



xavier college science & performing arts complex

location barkers road kew melbourne australia

status completed june 2008

client the society of jesus in victoria

photography john gollings

The Science and Performing Arts complex is a major new addition to the Xavier College campus. The commission for the project was won via a selected architectural design competition. Founded in the 1870's, Xavier College occupies a spectacular site on Barkers Road Kew. The school buildings are grouped on the brow of a prominent hill surrounded by an open landscape of sports grounds. The most prominent feature of the School is the copper domed 1930's Chapel, which can be seen for kilometres across the eastern suburbs. This together with the nineteenth century South and West Wing buildings forms a high quality architectural ensemble that is recognisably Xavier College.

The site for the Science and Performing Arts complex is located on the eastern boundary of the campus parallel with Charles Street and south of the Morris Wing. It is an elevated and prominent site with complex heritage and planning overlays. The site is split into 2 distinct precincts with Science to the north directly adjoining the main school buildings and the Performing Arts to the south. This gives both precincts a clear identity and address off the main arrival driveway serving the Chapel and South Wing.

The Science precinct is organised around a central courtyard as the main circulation and orientation space. The courtyard has an intriguing skewed geometry due to the rhomboidal shape of the site. It provides a sense of place and arrival for the science faculty. The main bank of 11 laboratories is

located to the east over 3 levels with direct links back into the Morris Wing and the main school beyond. A smaller Development Office contains the western edge of the courtyard reinforcing the dynamic plan form.

The Performing Arts precinct has been conceived as an inner 550 seat auditorium wrapped on two sides by transparent glazed foyers of a lower scale. These glazed circulation foyers face west and south to address the spectacular views and main arrival space. The auditorium takes advantage of the sloping site to embed the volume of the space into the topography thereby reducing its overall scale impact. This approach allows the building to knit well into the landscape by retaining the surrounding landform of grassy embankments and individual specimen trees.

The Science and Performing Arts building is a complex assemblage of several fractured forms of varying scales. The building has been sited to form an oblique "L" shaped open sided quadrangle with the South Wing and Chapel but of a lower scale. The new building is clearly a separate contemporary structure located in an extraordinary setting.

"...the architectural excellence of Peter Elliott and his colleagues is clearly on display...to deliver a fine facility which will be enjoyed by thousands of Xaverians in the years to come." Official opening ceremony July 2008

