Property Services’ Newsletter

Dear Colleagues

This Newsletter provides information on key activities undertaken by Property Services during 2007 and also details the major capital works about to begin or currently in the planning stage. These achievements have been possible through the support of the University executive and the hard work of the staff within Property Services, both of which I sincerely appreciate.

As many of you will be aware, I will be leaving RMIT at the beginning of January to take up a new opportunity at the University of Melbourne. I have thoroughly enjoyed the nine years that I have spent in Property Services and I am proud of what has been achieved during that period. Being only a short distance north of Queensberry Street will enable me to keep a keen eye on developments at RMIT and watch many of the projects I have been involved with come to fruition. In many ways I am sad to be leaving at such a unique and exciting time in RMIT’s history but I am confident that Property Services is in good hands and I am excited about the new challenges that await me as the Vice Principal Property and Campus Services at Melbourne.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the RMIT community for their friendship and support over the past nine years and to wish you all a safe and happy Christmas and a rewarding and exciting 2008.

Best Regards

Chris White
Executive Director
Property Services
"Info Corner" / Building 22 Upgrade

The Office of Prospective Students is now operating successfully out of its new home at 'Info Corner' in Building 22. The new centre is RMIT’s face to Swanston Street and has seen a dramatic increase in prospective students seeking details of tertiary study options at RMIT.

This ground floor development and second floor refurbishment completed the first stage of this building which will now progress on to the second stage to encompass a total refurbishment of levels 3 and 4 and culminate in a new fifth level added to Building 22. This new level will feature a rooftop atrium space designed for seminars, conferences, receptions and special events while connecting to the existing facilities on Level 7 in Storey Hall.

Building 15 / Alumni Courtyard

Completed in time for Open Day the new lift, stair and walkway access to Building 15 and the Alumni Courtyard are getting quite a work out. Almost as much as the adjoining new basketball practice facility.

These works and the actual Courtyard itself were entered into this year's Melbourne Awards in the category of Community Organisation – Contribution to Community. The new construction works have opened up the campus to enable easier pedestrian traffic from Russell Street into the campus and from Latrobe Street through the campus into the Courtyard. The Courtyard provides a range of benefits to users including a historically significant and interesting place to visit and a quiet shaded area to relax, as well as a book-able venue for student and staff activities.

Building 14 Floor Upgrade/Infrastructure UPDATE

This project is to refurbish Building 14 with a total infrastructure upgrade ahead of the reuse of the facility for the consolidation of Schools in the SET Portfolio. The challenge is to undertake the necessary works whilst the building remains occupied. The upgrade is progressively reclaiming 3,500 sqm of previously unusable space.

The building’s façade works were completed in 2006 and in 2007 so too were the works to relocate the SET Portfolio Office staff to new accommodation on Level 12 and to provide new Bioscience Laboratories on Level 13.

Design work is underway for Level 8 and Level 11 for new facilities for Computer Science and Information Technology and in early 2008, Property Services is arranging the design for the fit-out of Level 7 for the School of Electrical & Computer Engineering.
RMIT Vietnam recently opened a new nine level building at 18A Ngo Tat To Street, Dong Da District to expand the Hanoi Campus.

RMIT Vietnam's President, Mr Michael Mann said “This building provides much needed teaching space for our rapidly increasing enrolments at the Hanoi campus of RMIT Vietnam. More than 800 students are now studying English, undergraduate and post-graduate programs in Hanoi. This new building doubles the space RMIT has available in Hanoi for program delivery and will be equipped with wireless infrastructure to create a flexible learning environment”

RMIT University’s Vice Chancellor and Chair of RMIT Vietnam, Professor Margaret Gardner, said "It is fitting that one of Vietnam’s newest universities and its only international University, should be located near the Temple of Literature, the site of the oldest university in Vietnam. It is also appropriate that RMIT Vietnam has opened this facility at Ngo Tat To Street, named after the respected journalist, novelist, literary critic and translator. It is fitting that the opening of this new facility coincides with RMIT Vietnam's first graduations in Hanoi and RMIT’s 120th anniversary”

Starting in 2001 with 30 students, RMIT Vietnam now boasts a dynamic student body of more than 3,800 including over 200 students from over 20 other countries in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.
MAJOR PROJECTS ABOUT TO BEGIN

Building 1 Upgrade

Building 1 turned 120 years old on 7 June 2007 and a number of its infrastructure components are unavoidably outdated. The upgrade project, which will see works commence shortly, will rectify this and also comprehensively improve the internal appearance and functionality of the complex in keeping with its role as the University’s Head Office.

