

## **Implementing Suburban University Study Hubs Consultation**

### **Macquarie University submission**

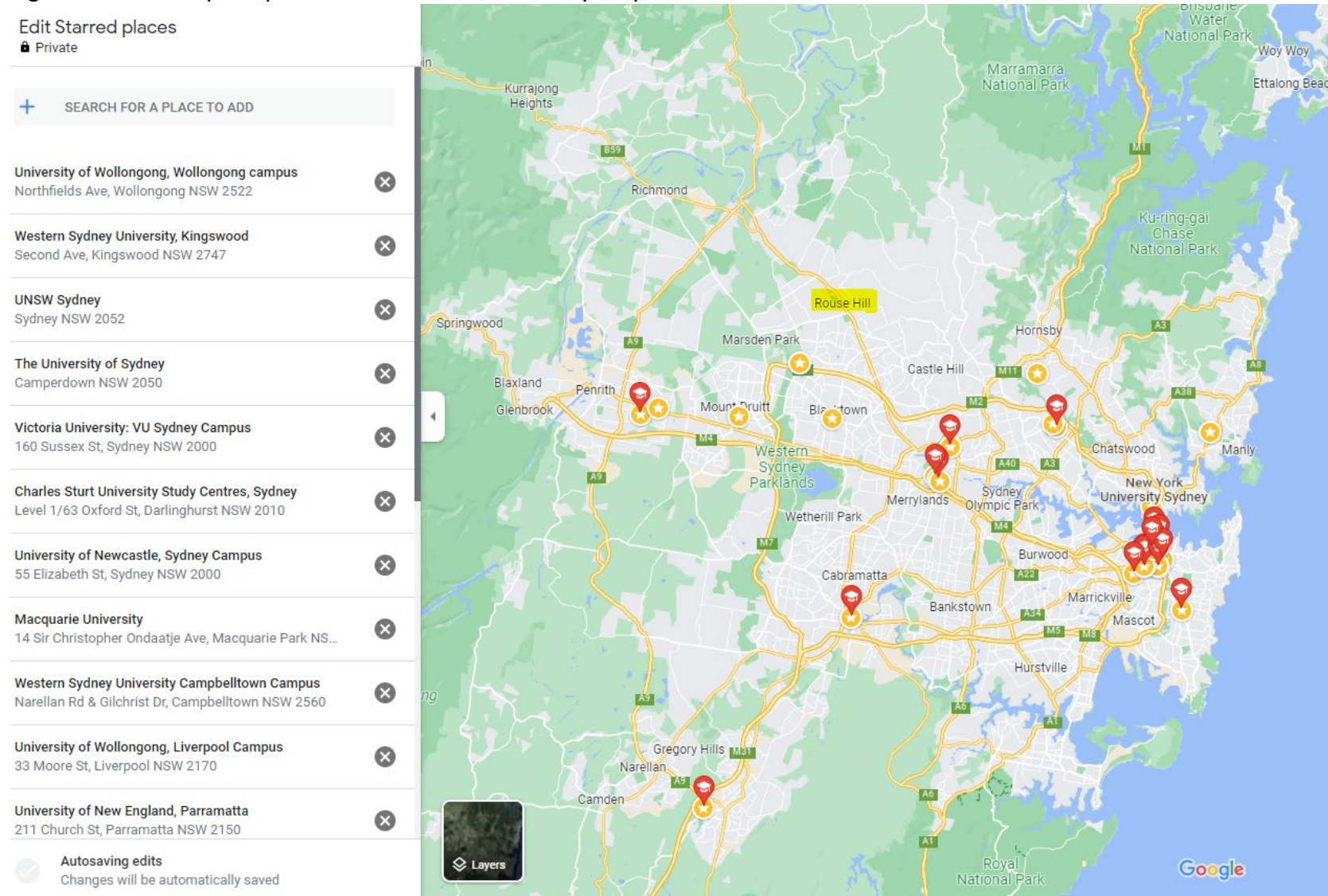
Macquarie University recognises the considerable potential benefit in extending the study hub concept to 14 new outer suburban locations. We agree that in these locations where attainment is lower, there is a need for potential students to see physical university assets in their suburbs to encourage aspiration to higher education. In addition, there is much benefit in providing conveniently located spaces with the right kind of support and environment that encourages quiet study as well as collaboration and the kinds of peer support that university communities offer, building a sense of wellbeing and belonging that is connected to enhancing student success. Some students struggle with the isolation of online learning from home or lack a suitable space. An environment more conducive to study, with technological, logistical and other support at hand, can be provided to great effect in study hubs. Furthermore, travelling to university campuses from these outer suburban locations requires students to invest greater amounts of time and expense which serves as a barrier to optimising student success, impacting equity student disproportionately.

