

Student Accommodation in Australia

The Benefits of Modular Bathrooms



Introduction

The demand for student accommodation across Australia is high, and is predicted to continue to rise significantly over the next decade. Increases in the number of international students choosing to study in Australia, combined with an increasing amount of domestic students preferring to live in accommodation in close proximity to education facilities and amenities, has resulted in a major shortage of affordable student housing – with research suggesting there is currently less than one Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) bedroom for every ten students¹.

Whilst there are constant new developments in the pipeline, demand still far outweighs supply, and it is crucial that more developers are able to turnover affordable, high quality new housing quickly, within budget, and with minimal disruption to campus operations.

One of the key considerations in the design and specification of any commercial development is bathroom construction, and no truer is this than for the time sensitive development of student accommodation. The complications associated with bathroom construction are often the cause of multi-unit building projects running late, so it is important the bathrooms are on a reliable programme that is guaranteed not to hold up the project.

This paper gives a brief overview of the current state of student accommodation in Australia, what the future holds, and how prefabricated modular bathrooms are helping to satisfy design and construction needs for this type of accommodation in Australia.



Interpod Bathrooms saving time in La Trobe Street, Melbourne

The rising demand for student accommodation

The number of students studying abroad is growing. It is estimated that international student numbers will continue to increase globally by 7 per cent per annum, which would result in around 760,000 international student enrolments in Australia by 2020 - a 50 per cent increase on 2012 figures². Already well behind on growing demand, this means the needs for PBSA is reaching untenable levels.

Not only is there a demand for more facilities, but also that these facilities are of an increasingly high quality. The federal government's deregulation of university fees is set

to increase the competition between universities vying for students, with the quality of the accommodation becoming a key motivator in a students' decision on where they study.

This is the case already for many international students. Due largely to the significantly higher fees they are paying, as well as the high costs of student accommodation in this country relative to the rest of the world³, they now consider themselves as consumers, and as such, there is an expectation for accommodation provided to be of a high quality.

Planned developments

In Australia, the bulk of students study in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, accounting for 75 per cent of all students. In these states, the number of student accommodation developments in the pipeline is significant but still well short of the required. As of July 2014 there were 1,528 beds in pipeline development for Melbourne, and 5,241 for Sydney. The Sydney beds comprise 18

different developments which vary from approval through to construction phase⁴. All of these developments are due for completion by 2017.

In spite of this, it is estimated that there is still over \$1 billion of equity looking to invest in the Australian student accommodation market⁵.

Keeping up with demand

With such high demand for new student accommodation, the prompt delivery of a project is crucial. Unfortunately, delays are a common and often unavoidable part of construction, and with little downtime experienced on university campuses, meeting deadlines is of even higher critical importance to a project's success. Minimising on-site disturbances and delays are key.

As bathrooms are the most specialised area of any construction, a multitude of trades are required. Plumbers, electricians, tilers, floor layers, sealant applicators, decorators, glaziers, carpenters and more need to be organised and managed. Add to this the ordering and delivery of materials, and delays somewhere along the line are inevitable.

The use of prefabricated modular bathroom pods helps to alleviate or altogether avoid many of the issues faced by on-site construction. A recent report revealed that 66 per cent of projects that use full modular construction decreased their schedule, with 35 per cent decreasing by four weeks or more. In addition, 65 per cent reported that budgets are decreased and 77 per cent on sites reduced waste⁶.

Leading providers of Student Accommodation in Australia, such as Urbanest and Campus Living Villages are moving towards bathroom pods for future projects due to these proven benefits.

Premium modular bathroom pods

Interpod Offsite provides premium modular bathrooms ideally suited to the unique requirements of purpose built student accommodation, with a revolutionary approach to the way bathrooms are constructed in Australia.

Interpod bathrooms are produced and assembled at their purpose-built facilities in NSW. Cutting-edge technology and a seamless production line process ensure a finely crafted, high quality, made to order product. Interpod bathrooms are tailored to the architect's specifications and come completely fitted out with floor and wall tiles/vinyl, light fittings, fixtures and appliances. Pods are fully tested and BCA certified before being delivered to the site.

Once positioned, a simple process connects the building's electrical, plumbing and ventilation systems – in just 2 to 3 hours on site, the bathroom is complete. Interpod's streamlined, offsite construction process means maximum efficiency and a shorter time to market.

Interpod Offsite

Interpod Offsite are the leading manufacturer of premium bathroom pods in Australia, and are the only modular building company in Australia dedicated solely to the production of bathroom pods for multi-unit applications.

With over 55 years of combined experience, the management team at Interpod offers expertise and knowledge in designing, producing and installing modular bathroom solutions for student accommodation.



Urbanest City Road Student Accommodation – Artist's Impression



2014 Student Accommodation Projects in Australia included nearly 3000 custom Interpod Bathroom Pods.

5 key benefits of bathroom pods

- **Significantly reduce construction time** – Through streamlining your construction, modular bathrooms can help cut your project's overall build time by up to 30%
- **Reduce cost and increase profitability** – Take your project to market sooner, and significantly reduce construction costs
- **Maintain exceptional quality control** – Slash construction defects by up to 80%, with strict quality control
- **Maximise efficiency with streamlined project management** – Deal with a single point of contact as opposed to multiple trades
- **Use sustainable construction methods** – Contribute to a better future and comply with sustainability guidelines at the same time

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