seasonal amenity for students, staff and visitors
- complement the architecture
- incorporate ESD and WSUD principles
- be low-maintenance
- incorporate CPTED principles
- demonstrate design excellence by the use and fine detailing of a restrained material palette

The key landscapes areas and elements to be addressed are:

- *Public Domain to Abercrombie, Codrington Street and the former Boundary Lane area*
- *Ground level (South East) and Level 1 (North West) Internal courtyards*
- *The Student Housing Courtyard*
- *The North South Through site Link*
- *Level 3, 4 and 6 Rooftop Landscapes*
- *Vegetation management and planting design*



## PUBLIC DOMAIN

### Abercrombie and Codrington Street

The site is a gateway to the University being at the southern end of the Eastern Avenue axis. Therein the building and its surrounding landscape will provide a strong visual connection to the broader campus. The proposed site plan provides a generous curtilage to the buildings along both Abercrombie and Codrington Streets, complementing the pedestrian zone provided by the public domain. In this curtilage is proposed a wide, soft landscaped area, with pockets of seating provided at regular intervals. This mass planting of predominantly native, low-water use species will cushion the building mass and the seating areas will contribute positively to the public domain, offering respite to pedestrians and providing informal study/passive recreation opportunities away from the higher use zones of the building.

Proposed street tree planting is in accordance with the City of Sydney's Street Tree Masterplan 2004 ie. *Eucalyptus sideroxylon* to Codrington Street and *Nyssa sylvatica* to Abercrombie Street.

### Former Boundary Lane

Although the Lane is being purchased by the University, it will have the character, quality and function of public realm. Situated between the proposed buildings and the existing Economics and Business Building (H69), it will be used predominantly for pedestrian movement and seating and will be capable of supporting service and emergency vehicle traffic.

The dynamic form of the Auditorium buildings is reflected down onto the floorplain which ensures the public space has a lively relationship to the facades of the architecture that bound and define that space. High quality materials will be used for paving and an uninterrupted thoroughfare for pedestrian traffic is maintained. Seating areas are associated with a rhythmic central grove of *Corymbia maculata* (Spotted Gum) which subtly and appropriately dissect the space while still ensuring important circulation and visual permeability. The Lane is also linked to the northern existing Economic and Business Building H69 with a series of seating terraces which will provide amenity for varying levels of social gathering and activity. These seating podiums also provide areas of refuge that support vantage points to view passing pedestrian traffic and interesting filtered views through the *Corymbia maculata* (Spotted Gum) foliage towards the adjacent glass façade and activities within.

It is proposed to remove the existing *Flindersia australis* to the western side of Boundary Lane and to transplant the *Elaeocarpus reticulatus* to the Eastern side in order to enhance the clarity of architectural form and legibility of building entry points along the lane. It is proposed to transplant the *Elaeocarpus* to the Student Housing courtyard.



## Building entries

### Main entry - Codrington Street and Boundary Lane

The main entry to the precinct at the corner of Codrington Street and Boundary Lane is characterized by a generous open approach, clear visibility. A platform of high quality paving leads pedestrians to and from the precinct into the public domain

### Abercrombie Street Entry

In support of the architecture, accent planting will be provided at the ground plane to increase legibility of the entry to the through-site link. Seating areas are also associated with the building entry.

## GROUND LEVEL (South East) INTERNAL COURTYARD

As a focus of the main entry to the precinct, this courtyard is in the first instance, a symbolic gesture. It is a landscape reflective of the memory of the site, an inviting, verdant core which is clearly visible from the street and seemingly, around which the building is built. Comprised of locally native canopy trees (*Corymbia maculata*), mid-storey shrubs or small trees (eg *Banksia serrata*), Livistona palms and a lush understorey (eg *Macrozamia*, *Xanthorrhoea*, *Alocasia* and native ferns) this landscape will be experienced from all levels of the building, including the rooftop.

At ground level, the garden is traversed for access to classrooms and lecture theatres via steel mesh boardwalks that float over the slightly sunken landscape. This courtyard is essentially a protected garden, providing an intimate connection with nature. In the warmer months, the vegetation will provide passive cooling for the building. Small, study/sitting areas located intermittently along the boardwalk, set-off from the main access way, will provide welcome shaded respite in the hotter months.

## LEVEL 1 (North West) INTERNAL COURTYARD

In contrast to the relative passivity and protection of the Ground Level Courtyard, the Level 1 Courtyard is an open space with a character adapted from the qualities of The Quadrangle.