### **Geographical location**

Macquarie University believes there is a strong case for a suburban study hub to be located in northwestern Sydney, specifically in the Tallawong/Rouse Hill area, on the Northwest Metro line (as highlighted in Figure 1.).

As an established university in the northern suburbs of Sydney, Macquarie University is acutely aware of the lack of higher education campuses on the northern side of Sydney in an area stretching from the northern beaches west to the Hawkesbury. This vast part of Sydney stretches as far north as the Central Coast. Currently, students face considerable difficulty accessing university due to the lack of any university campus within this highly populated area.

Figure 1. University campuses and centres in Greater Sydney<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Google Maps. (2023) Map of greater Sydney with University campuses marked. Retrieved 28 September 2023 from <https://maps.app.goo.gl/BkcZxRzFdbYF18Z8>

### **Co-location**

Macquarie University believes there is great merit in establishing a study hub in close proximity to schools, vocational education and training facilities and other public infrastructure such as hospitals. In this way, a new study hub in Rouse Hill/Tallawong will respond to the existing shortfall of higher education institutions as well as cater to future need as population growth continues into the future. The ongoing growth in this area of Sydney is recognised in the recent announcement of the establishment of new high schools in Schofields/Tallawong, Melonba and Jordan Springs, and new primary schools in Nirimba Fields, Melonba and Gables.

Macquarie University is a foundation partner of the Institute of Applied Technology, Digital (Meadowbank) and as such recognises the benefits of partnering with vocational education and training, and industry to provide innovative higher education which truly prepares students for in-demand employment. We believe study hubs should reflect this type of partnership as higher education in Australia moves towards greater integration between VET and universities and greater engagement with industry. A study hub in this area could take advantage of the work integrated learning possible at nearby hospitals, including the new Rouse Hill Hospital and schools, serving key skills shortage areas in health and education. In this way a study hub in this area of Sydney builds upon other investments being made within the local community, creates a focal point for industry outreach to students for work integrated learning opportunities, and serves as a key point for local industry within the north-west region to connect with universities and provide valuable input into curriculum, student experience and real employment opportunities for both students and graduates.

Furthermore, in supporting a more diverse student cohort to succeed, providing study hubs in areas where there are additional support services for students is important. A key requirement for many students from equity backgrounds is accessible childcare to enable study. There are three [new public pre-schools](#) to be established in north-west Sydney, in Nirimba Fields, Melonba and Gables, providing a family centric approach to accessing university education supported by a study hub in Tallawong/Rouse Hill.

### **Transport**

The Universities Accord Interim Report noted the high cost of commuting to a university campus and the high cost of metropolitan accommodation are both significant barriers to tertiary education for prospective students living in outer metropolitan suburbs. This highlights the importance of high-quality public transport. The Northwest Metro is a high-quality public transport link between the northwest and the city as well as being a direct link between the Macquarie University Wallumattagal Campus (North Ryde) and a new study hub in Tallawong/Rouse Hill. This link would be a crucial enabler for the University to support a new study hub. It would be the conduit for transfer of staff and students between campuses, including universities other than Macquarie. As urban planning policies encourage housing development on transport corridors, this location will continue to experience population growth and high demand for university access well into the future.