

HUMANITIES AND SCIENCE CAMPUS SQUARE

NATIONAL CAPITAL AUTHORITY

INTRODUCTION

The National Capital Authority (NCA) has redeveloped the area between the National Library of Australia (NLA) and the National Science and Technology Centre (Questacon) to create the Humanities and Science Campus Square Stage One. The creation of Campus Squares within the Parliamentary Zone was proposed in the *Parliamentary Zone Review Outcomes* (2000) and is provided for in the National Capital Plan.

The Parliamentary Zone Review (the Review) noted the disconnected nature of the national institutions, the lack of pedestrian connectivity and the need to create coherent public spaces between the institutions. To address this disconnectedness, the Review proposed a hierarchy of public spaces be created to produce places of human scale and improved amenity. A key part of this hierarchy was the creation of ‘campus squares’ to act as a central orientation space about which future development would occur. In addition to their visual function, the ‘campus squares’ were to improve public amenity.

The first ‘campus square’ to be created is the Humanities and Science Campus Square, located between the NLA forecourt and Questacon within the Parliamentary Zone.

The Campus Square creates a unified address for the NLA and Questacon, integrates with existing artworks, improves public safety by separating coaches from pedestrians, and establishes a framework for any potential building expansion in the future.

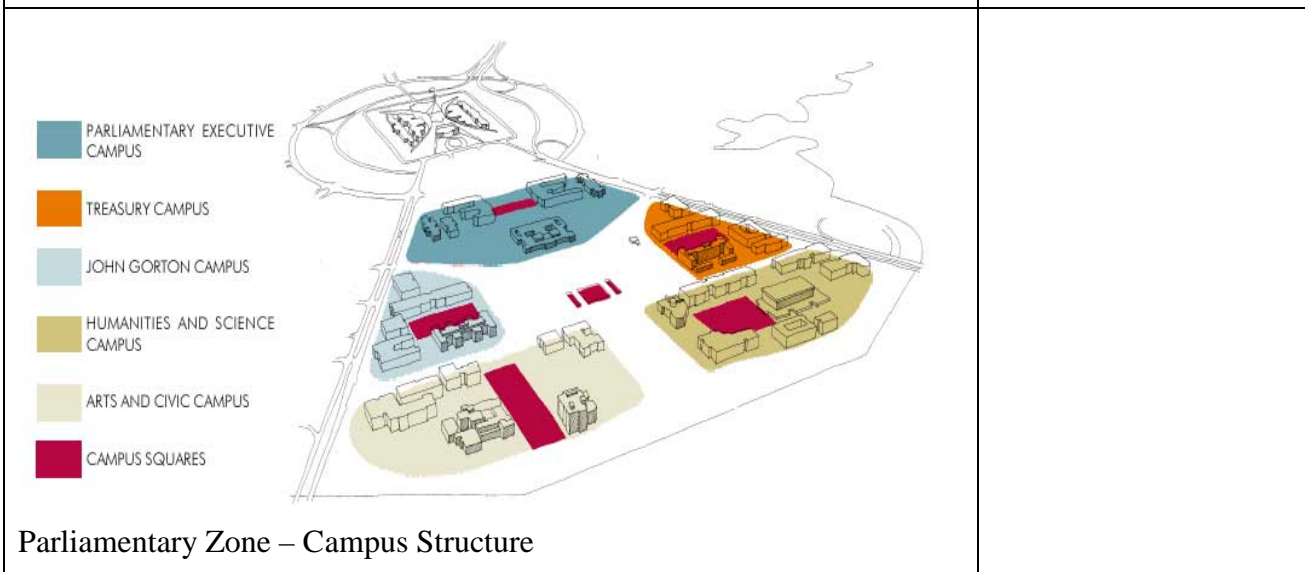
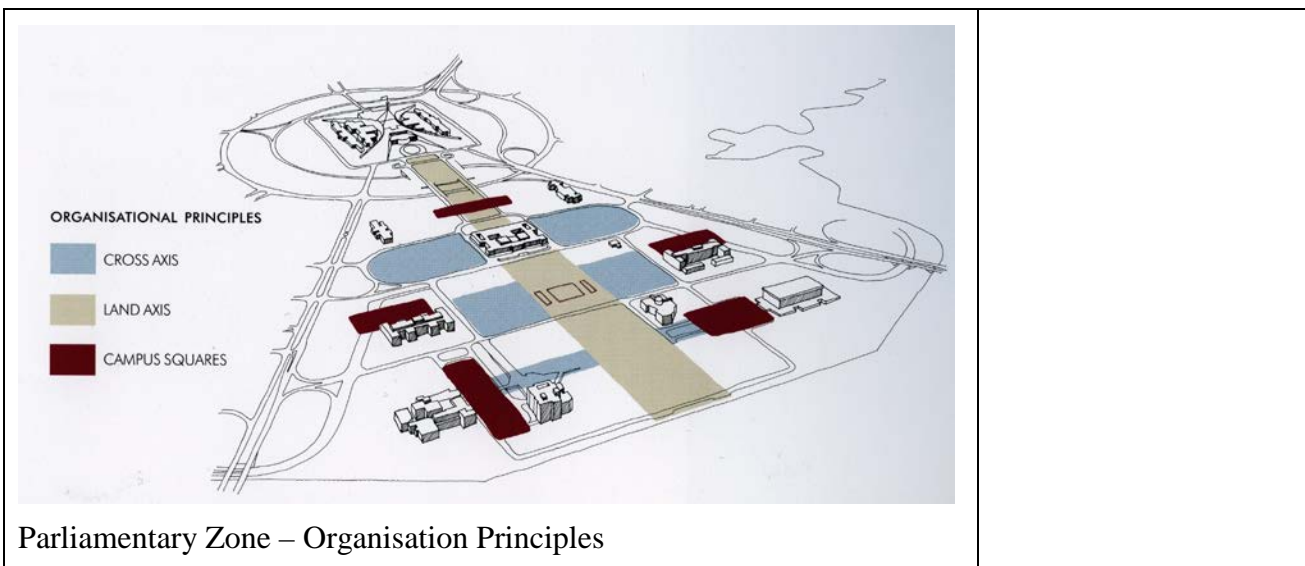
The design was subject to referral by the former Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The proposal was assessed as not being a controlled action.



