



## ► Leicester Street, Carlton PBSA

Melbourne continues to grow as a key study destination, yet there remains a shortage of high quality, purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) in the city. The University of Melbourne hopes to meet some of these needs by providing at least 2,000 new student beds by 2020.

Part of this strategy is a new 14-storey, 648-bed facility on Leicester Street in Carlton, by student accommodation specialist, Campus Living Villages (CLV), built by Watpac. The 22,500sqm building has a completion deadline of late 2015, and is expected to be ready for students in January 2016.

With just over a year to build 512 bathrooms on a tight site, Watpac decided to specify 441 modular bathroom pods of the same design to achieve greater efficiencies with service and stack rises. Although the choice to use Interpod was a “fairly late call” and led to minor design modifications (relocating the toilet pans in the design),

the benefits of using pods far outweighed the initial issues. This included guaranteed delivery dates as the pods were built off-site in factory-controlled conditions that are not affected by weather changes.

“We agreed there was benefit in getting factory-type quality in the manufacturing of the bathrooms pods. Waterproofing, tiling and fitting of fixtures are more likely to have issues on a building site than in a factory,” explains Andrew Kirk, Director of Development at CLV.

“At the moment we’re about a month, I believe, ahead of program, whether it is all down to the bathrooms I can’t say, but it wouldn’t have hurt them. It also means that there are less people on site, which just makes general construction easier.”

“The thing we like about the Interpod system is that it is effectively conventional construction but done offsite, so there are no additional risks to the conventional construction.”

## CHALLENGES

The building had to be completed in time for the start of Semester 1, 2016, leaving Watpac just over 12 months to construct 648 bedrooms and 512 bathrooms. If the team did not meet the strict deadline, the building would sit vacant for another six months as student accommodations usually have two intakes in line with the academic year. This would have led to an enormous profit loss. At the same time, the small Leicester St site presented unique challenges, with minimal parking and limited access to materials and trades.

## SOLUTION

441 premium Interpod modular bathrooms designed and constructed specifically for the project, were delivered to site as completed units on time and on budget. This building method eliminated the bathroom trades and activities that restricted site access would have made incredibly difficult. Each bathroom also included just one-floor penetration with the use of linear strip drains, minimising the slab penetrations.

## RESULT

With guaranteed delivery dates, the use of pods allowed Watpac to meet the building’s completion deadline. They also minimised the risks associated with a fast construction programme by taking bathrooms off the critical path, and reduced site trades and traffic. With just one point of contact at Interpod instead of having to deal with multiple bathroom trades, both Watpac and CLV were relieved of less project management onsite responsibilities, which in turn, contributed to streamlined construction.

