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urban design

## rmit university urban spaces stage three

**location** rmit university melbourne australia

**status** completed 2010

**client** rmit university

**photography** dianna sname

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. The Urban Spaces Project commenced in 1997 and has been continuously unfolding new spaces and places progressively each year. University Lawn is a major public space with great urban presence. It is located in the heart of campus and forms part of an important group of interlinked open spaces from Ellis Court on La Trobe Street through to Alumni Court on Russell Street. Spatially, University Lawn is defined by a diverse perimeter of buildings and urban elements. This includes the Francis Ormond Building, Buildings 3, 5 and 15 along with the grand stair to Alumni Court, the remnant Old Melbourne Gaol walls, the belvedere embankment, the Former City Watch House and the link through to Building 20. All of these projects have been undertaken by this Practice over the last decade and form an unusual suite of urban spaces and built fabric.

As a place, University lawn is a quiet haven within the bustling city, a protected and defined space with a sunny northern exposure. It is a pivotal project as it dramatically opens up, repairs, and then adds a new urban venue which unites several pathways crossing the campus. A significant aspect of the remaking of University lawn was the rebuilding of new fronts onto the backs of all the adjoining buildings. A series of new facades, entry lobbies, lifts, terraces and stairways connect with the public space they face. This not only improves urban amenity and legibility, it brings new energy and activity to University Lawn.

The northern café courtyard to the Francis Ormond Building flows out onto University Lawn. Whilst the café courtyard is an intimate paved space,

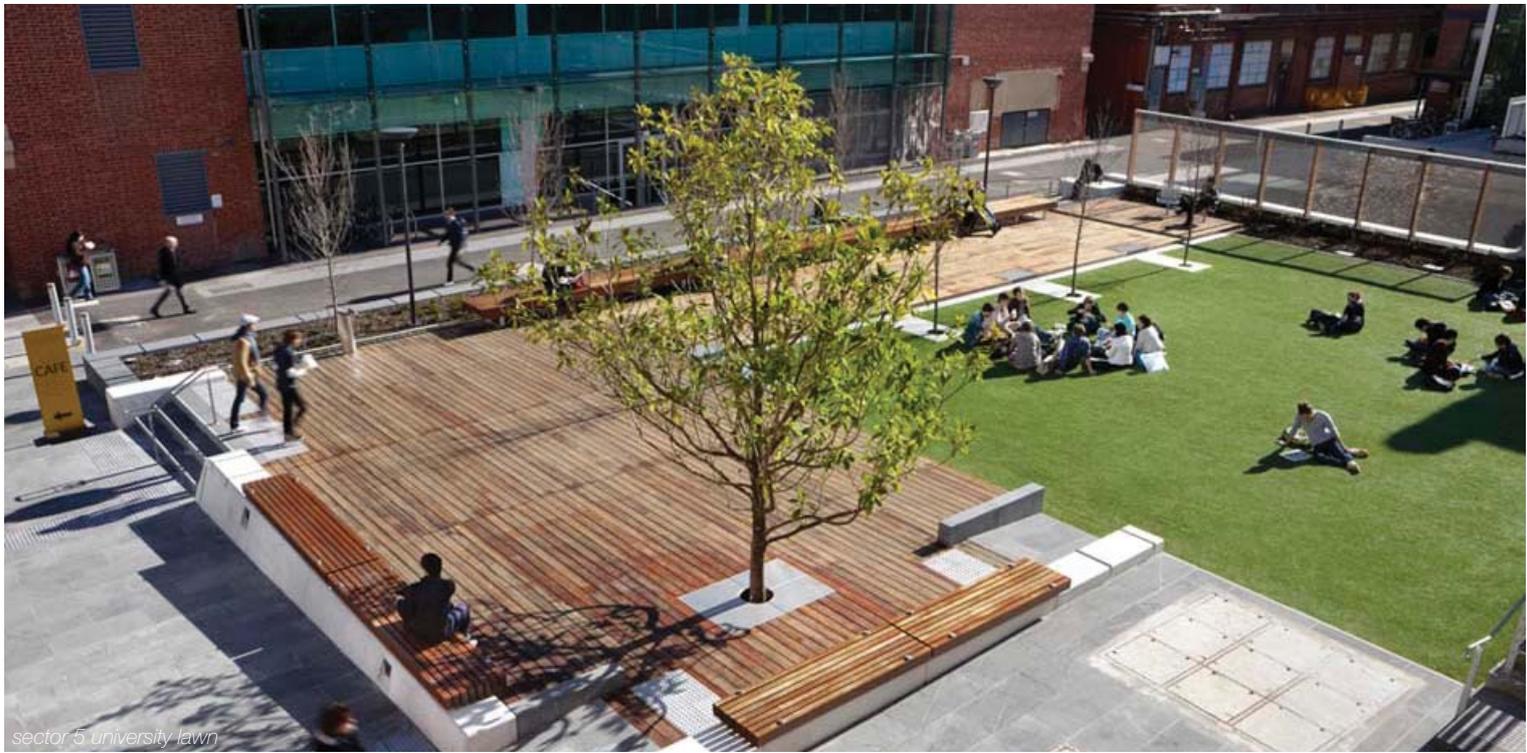
University Lawn provides a larger more open garden setting with artificial lawn, fountains, timber decks, landscaping and an avenue of trees. To the north and east the lawn is captured by the dramatic backdrop of the Old Gaol wall which sits on top of a high embankment along with an upper terrace known as the Belvedere. The Gaol wall is heavily scarred and textural, with a centrally located arched gateway and grand stairway connecting the upper and lower levels.

University Lawn is essentially a passive space for sitting, strolling, relaxation and social interaction. It is surrounded by visually interesting buildings and remnant historic structures. It also readily accessed from several directions as various campus pathways have been opened up and linked the space. The design incorporates a number of ESD initiatives including large underground storm water collection tanks, recycled timbers and LED lighting. Both the fountain and garden irrigation systems use recycled water collected from the site.

University lawn was once a gravel car park surrounded by degraded buildings and spaces. It is now a rediscovered and magical place with a rich history going back to the foundations of Melbourne.

*"The University Lawn project successfully adds a new, richly engaging urban venue that provides a moment of calm and delight within the city." AIA Urban Design jury 2010*

*"What was once an uninviting rear entrance to the campus is now a celebration of myriad building typologies that are stitched together by a series of successful urban landscape interventions." AIA Walter Burley Griffin Award national jury 2010*



sector 5 university lawn

