November 2006

**Property Services’ Newsletter**

This Newsletter provides information on the status of 2006 capital projects and details how Property Services is implementing actions under the Strategic Plan 2010’s Priority 7 Objective – *Develop facilities and systems to support and sustain excellence in education and research.*

In particular the delivery of the capital projects is focussed to address Action 1: Improve and consolidate our built infrastructure, in particular our student, research and teaching and learning facilities, to provide a stimulating, sustainable and safe learning and working environment.

Property Services is excited about the challenge of an increased capital budget with considerable planned growth to 2010. This will be reflected in the scope and nature of many of the works you will see across the University during 2007, some of which are detailed in this Newsletter.

Once again, in promoting the role of Property Services to you, I commend the continuing hard work of Property Services staff, which is focussed on improving facilities for staff and students.

Christopher White
Executive Director
Property Services
IMPROVED STUDENT FACILITIES

“Front Door”

With the completion this year of extensive works at Building 22, the University will have an obvious Front Door designed to attract potential students to an integrated Information Centre at the physical location on the City Campus that is logically the first point of contact for the campus – the corner of Latrobe and Swanston Streets.

Diagonally opposite a heavily trafficked exit for Melbourne Central, this location readily lends itself to the improved marketing of our programs by maximising the vantage point of this high exposure site. Imagine how many commuters observe this corner from passing trams each day!

The project is utilising the talents of Consultants Ashton Raggatt McDougall who were responsible for the neighbouring building of Storey Hall.

The choice of green highlights for the Swanston Street Canopy, extends the design philosophy for green which Professor Raggatt devised originally for Storey Hall and which draws upon the colour’s historic significance for RMIT. Amongst other things, green was appropriate for Storey Hall when it was known as Hibernian Hall with its Irish connection and also for the Hall’s one time tenants from the women’s suffragette movement (which is also where Storey Hall’s connection with purple comes in).

More recently, green features on the University’s promotional material in print and outdoor advertising displays.

Accordingly, we anticipate a similarly eye-catching physical appearance to the new facility whilst retaining the heritage integrity of the building’s facade. Certainly at Ground Level the Front Door will draw attention to itself.

Additionally the works will allow an opportunity to provide compliance with respect to disability access and also to meaningfully address the building’s backlogged maintenance program.

Building 8 Café

The Building 8 café space has been widely hailed as the University’s “Town Square” for the main City Campus but, whilst it is an inviting and popular place to be, it has not had a meaningful physical interface to its surrounding urban environment.

The current Café 8 Project Stage 1 is complete. Stage 2 is in design and will open up space to view and create outdoor balcony areas to Swanston Street. Furniture improvements are also planned in this Stage.
Library Upgrade

Thanks in large part to the use of modern furniture, the look and feel of the University’s Libraries have changed remarkably. The modular design and compatible tones of the chairs and tables can be configured to suit students’ requirements who like to be able to choose from individual study stations, intimate small syndicate settings and/or more open arrangements for larger groups. The “jelly bean” tables look equally good on their own or nestled together in organic clusters. This style of furniture is to become the standard across all the University’s Libraries. Professor Gardener opened the upgraded Bundoora and City Libraries on the 4th and 5th of April. A post occupancy evaluation will be conducted in respect of the renovations, which were funded from increased HECS fees.

Building 15 / Alumni Courtyard

Construction works are underway on the link which will revitalise the use of the Alumni Courtyard facility. Ultimately Building 15 will be provided with an upgraded disabled access but the key feature of the works will be to improve access to the courtyard by introducing an entryway through the bluestone wall which was once the rear of the Old Police Garage complex. The expected date of completion is March 2007.

Building 14 Floor Upgrade/Infrastructure

Eventually this project will 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 will reclaim 3,500 sqm of currently unusable space

In 2006, Property Services is arranging the design for the fitout of Level 7 for the School of Electrical & Computer Engineering

Users will have already noticed the works on the B14 façade

The windows and frames are being replaced and new shading structures introduced to greatly enhance the appearance of this prominent aspect of the campus and to provide some passive thermal control.

