

Healthy Disregard for the Impossible Essential for the Macquarie University Incubator

John Shi-Nash², Nick Elias¹, Chris Crick³

¹*Architectus*, ²*Macquarie University*, ³*Root Partnerships*

The Macquarie University Incubator was born from a complex mesh of creative constraints – limited time, brief, budget, even limited permanency. But it was these constraints that fuelled the fire of innovation necessary to deliver the project. This presentation will reveal how the team designed and built the Hub within one year of inception by reinventing how they worked.

Macquarie University focused their attention on engagement with industry, government, not-for-profits and entrepreneurs, and in 2016 wanted to create a space that fostered fluid collaboration, a creative community and an architectural expression that captured the innovation within. Macquarie University, Root Partnerships, Architectus and the consultant team had one year from inception to occupation. Together, they rose to the challenge of developing, designing and delivering these aspirations in the form of the new Incubator. The ambition for the Incubator is to attract high calibre partners, researchers and students with a unique and inspiring work setting, allowing them to grow in a hotbed of ideas and network of intense pursuit, competition, support and collaboration.

This inspirational vision was filtered through the whole consultant team. Upon success in the design competition, Architectus had six weeks to design and document the project for tender. It had to be flexible to enable the evolving brief, temporary and reconfigurable, and quick to erect to meet the tight timeframe. The design team worked furiously against these constraints to develop a cross laminated, prefabricated timber cassette structure. What evolved was a column-free, large span timber shell that can adapt with its creative occupants.

While innovation was engrained in the design, tight timelines required Root Partnerships to rethink the approval and delivery process. Communication and early involvement with the building contractor was key, with 25 strong project team developing the design and go to tender in just six weeks. The design needed to advance at a rapid rate while still enabling the briefing process to evolve. The team reconsidered contract procurement and tendered early with a performance specification to ensure design integrity. Smart design and prefabrication reduced time on site, meeting the semester two deadline.

Audience members will be invited to experience the Macquarie University Incubator themselves, through Virtual Reality.