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Construction begins on the first purpose-built postgraduate community

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A foundation stone ceremony has marked the commencement of building on a new 319-bed residential village located at the University of New South Wales (UNSW). Envisaged as the first postgraduate community of its kind in Australia, the Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of NSW, Professor Frederick G Hilmer AO, unveiled the stone for New College Village yesterday.

Anglican residential college – New College – has entered into a partnership with the University of NSW and Sydney-based Development and Construction Company, Lipman Group Pty Ltd to manage and complete the new facility, with Allen Jack+Cottier Architects providing design services.

The expansion of New College recognises the growing scale of postgraduate study, says Andrew Parker, Allen Jack+Cottier team leader.

Students will choose between self-contained studios with their own kitchenette and ensuite, or their own room with ensuite in multi-bedroom apartments. “Building a community is at the heart of the brief,” says Parker. “Currently, New College residents come together three times a day in the dining room, but the Village poses new challenges in bringing people together because of their self-contained accommodation.”

Allen Jack+Cottier’s response involves a series of graduated ‘common’ spaces to accommodate social interaction. Residents will share two common rooms on each level, a ground floor games room, and formal seminar rooms (in conjunction with visitors).

The u-shaped Village frames a central courtyard opening to the Western Campus, while a more intimate eastern courtyard is separated from Anzac Parade by a glazed wall. The wall will also reduce traffic noise sufficiently to enable natural ventilation in all student rooms. A roof terrace on level four will provide an additional recreation space for all residents.

“The u-shaped building promotes a strong sense of enclosure and encourages social interaction for occupants,” says project architect, Matthew McNeil. “It also presents a front yard that opens directly to the proposed extension of the University Mall, reflecting the strong relationship between New College and UNSW.”

There is also an important relationship between light and the student. "Solar access can provide excellent natural light for a studying environment, but it can also detrimentally heat the room in summer months," says McNeil.

Passive solar screening has been utilised as a simple yet effective device to control solar gain, with students able to individually control glare and sunlight to their spaces.

Having designed Sydney University's award-winning 650-bed Village in 2003, Allen Jack+Cottier has maintained a goal of setting new standards in student housing. The practice has just completed construction of a 455-bed student village on the Brisbane campus of the Queensland University of Technology, with doors opening for the first intake of students in February.

"We have established a reputation for high quality, innovative student housing in recent years, and New College Village builds on this experience," says Parker.

Completion is scheduled for early 2009.

For further information and high resolution images on New College Village:

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(From left to right) Vice-Chancellor and UNSW President Professor Frederick G Hilmer AO, and New College Master and CEO Professor Trevor Cairney at the ceremony. (Photo courtesy of Ramon A Williams, Worldwide Photos)



(From left to right) Allen Jack+Cottier architects, Andrew Parker and Matthew McNeil, pictured with the foundation stone.