

Vision 2025:

Masterplanning Rockhampton Girls Grammar School

an Insight by Graham Legerton
Head of Education, ThomsonAdsett



One of only eight original Queensland grammar schools, Rockhampton Girls Grammar School identified the need to plan their campus's growth to meet projected future demand. ThomsonAdsett prepared a 2025 masterplan that capitalises on the school's existing assets and provides a development framework addressing the school's vision, needs and aspirations.

The brief.

RGGS wants to be recognised as the first thought for girls' education in Rockhampton, and this combined with their school's motto of 'Non Scholae sed Vitae' or 'Learning not only for school but for life' would shape the future direction of their campus. High quality learning environments, choice of facilities, preservation of heritage values and a cohesive, inclusive campus were all crucial ingredients we considered to achieve this vision.

We passionately believe that all schools should have a future vision that can inform the development of the school and maximise return

on investment. Rockhampton Girls Grammar School has recognised this and they now have a plan, a roadmap for their next fifteen years of growth.

We also share the belief with RGGS that appropriately designed learning environments can inspire greater learning outcomes whilst respecting and enhancing the unique qualities of their context. It was great working with the RGGS team's forward-thinking principal and school board.

Appraisal of existing building stock.

One of the first steps the architects undertook was a detailed assessment of the campus's existing building stock, utilising a masterplanning assessment tool of weighted criteria. The goal was to identify for each building whether it should be removed, refurbished or retained in its present condition. The outcome informed the determination of a strategic vision for the site. The assessment tool also helped the school gain a clearer understanding of the current condition of their building stock.

Concept.

The principal concept of the masterplan centres around the importance of creating a whole in lieu of a series of parts.

This was achieved in part through effective use of the circulation paths and appropriate siting of all new buildings and amenities. Bridges and linkages between buildings were inspired by a visit to Cradle Mountain in Tasmania where pathways and seating areas entice exploration, promote inclusion and enable opportunities for rest and social interaction. The proposed circulation and interventions serve as the *essential glue* that will transform the campus into a connected, inspiring and sustainable learning environment.

Another of the masterplan's aims was to cluster accommodation; assisting wayfinding and promoting a sense of collegiality.

Our overarching vision was to create a series of distinctive districts with a new 'learning for life' zone at the heart of the campus. As the name suggests this zone contains the majority of the living and learning accommodation, surrounded by other supporting districts including rest, sport and play.

The panoramic range views provide a magnificent backdrop to the school. As such the masterplan sought to maximise enjoyment of this asset and provide the school with a staged, coherent and manageable development program.

The masterplan also recognised a pedagogical shift towards blended, collaborative learning and proposed places of social exchange of varying scales, where pupils can engage with teachers, their peers, their parents and the community. A variety of learning settings and cohorts can be

accommodated in keeping with the pedagogy of 'discovery by doing' and the creation of a wider school community.

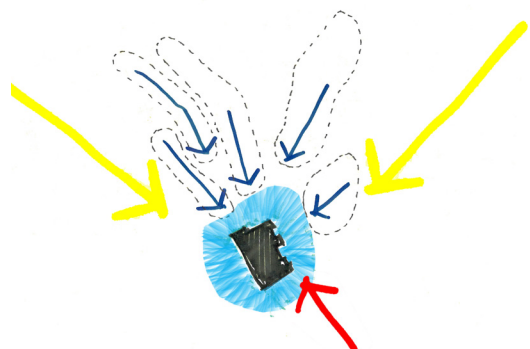
'Learning commons' environments are proposed adjacent to recent refurbishments within the campus, maximising their transformational value. Such refurbishments have made a significant impact on the quality of the school and they provide a catalyst for continued learning integration.

Keeping the history.

"In preparing this masterplan there were a number of specific considerations given to the existing heritage setting, with the intent of complementing, reinstating and preserving the unique qualities of the site and in particular Paterson House (c1890's)," said Legerton.

"Our research revealed that forty-six trees had been planted in the school in its first year, each one representing a member of the school's founding class. To extend this tradition our plan proposed planting a further forty-six trees of the same species. The new trees will define external learning spaces and circulation paths, whilst providing essential shaded spaces and a sense of history."

"On Arbor day, soon after the school's opening, forty-six trees, one for each pupil, mistress and Trustee present, were planted. These included, on advice from the curator of the Rockhampton



Education Vision 2025: Masterplanning Rockhampton Girls Grammar School | Graham Legerton

Botanic Gardens (JS Edgar), 12 mango trees planted on the town edge of the tennis court, silky oaks, jacaranda's, and bunya pines." - Queensland Heritage Register Archives

The dominant historical reference point on site is Paterson House. The building is at the school's entrance and contributes to the all-important 'first impression' of the campus. A reinstatement of the original tennis courts and creation of clear spaces around the house promote opportunities for clear vistas of the building. The building has a 'Collegiate Gothic' architectural vocabulary which had been impeded by more recent adjacent additions.

Close to Paterson House is McKeague Hall. This later but still historically significant addition to the campus has a strong visual impact on the historic Paterson House. The ThomsonAdsett plan creates a green wall on the side of the hall. The green wall not only lessens the building's visual encroachment on Paterson House, it also serves as a micro-habitat that offers significant learning opportunities.

Constraints create opportunities.

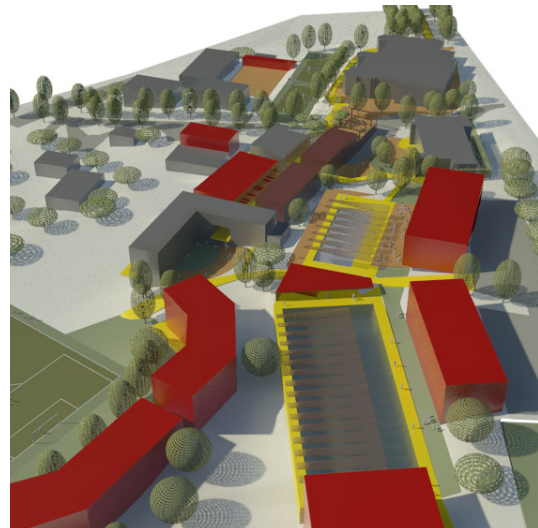
A service road running through the heart of the campus provides essential access for deliveries, drop off and emergency vehicles. While the road is a crucial access point that needs to be retained, it divides the campus into two entities. The addition of a foot-bridge in the masterplan bridges the rift between east and west and enables safer access for students. The bridge itself will also be a learning environment, with informal seating creating opportunities for rest, discussion and learning.

Outcomes.

School Principal Bev Mouritz was very happy with the school's new vision for the future, and said that "the final product was very well received amongst the school's community."

"[ThomsonAdsett's] vision for Rockhampton Girls Grammar School encapsulated the school's needs very well. Graham and his team were most reliable and positive, posturing an excellent rapport and level of trust. They provided outstanding vision and [a] most positive approach."

This 2025 masterplan for Rockhampton Girls Grammar School was developed using ThomsonAdsett's unique 'we share how we get there' process. For further information contact Graham Legerton.

**Graham Legerton**

Graham has benefited from over 14 years experience with educational projects which include a full range of Prep, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary facilities. Graham is the national head of the ThomsonAdsett Education discipline.

