

# Redefining student living with precast concrete

Situated in the vibrant Sydney suburb of Redfern, the Wee Hur Student Village emerges as a premier student housing complex, blending modern design with practical functionality.

Located at 13-23 Gibbons Street in Redfern, New South Wales, this project is a testament to the transformative power of architectural innovation and the seamless integration of precast concrete elements.

**A fusion of design and practicality**

The Wee Hur Student Village stands as a striking example of how AJC Architects' visionary design became a reality by teaming up with one of Australia's leading precasters, Advanced Precast.

This 18-storey tower, crafted from tinted precast concrete, evokes the look of Sydney

sandstone, giving the structure a distinct and contextual presence. The building's design reflects both pre- and post-colonial narratives, enriching its architectural significance.

Advanced Precast, a National Precast Master Precaster, played a pivotal role in bringing the architectural vision to life.

According to Brett Foster, Advanced Precast's operations manager, over 280 unique precast elements were meticulously crafted, including brick inlay façade panels and special brick inlay feature panels that project outwards.

"The use of special window moulds, with windows fitted in the factory before delivery,

exemplifies the project's commitment to efficiency and precision," says Foster. "The façade features recesses and grooves to achieve the architectural intent of vertical and horizontal banding, further enhancing the building's aesthetic appeal."

**Sustainability and efficiency**

Precast concrete was chosen for the Wee Hur Student Village for its aesthetic appeal, durability, and ability to integrate architectural elements that would resonate with Sydney's landscape and heritage. Mimicking Sydney sandstone, the tinted precast concrete creates a visually appealing and contextually relevant façade. The incorporation of brick inlays into the precast panels allows for seamless integration with the surrounding suburbs.

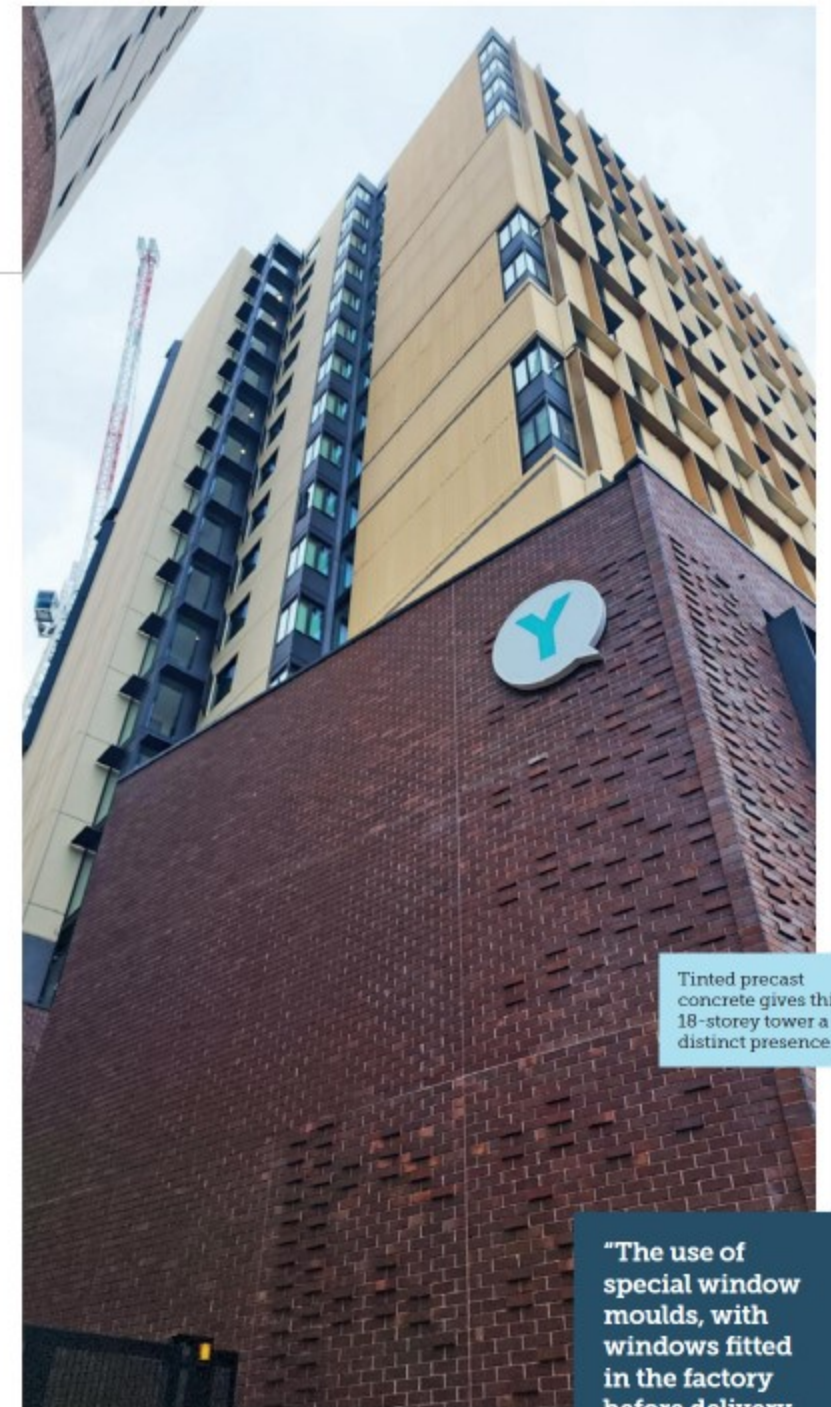
Significant time and cost savings were achieved by using precast. Speedy installation and reduced onsite labour, along with minimised scaffolding requirements and the ability to work on multiple building sections simultaneously, resulted in significant cost savings for the project.

That said, the project did face challenges, particularly in extending slabs to the façade and integrating non-loadbearing precast panels. These were addressed by engaging Advanced Precast early in the consulting process, ensuring thorough planning and seamless integration of architectural and engineering requirements. This collaborative approach ensured that the benefits of precast construction, including efficiency and cost savings, were fully realised.

**Community focus**

Designed as a social hub, the village offers a variety of shared spaces, including a rooftop garden, barbecue area, cinema, games room and 24-hour gymnasium. The interior design features colours inspired by the Australian landscape, with timber accents for warmth, creating an inviting and inclusive environment for students.

At the ground level, the podium continues the tone of neighbouring brick shops, enlivening the streetscape with fine grain detailing, steps and splayed reveals. A new landscaped public laneway, complete with a bicycle repair workshop and retail spaces, enhances the community feel.



Precast concrete elements were expertly utilised to create the eye-catching façade of the Wee Hur Student Village. (Images: National Precast)

Tinted precast concrete gives this 18-storey tower a distinct presence.

"The use of special window moulds, with windows fitted in the factory before delivery, exemplifies the project's commitment to efficiency and precision."

The Wee Hur Student Village exemplifies a harmonious blend of architectural excellence, sustainability and community-focused design. Its prime location, innovative use of precast concrete and dedication to creating a vibrant student community raise the bar for student accommodation in Sydney.

The project not only provides high-quality living spaces but also contributes positively to the urban landscape and student life in Redfern. ■■

**Project**  
Wee Hur Student Village

**Location**  
Redfern, New South Wales

**Master Precaster**  
Advanced Precast

**Builder**  
Richard Crookes Constructions

**Architect**  
AJC Architects

**Engineer**  
Webbed Design – WEBBER

By the National Precast Concrete Association Australia (National Precast).