The project will be implemented with full consideration to the fact that the building is a significant landmark for RMIT and indeed for the Melbourne CBD.

The works entail the complete internal refurbishment of Levels 01, 02, 03, the provision of a new central stair and improved internal circulation, a new passenger lift serving all levels, alterations to the rear of the building to open up the building and the courtyard to the north, removal of existing ceiling and walls on Level 03 to reinstate the original volumes of the central wing and an upgrade of all the building’s services to meet regulatory requirements. Construction activity will extend from about January 2008 until early 2009.

Graduate School of Business UPDATE

The Emily McPherson Building (B13), as the new accommodation for the Graduate School of Business will house students, alumni, faculty and adjunct faculty who are to be relocated from B108. The project will include the refurbishment of the Ethel Margaret wing to provide additional general classroom space. The refurbished building will also accommodate graduate programs for other portfolios.

The project is currently in contract documentation phase. The main contract works are scheduled to begin in 2008 for a planned completion in late 2009. Most of the occupants of the building have been decanted so that an early works contract can commence in December 2007.
The Design Hub

The Design Hub will form an exciting component of the mixed use ‘village’ to be created at the former CUB site on the section to be occupied by RMIT at the corner of Swanston and Victoria Streets.

This landmark facility will be a collaborative research environment for trans-disciplinary teams from RMIT and industry to work together to innovate by design. It will draw together design professionals, engineers, technologists, scientists, social scientists, entrepreneurs, government and the community and, in doing so will:

- raise awareness and disseminate use of design in industry;
- grow design capability in the Victorian economy and
- help develop new products, services and constructed environments and design futures.

Building 9 Upgrade ~ School of Applied Communication

Significant work will begin very soon on one of the University’s most ambitious recent projects — to extend Building 9 vertically by adding two more storeys.

The extension creates 2050m² additional space and the building will be the new consolidated home for the School of Applied Communication.

Whilst the works will involve some unavoidable disruption to campus routine, the benefits will far out weigh the short term inconvenience. These benefits include but are not limited to:

- the establishment of a discipline precinct for the School
- the co-location of the School’s support resources
- reduced time taken to journey between learning activities
- the reinforcement of the School’s identity with a specific ‘home’
- closer and more frequent contact between School staff and students.

MAJOR PROJECTS IN THE PLANNING STAGE
Consolidation of RMIT’s City Campus is taking a step closer with project planning now well underway for the development of RMIT’s vacant Swanston and A’Beckett Street sites.

Comprising some 35,000 square metres of floor space, wrapping around the historic ‘Oxford Scholar’ Hotel, it will be the new home for the Business Portfolio plus a major new RMIT teaching and learning centre. For Business students in particular the new location will provide greater access to student services and facilities.

State of the art teaching facilities and staff accommodation will be the hallmark feature of what will be the largest academic building project ever undertaken by the University.

The development will also bring a new energy and vibrancy to RMIT’s Swanston Street frontages by incorporating ‘student’ related commercial activities with pedestrian traffic to and from teaching spaces. The look of the location will be dynamic and eye-catching.

Works are expected to begin in 2009 for an anticipated opening in 2011.

ONGOING PROJECTS

Lecture Theatre Upgrade : Update

Since the last Newsletter, the Lecture Theatre Upgrade Program has incorporated additional work with flat floor classrooms as well as seating and carpeting for 4 theatres at Bundoora.

Over the 2007 Christmas New Year break an exciting new innovation will be installed in a number of lecture venues across the University. This system (from AMX Worldwide) provides lecturers with intranet links to AVS/ITS to obtain real-time interactive remote assistance in operating data projectors, PCs, document cameras, DVD players and VCR units or to remedy software/hardware difficulties.

Safety & Security Update

Additional Closed Circuit Television cameras have been installed in Bowen Street, Franklin Street and the B51 garage and additional units are planned for Buildings 22, 94 and possibly 48. These are hard-wired to the City Security Control Point and give an instantaneous image feed. New CCTV cameras have also been installed at Bundoora West and Brunswick campuses and are linked via the internet back to Security.

A Petty Theft Awareness Campaign was successfully implemented in the City with posters and electronic displays in the Libraries, cafeterias and other common use areas. Indications are that the theft of small, easily disposable personal items has reduced although diligence by staff and students is always necessary.
Campus Signage

A range of colourful, large and user-friendly signs and maps have been installed across RMIT this year. These have all been developed using the University’s new Signage User Guide and all present School tenancy details and directional instructions in a clear and consistent fashion. Signs range from small units at the doorways to buildings to large sky signs and free-standing front of campus installations such as the one (left) in Plenty Road at Bundoora West which stands ten metres in height.

