

Case Study:

# The Charles Darwin University Education & Community Precinct, Danala, Darwin, NT

**Architect:** MODE **Builder:** DCOH (formerly Halikos Group)

**Installer:** Northern Trade Solutions **Product:** MondoClad panels



## Background

The newly opened Charles Darwin University (CDU) Education and Community Precinct epitomises a dynamic vision for Darwin's Central Business District. An essential part of the Darwin City Deal, this collaborative redevelopment brings together the Australian and Northern Territory Governments and CDU to transform a strategic city block into a welcoming educational community hub that celebrates its intricate locale.

The precinct, aptly co-named Danala, which means 'dillybag' in the Larrakia language, highlights the city's commitment to revitalising its very fabric, celebrating Indigenous culture and establishing CDU as a centrepiece of the region's educational landscape. The new facility is divided into three distinct areas: two levels for CDU faculty and staff, three levels dedicated to

students and teaching, and two levels accessible to the public. Additionally, the campus' integrated library, a collaboration between Library & Archives NT and the CDU Library, further promotes community engagement within the precinct.

Designed by interdisciplinary studio MODE and built by Darwin-based DCOH, the project significantly boosted the local economy, engaging nearly 1,000 Northern Territory workers, including 173 First Nations individuals. This strong emphasis on regional and Indigenous employment underscores Danala's commitment to community engagement and cultural sensitivity. "Danala is made for Territorians, by Territorians," Professor Scott Bowman, CDU Vice-Chancellor, says. "And it will ensure students are getting the education they deserve in a modern facility that suits Darwin."

## Challenge

A layered facade, shaded terraces, and a carefully curated colour palette work in tandem to create a comfortable and visually cohesive building harmoniously integrated within its setting, representing the development's commitment to its geographical and cultural context.

However, achieving this seamless visual outcome didn't come without its challenges. The design vision for the facade featured bespoke Interpon Powder Coat colours that resided outside the

standard range of the chosen cladding system. Achieving this unique aesthetic demanded a collaborative approach, requiring the supplier to meticulously match a custom PVDF finish to ensure it was the perfect match.

As such, this customisation became a pivotal aspect of maintaining the integrity of the design's natural aesthetic and bringing the facade design to life.





## Solution

To address the challenge, HVG Facades worked closely with Northern Trade Solutions, the installing contractor, to develop a tailored solution. “The cladding colour that was specified was not in the standard MondoClad colour range,” explains Jiayun Lee, Operations Director of Northern Trade Solutions. “We worked with HVG Facades to produce the custom colour by providing the colour swatch and prototype to meet the specified colours.”

HVG Facades’ MondoClad, a premium solid aluminium cladding panel pre-finished with a durable PVDF Fluoropolymer coating, offered the ideal combination of adaptability and long-term performance. Through their close partnership with Northern Trade Solutions, HVG Facades demonstrated exceptional adaptability in realising the bespoke colour, and their technical expertise and commitment to collaboration proved instrumental to the project’s success.

“HVG Facades is always proactive in providing services and technical data for their products,” Lee notes, “as well as the

logistical perspective to ensure we can meet the project time frame.” This proactive support highlights HVG Facades’ dedication to streamlined and collaborative building processes.

The successful implementation of HVG Facades’ MondoClad panels, with the bespoke colour solution, ensured the facade upheld the architectural vision and marked Danala as a striking example of how customisation capabilities and strong supplier partnerships can transform bold architectural projects into essential elements of the urban landscape. The newly opened facility seamlessly fuses public spaces, educational facilities, and essential services within the CBD while delivering a stunning, climatically responsive structure that echoes Darwin’s unique context.

“Danala is spacious, can handle the Territory’s unique weather and climate, and will support local events and entertainment in our community,” Professor Bowman adds. “I am grateful for the dedication of all contractors in bringing the campus to life.”

