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## **RMIT Swanston Academic Building [SAB] design reflects the site's centrality**

The very centrality of the RMIT Swanston Academic Building [SAB] site to the city of Melbourne became a defining element in Lyons architect's design for the building, shaping its footprint and form. And the sightlines from the building at each level played an integral part in the design of its portals, which connect the building to its surrounds.

Lyons director and RMIT alumnus, Adrian Stanic, said the idea of RMIT's pivotal role in the life of Melbourne became an overriding theme in the building's design.

"We saw the site as a focal point of the city and looked at how the SAB could create a dialogue with the other landmark buildings that define Melbourne. The process involved mapping lines from the site to these buildings.

"Using these lines we then created a computerized algorithm that generated the 3 dimensional shape and form of the building.

"We also put a boom lift on site and hoisted architectural photographer Dianna Snape up to photographically capture the vistas from the 11 levels of the building.

"The best viewpoints then became the location for the student "portals" on each level, which connect student activities inside the building with the surrounding cityscape.

"In this way we have created a design that integrates the building into the very heart of Melbourne architecturally, but also reflects and embraces the broader architectural legacy of the city," Mr Stanic said.

The colour palette from the building is also derived from a survey of the predominant colours of Melbourne.

With a Ground Floor Area of 35,000m<sup>2</sup>, the 11 storey building will form a significant part of RMIT University's "Swanston Street Precinct and will be a major addition to the City.

The scale and form of the SAB has been designed by Lyons to connect to the rest of the RMIT campus with "a sense of openness, transparency and energy".

The design reflects an extensive consultation process with a wide range of academic staff to gather information about their current (and future) learning and teaching methodologies (pedagogies) and the types of learning and teaching spaces that will enhance their teaching practice, particularly new technologies.

Student feedback also informed the shaping of the future teaching and learning spaces.

“SAB is designed to provide innovative teaching and learning facilities for the whole RMIT community as well as being the new home for the College of Business

“Business staff and students, who will be able to fully engage with the rest of the student and staff community on the City campus and have a richer university experience.

“SAB will introduce more student study and recreation spaces to the City campus.

“Student recreational areas and retail outlets selected to meet students’ needs and budgets will also form part of the Swanston Academic Building”, Mr Stanic said.

Some of the proposed spaces include simulated trading rooms, a network of informal student “portals” for collaboration and networking and rooftop learning spaces cantilevered over Swanston Street.

SAB will also be distinguished by sustainable design features and is targeting a 5 Star Greenstar rating. Water will be harvested off the roof for flushing toilets. In addition, natural light will filter into the building through horizontal atriums, which will reduce the use of electric lighting.

Contracts have been let for the construction of the Swanston Academic Building (SAB), RMIT’s biggest ever new teaching and learning facility. It is scheduled to be open for business in 2012.

**Features in brief:**

The multi-purpose Swanston Academic Building key features are:

- 35,000sqm of floor space and 11 levels (including basement)
- 12 lecture theatres, 64 teaching spaces and 10 specialist learning venues for the whole RMIT community
- New home for College of Business students and staff
- Two-storey cantilevered student portal that overhangs Swanston Street
- Nine additional double-height student portals for study and recreation, with landscaped indoor gardens and curated spaces for public art
- An innovative mix of teaching and office space on all levels of the building to encourage more interaction between staff and students
- Retail outlets on Swanston, A’Beckett and Stewart Streets
- High-performance façade with double glazing and sunshadows
- Greywater recycling, solar hot water and natural ventilation system

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