ENERGY CONTRACT

Property Services is pleased to announce the successful tenderer for a new three year energy contract with Country Energy, commencing in 2008. Country Energy is a NSW State Government owned supplier, retailing electricity across the eastern states of Australia. RMIT has negotiated a significant Green Power component, with 15% of total energy supplied from accredited renewable sources in 2008, rising to 20% in 2009 and thereafter. The Green Power commitment by RMIT puts us at the same level as Monash University and ANU in terms of procurement of energy from alternative sources.

The tender process was managed by consultants Energetics and reviewed by the RMIT tender panel consisting of Property Services staff, including our Energy Manager and was overseen by external probity auditors.

The current electricity market has risen significantly and is very volatile due to the uncertainty of supply caused by the impact of the drought on the key hydro generators in New South Wales and Tasmania. RMIT was anticipating an increase in electricity costs of over 30% but due to a short period of confidence in the market, achieved an outcome over the next 3 years that is around 10% higher. This excludes the increased cost incurred for purchasing Green Power which comes at a higher cost than the normal power prices.

Another key feature of the tender was that the new contract also allows for RMIT’s choice of proprietary energy metering that further facilitates our cross-campus energy management.

As the imperative to reduce our ecological footprint continues, this contract forms a vital component of overall operations and a sustainable outcome for the University.
COMMERCIAL SERVICES

Following the passage of VSU legislation and the decisions made by RMIT Council as a result, Property Services has been busy transitioning various commercial services on our campuses from RMIT Union management to management by or on behalf of RMIT University.

A tender process was undertaken last year to determine a new operator for the Bundoora cafeterias and this new operator took over management of remodelled facilities effective with the beginning of the 2007 academic year. Informal feedback on the cafeteria operations is very positive but a survey will be conducted during first semester 2008 to fully gauge Bundoora Campus community satisfaction with the new operator and facilities.

The Bundoora Netball and Sports Centre has also been successfully tendered and Belgravia Leisure has been appointed to manage the facility for an initial period of three years, effective 12 November 2008. Users will continue to see a number of familiar faces but can also expect an increased number of new and exciting programs and activities. Property Services is confident that internal and external users of the facility will be happy with the services provided and will conduct a user satisfaction survey early in 2009. Any comments in the mean time can be addressed to Roy Notini on ext. 51770 or via e-mail.

STUDENT SPACES

Property Services will soon begin work on a number of student related spaces on our campuses.

Building 8, Level 3
The ex RMIT Union Shop space at the front of B8 will be renovated in Semester 1 to provide purpose designed administrative and other spaces for the SUC and to assist in consolidating services and facilities for students. The area will include a relocated Womyns Room and Queer Room as well as shared meeting and other spaces and will be in close proximity to the recently relocated and renovated Postgraduate Centre on the street level of Building 28.

Renovations to additional spaces to accommodate the RMIT Union are expected to be undertaken in second semester.

Bundoora
Building 204, which is the horseshoe shaped building close to the main cafeteria, will soon be renovated to accommodate the SUC, RMIT Union and recreational spaces for students. It is anticipated that this project will inject more life into the centre of the Campus and provide more convenient and consolidated student facilities. Other plans are progressing at Bundoora to locate the Hub in close proximity to the main cafeteria and further consolidate services for students.

Brunswick
The SUC have recently moved to the upper level of Building 514 and the vacated spaces on the ground floor have been renovated to accommodate the increased presence of Student Services on this campus.

A number of other student related projects are being planned, all of which together will considerably improve the student experience at RMIT.
Apart from the significant project at Building 15 which was completed this year, works to enable disability access to all buildings are planned for progressive implementation throughout the University. In 2007 other relevant works included:

- Emergency Systems at Bs 18 and 89
- Installation of a compliant entranceway to B57
- Disability facilities at B19
- Disability facilities at B22

All new building projects incorporate full disability access.

Recommendations from the University’s Disability Advisory Committee are taken into consideration with regard to future capital works programs.

In an effort to further improve communication on Property Services matters, we are expanding our use of one page on our website to provide links to summarised updates on current projects.

Readers can also look up details on a number of Projects which have been concluded.

Project Summaries typically indicate the various consultants engaged for the design, preparatory and buildings phases, the relevant Property Services Project Manager and Client Relations Manager, costing detail and timeline milestones.

See the link/s @: http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=fwt54i55s9fe