



## steel underground car park & oval

**location** st kilda road melbourne australia

**status** completed september 2009

**client** melbourne grammar school

**photography** john gollings

Founded in 1858, Melbourne Grammar School is one of the oldest denominational schools in Victoria. The South Yarra site is immediately recognisable, with its fine collection of nineteenth century bluestone buildings set in generous and picturesque landscaped grounds. More recently the School has built some outstanding contemporary buildings as it continues the staged implementation of the 1998 master plan.

The campus has a very distinctive spatial structure centred on three large interlinked ovals, Wadhurst, Steele and Main with most of the buildings and tree plantings held to the perimeter edges of the site. It is this simple but striking relationship between built-form to landscape, which is the hallmark of the campus.

The project involves the construction of a 200 car underground car park located under the Steele oval. It has been a long held ambition of the School to remove all parked cars from within the campus and thus significantly enhance amenity and safety. This is a compact campus with over 1150 students and 225 staff so space is precious. The campus is also subject to a complex range of planning and heritage controls, including some 25 buildings and landscape elements listed on the Heritage Victoria Register.

The car park has two identical levels of 100 cars with an off-set ramp for access. This produces an extremely efficient structure and parking layout. Vehicle access is from St Kilda Road but the ramp entry crosses through the Bromby Street retaining wall several metres east of the Schools ceremonial Barrett Gates (1927). This arrangement preserves the important

open vista from St Kilda Road across the Steele oval and driveway to the west Quadrangle building and forecourt. The entry ramp location also takes advantage of the raised level of the Steele oval above St Kilda Road thus minimising its visual impact.

The Steele oval has been rebuilt on top of the car park to seamlessly integrate it into the landscape and topographic form. The oval has been replaced with synthetic grass to provide an all weather surface and to reduce the School's overall watering requirements. Underground water storage tanks have been installed in two locations to best capture stormwater runoff. The tanks provide 500,000 litres of water storage linked into the irrigation systems for the Wadhurst and Main ovals which remain as natural turf.

The car park is accessed via two external stairs at the northern edge of the Steele oval. These stairs also provide daylight to the levels below ground along with planter beds to create a more welcoming arrival experience. Overall the car park has a high level of detail and finish inside and out, including stone facing to all of the peripheral elements of stairs, retaining walls and other trims. The mechanical system for the car park has been ducted under the main driveway with the vertical exhaust stack integrated into the end of the Lodge extension so as not to be seen at all.

*"Given that the prospect of an underground car park was mooted some 25 years ago, it is a memorable moment that it has come to fruition...it is an outstanding achievement for the School..." David temple, Bursar MGS 2009*