It is defined by three key elements:

- *A shroud of filagree planting* that blurs the edge of the space and shows the silhouettes of movement and activity. This shroud also creates a sense of intimacy, and privacy and affords the use of the edge of the space for private study/sitting and small gatherings on both sides of the glazed building threshold. The shroud is proposed to be bamboo, planted at intermittent spacings to allow movement and seating
- *A grove of Illawarra Flame Trees (*Brachychiton acerifolius*)* which flower in late spring around the end of the university semester. Symbolically, this correlates with the flowering of the Jacaranda in The Quadrangle.



Culturally, Jacaranda and Flame Trees are often planted together due to their common flowering time and complementary flower colours.

- *Open space.* The courtyard is free space with casual street furniture. As a show of the symbiotic relationship between business and the arts, the open space could also be used for temporary sculptures.

This open, protected courtyard will be particularly valuable as a winter garden

### STUDENT HOUSING COURTYARD

With various opportunities for passive recreation including open lawn space, quiet seating areas and a communal bbq facility, this courtyard will provide both respite and social interaction for resident students. The courtyard is accessible from the North South through site link and is also envisaged to be activated by non-resident students. The planting scheme to this courtyard will maintain continuity of species with the precinct, including transplanted *Elaeocarpus* (Blueberry Ash) from Boundary Lane, *Livistona australis* (Cabbage Tree Palm) palms, *Banksia* spp and ornamental native shrubs and groundcovers.

### THROUGH SITE LINKS (North South)

This through-site link provides clear passage with articulated passive seating zones. Throughout the space a playful but practical rhythm of *Livistona australis* (Cabbage Tree Palm) emerge from the paving with associated seating that creates a plaza that complements the building scale and provides visual continuity with the *Livistona australis* (Cabbage Tree Palm) plantings in the Ground Level (south east) Courtyard. Importantly the placing of the *Livistona australis* (Cabbage Tree Palm) palm plantings and associated furniture within the North South Link retain a thoroughfare wide enough to support heavy pedestrian traffic whilst also incorporating the desired social spaces and areas of respite that encourages passers to stop and enjoy.

At the northern end, a new Blue Gum is proposed in lieu of the existing Blue Gum to be removed as part of the site works. Symbolically, the new Blue Gum will be a marker tree at nexus of the through site link and Boundary lane.

### LEVEL 3, 4 AND 6 ROOFTOP LANDSCAPES

It is proposed to landscape the rooftops of each building to promote the Precinct's ESD principles and to add a significant layer to the social sustainability of the buildings. In addition to rainwater absorption collection, building insulation and habitat benefits, the fully accessible rooftops will provide valuable additional usable space. Designed as an island in the inner-city sky, the rooftops are intended for respite and private study for individuals and small group. The landscape will be predominantly planted with hardy native shrub and groundcover species creating a buffer to the external building edges, with timber deck paths floating over the landscape to varied pockets of space, immersed in the landscape. The spaces will be of varied character. Social spaces associated with building access points will have



permanent shade and fixed bench seating, small turf pockets with daybed benches will provide passive recreation areas for small groups and small ornamental trees will provide natural shade to informal seating areas. The roof gardens will be particularly valuable outdoor space in the milder seasons of winter, spring and autumn.

## VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND PLANTING DESIGN PRINCIPLES

### Vegetation Management

The planting design principles are derived in response to the arborist's report (refer: *Trees – Potential Redevelopment Site - Abercrombie Street, Darlington Road, Codrington Street, Golden Grove Street – Darlington Campus University of Sydney, The Tree School, January 2008*) and 360's assessment of the character of the existing vegetation, in the context of the immediate site and the broader University campus.

The arborist's report for the site note a selection of trees that would ideally be retained.

In developing the landscape response for the site it has been determined that some of these trees may be removed and replaced with the new planting and open space areas as defined in this proposal. Retention of the trees was contemplated in the development of the design response for the site but the decision to remove the trees was based on:

- A clash in their location with all site planning options;
- Likely damage or death of the trees despite any attempt to keep them;
- Ample replacement trees and new open space areas on the site that will serve to offset the loss of what is effectively now a site that lacks any large open space areas for public use;
- Replacement of the loss of the significant Blue Gum with a new blue gum to be planted at the junction of the north south through site link and the "Boundary Lane" walkway.
- Retention, as recommended of the *Flindersia australis* and transplanting of the *Elaeocarpus reticulatus* in Boundary Lane

### Planting Design Principles

The Landscape Design incorporates the following planting design principles:

- Memory of site, including local native species suitable to the environments and microclimates generated by the new buildings
- Cohesiveness with the character of new University campus planting
- The use of predominantly low maintenance, low water use species
- The transplanting of existing trees where possible and the replacement of the existing Blue Gum with a new Blue Gum to be situated at the nexus of the North-South Through site link and Boundary Lane.