Campus Square



Campus Square



BACKGROUND

In 1998 the Australian Government announced that the NCA would undertake a strategic review of the Parliamentary Zone and initiate the development of a master plan. The outcomes were published in the Parliamentary Zone Review Outcomes 2000 and the National Capital Plan was amended to give statutory basis to the policy outcomes of the review. Key results from the Outcomes report were incorporated into a master plan which is intended to guide decisions relating to development and management within the Parliamentary Zone.

As a statement of policy, the master plan directed that identifiable precincts, or campuses, should be created to provide a sensible and flexible rationale for the location of new buildings, public spaces and even some events. This policy is incorporated into the National Capital Plan as Appendix T.6.

The NCA commissioned Spackman & Mossop Landscape Architects with Lahz Nimmo Architects to prepare a development plan for the Humanities and Science Campus, including a concept plan for the Campus Square. The Campus Square Stage one is centred on the Parkes Place West and Enid Lyons Street intersection between the NLA and Questacon and establishes two main spaces – it recognises the heritage significance of the NLA forecourt, and it re-examines the area east of Parkes Place to the north of Questacon. Reconciliation Place is retained in the design.

The aim of the development plan was to guide ongoing enhancement of the Campus and provide direction for future constructed works towards 2050 and beyond. The main intent of Stage one reduces the amount of vehicular traffic through the Campus to create a better and safer experience for pedestrians (largely children), increase vegetation and trees in the area, and to accommodate the disparate needs of the users of each of the flanking Institutions.

