



rmit university urban spaces stage one

location rmit university melbourne australia

status completed 1999

client rmit university

photography john gollings

RMIT University has been progressively rebuilding its main city campus as part of a sustained transformation of both its building stock and its open spaces. Founded in 1885, RMIT occupies a pivotal location on the civic axis at the top end of Swanston Street in central Melbourne. Overtime RMIT has grown beyond a single city block and spread out to become an ad-hoc piece of the city. The central campus had progressively developed into a disparate collection of isolated buildings and degraded spaces with little cohesion or connection to the city around it.

In the 1990's the University began a radical process of transformation, commissioning adventurous new architecture and progressively rebuilding the campus with startling results. What was once a gated and inward looking campus was suddenly opened up and connected the city. All the cars were removed along with the gates and fences and a new and vibrant urban environment was created.

The transformation of the campus was overseen through the Urban Spaces Project which began in 1995. The plan was to rebuild all the open space on the campus in a staged process that has taken 15 years to complete. What was a cacophony of cluttered streets, laneways, dead-ends and hidden courts, is now a pedestrian-friendly campus of visual delight and interest.

Sector 1 Bowen Lane

The lane between B8 and Storey Hall is the main student and pedestrian entrance to the university. Beyond this a labyrinthine series of spaces which link back into the heart of the campus not unlike the cavernous laneways of medieval cities.

Sector 2 Ellis Court

Ellis Court is the ceremonial gateway to the university. It is a sizeable open

public forecourt which provides a strong urban interface with the city proper.

Sector 3 Bowen Street

Bowen Street is the principal pedestrian and service vehicular circulation spine for the campus. A network of laneways and other spaces interlink back to Bowen Street as the main thoroughfare. In its day to day use Bowen Street provides an important social gathering and event space for students, staff and the public.

Sector 4 Bowen Terrace

Bowen Terrace adjoins the western edge of Bowen Street and so forms a major urban space and focus for student activity, like markets, bands and other outdoor entertainment. It is edged by a large yellow Loggia that links the terrace to the buildings that face it. It is a gathering space with casual seating in sunny and shady corners.

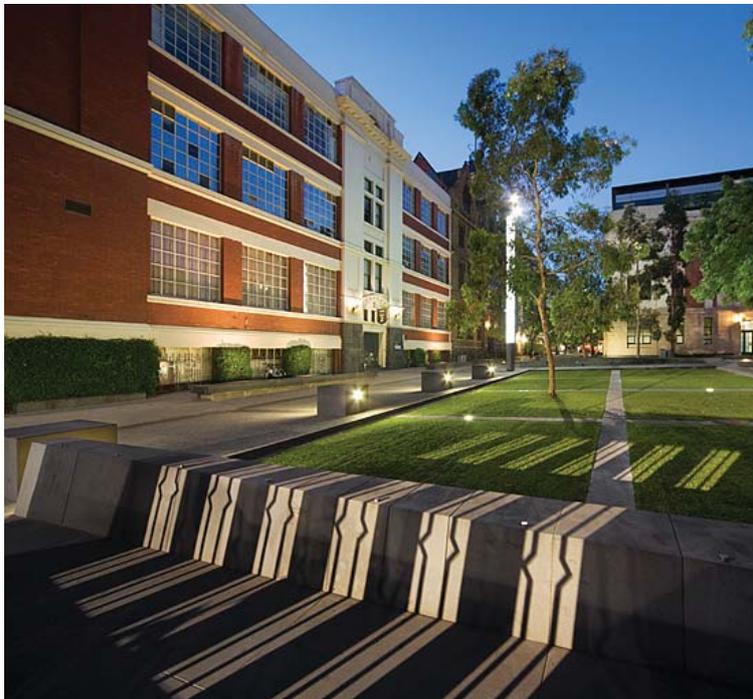
Sector 7 University Way

University Way is an urban laneway which provides secondary access and address to numerous buildings and spaces that line it. The laneway also links the western half of the campus to the secret courtyards and alleyways scattered through the old Gaol precinct as well as to the Carlton precinct north of Victoria Street.

"The RMIT Urban Spaces project is an ongoing work of considerable profundity, executed by a tenacious team well informed by urban theory, which has held the integrity of the design enterprise...the designers have created a magic carpet, a single ground plane rich in texture, vistas and spatial variety." AIA Joseph Reed Award jury 2000



sector 2 ellis court



sector 4 bowen terrace



sector 7 university way