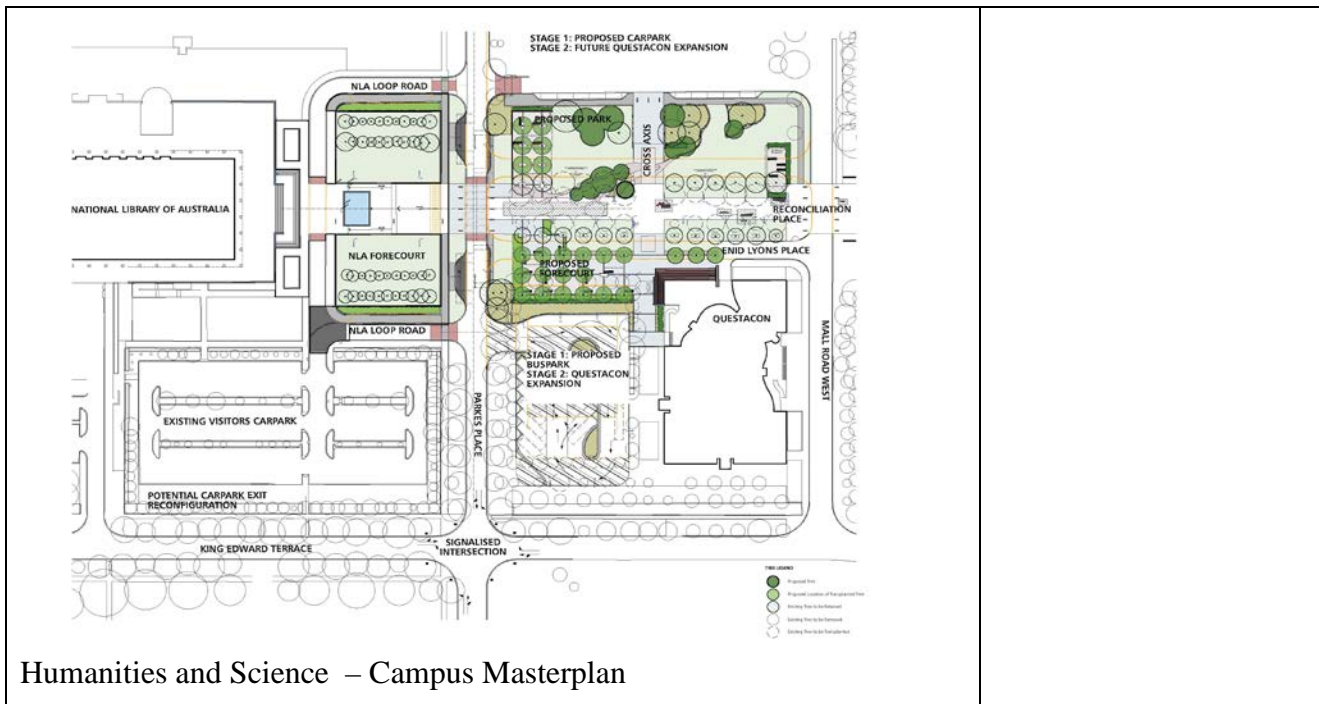
The design team undertook extensive consultation with stakeholders. This included the Department of Environment and Water Resources for consideration under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (the EPBC Act), the NLA, Questacon, Moral Rights holders and the general public. The proposed Campus Square design received full endorsement from the Director-General of the NLA, the NLA Council, the Director of Questacon, the Questacon Advisory Council as well as the Secretary of the Department of Education, Science and Training.

DESIGN INTENT

The NLA forecourt and fountain have been restored and a single broad ramp to the central section introduced to allow equal and equitable access for the visitors to the campus. To the east of Parkes Place West, a new park was created; this was achieved through the removal of Enid Lyons Street and the transplanting of plane trees to open up the view along the East/West axis towards the NLA. The south of Reconciliation Place has formal recreation area created by a grid of the transplanted plane trees, whilst the area to the north comprises a more informal, organic space. Mall Road West will be converted to coach parking with some allowance for private vehicular access to Questacon basement and a taxi zone.



Humanities and Science Campus Square – Original site



The Questacon side of the campus was divided into two main areas either side of Reconciliation Place, with the removal of Enid Lyons Place. The edges of Reconciliation Place have the flanking inner row of plane trees removed to open up the view along the East-West axis towards the National Library. All plane trees were transplanted and reused in other areas of the Campus.

The poplar trees along the north and south edges and their surrounding turf platforms were retained. The retaining walls have been rebuilt, reclad, and provided with balustrades to comply with current Codes. The water fountain was restored to its original design, and its depth will be reduced to comply with current Standards.

Today the south of Reconciliation Place is a more formal recreation area with a grid of the transplanted plane trees to form a shady canopy over paved and permeable surfaces. Seating and street furniture form an integral part of the space. The north and west face of the Questacon podium have been extended with broad steps, forming a terraced amphitheatre for school groups to be marshalled and addressed; a meeting place.

The area to the north of Reconciliation Place unifies the ideas of the Campus. It has a more informal theme, with the introduction of native plantings as an understory beneath the existing and new gum trees. It relates to the NLA forecourt walls across Parkes Place, introducing a retaining wall of the same proportions, but constructed from materials that reflect the artworks in Reconciliation Place. Further transplanted plane trees form a grid that continues across from the south side to provide a formal corner (behind the new retaining wall) to the otherwise more organic form of the plan to the east.

RESPONSE TO CRITERIA

• *Principles that could be applied nationally*

The project was a realisation of a campus precinct identified in the Parliamentary Zone Review released in March 2000. This review identified the east-west promenade as a major pedestrian link between the National Library and the High Court. The pedestrian promenade was to be a series of spaces that permit a direct view between the major buildings on this east-west axis. The promenade

was planned to become an important piece of infrastructure to encourage visitors to walk between the main cultural institutions. The Humanities and Science Campus Square Stage one completes this promenade by connecting to reconciliation place. This has been achieved in the decade since the Parliamentary Zone review took place.

- ***Community benefit, particularly a positive impact in as wide a section of the community as possible***

The project design and development responded to both national and local interests in providing amenity for a broad cross-section of the community. The NCA identified that visitors tended to drive between major institutions – in part due to the lack of legibility of the public realm in the Parliamentary Zone. This project has contributed significantly to visitor experience and behaviour as the campus project, along with Reconciliation Place is an exemplar of a truly walkable precinct.

- ***Originality or uniqueness***

The project provided a contemporary design solution to an area containing iconic buildings and heritage elements central to the identity of the Parliamentary Zone. The considered use of materials and human scale elements has provided a family friendly park that complements rather than competes with the National Library and Questacon.

- ***Resourcefulness, innovation, good quality documentation, attractive presentation, that it is “user friendly”, easily read and understood, technical competence and creativity***

The following is drawn from the Australian Institute of Architects citation for the Humanities and Science campus and demonstrates the projects consistency with this criteria.

“The Humanities and Science Campus Place provides a well-integrated and engaging urban intervention which dramatically improves functionality, safety and legibility for users of Questacon, the National Library, and surrounding areas. It also contributes to greater definition and awareness of Reconciliation Place and, at the same time, it enhances the sequence of public spaces that form and surround the pedestrian and visual axis from the National Library to the National Gallery. Architect and Landscape architect have successfully collaborated to introduce various hard and soft landscaping elements, including relocation of a number of existing London Plane trees, to integrate with and complement adjacent spaces. Its overall effect is to enhance the presence and symbolism of the axis, to extend the mix of public spaces for leisure, meeting or quiet contemplation, and to improve their amenity, activation and safety. The arrival sequence for a multitude of local, national and international visitors is simplified, and the design resolves previously vexatious relationships of coach drop-off and parking, and pedestrian pathways, delivering a clear sense of pedestrian priority.”

- ***A high level of professionalism***

The project is the outcome of a sustained strategic development and master planning process beginning with the Parliamentary Zone Review in 1999-2000. The campus integrates with numerous other developments in the precinct including Reconciliation Place and the Questacon forecourt redevelopment. The outcome is a coherent campus within a precinct that completes the redevelopment of the southern shore of the lake within the Parliamentary Zone.

- ***A realistic implementation program - possibly including a budget, and staging details***

The duration of the project from design to practical completion was two and a half years, the final project cost \$9.25 million.