Capitol Theatre Upgrade

The Capitol Theatre and its unique lighting scheme was designed in the 1920s by a team comprising Walter Burley Griffin, his wife Marion Mahoney Griffin and local architects Peck & Kempton and was hailed as the work of “a genius in resource and an artist in effects”. Nonetheless, the theatre presents ongoing maintenance challenges for Property Services.

Recent works include the repair and repainting of the ceiling and walls of the theatre’s auditorium and foyer. Additional refurbishment to this large lecture facility includes new seating for the lower half of the auditorium and extensive new carpeting to the auditorium and foyer.
Another project on the drawing board this year is the design and some preparatory activity to prepare for actual construction works in 2007/2008 at Building 13. The Graduate School of Business will be provided with a new home in a facility which will house students, alumni, faculty and adjunct faculty who are to be relocated from B108. When not in use by the GSB, the refurbished building will accommodate a host of commercial teaching and conference activities.

Lecture Theatre Upgrade : Update

Since the last Newsletter, the Lecture Theatre Upgrade Program has addressed a further 12 major refurbishments and the provision of a new theatre (@ B56.4). Apart from the refurbishment program, ongoing maintenance works are routinely carried out and will continue. Property Services’ current focus for the University’s audio-visual facilities is to incorporate more modern projection equipment into flat floor teaching spaces. Nearly as sophisticated as that in the lecture theatres, the new equipment in classrooms will greatly enhance the presenters’ ability to convey data to students. Further ahead is our involvement in providing a range of collaborative learning spaces.

SUSTAINABILITY

Escalator Automation Project

RMIT has taken advantage of recent technological developments within the vertical transportation industry to introduce an energy efficient overlay control system for some of the University’s escalators. This system allows an automated starting and stopping function activated by traffic flows. What this means is that when there is no demand for an escalator after two minutes where no traffic is detected, the escalator will automatically ramp down to 1/3 of its normal speed for 60 seconds, then shut itself down, reducing energy use and wear and tear on the escalator.

Property Services, with consulting and contracting assistance from Sinclair Knight Merz, Motion Control Engineering and Independent Lifting Services, is currently installing this system on four escalators in Building 8. It is anticipated that substantial savings in both energy use and wear and tear will be the result. Calculations show that energy consumption will be reduced by up to 42% and wear and tear will also be reduced by a similar margin extending the life of the escalators by 8-10 years.

The final design of the bollards is based on an original concept from Property Services’ Senior Project Manager Graeme Martin with input from People & Culture's Gary Phillipson. Direction indicators are located on the top of the bollards; when a green arrow is seen it indicates an 'entry point', the arrow indicates the direction of travel for that escalator, however when a flashing red disc is seen, a 'no entry' or exit path from the escalator is indicated.

Should the escalator be stopped as a passenger approaches an 'entry point', detectors located in the bollards will "see" the passenger and gently ramp the escalator up to speed.
Disability Access

Property Services is progressively working towards ensuring that disabled access is provided to all buildings.

Relevant capital works for 2006 are as follows:

- Building 15 stair/lift access (due to finish in December)
- New limited mobility lift installed to Building 212
  (completed in February)
- New limited mobility lift installed to Building 203 (completed in April)

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.

Progress on City Campus Cooling Plant Project.

Following the successful installation and commissioning of a replacement chiller last year, works continue to extend cooling capacity for most of the larger teaching spaces on the main City Campus. Along with the more extensive coverage, the replacement systems will also be more energy efficient. By the end of 2006 and with the expenditure of $2.6M, it is expected that this upgraded air-conditioning system will service Buildings 8, 10, 12 & 14 and be extended to enable servicing of Buildings 5, 7 & 9 in the future. Users were informed and consulted with regard to unavoidable disruption to traffic in Bowen Street as a consequence of the works.

City Campus Building Automation System (BAS) Upgrade

Over time the University has installed 7 different BAS systems across various buildings on the City Campus. Whilst each of them has been useful in supporting the buildings they service, Property Services is moving towards a single centralised system. This will provide a much faster and more economical and efficient facility that monitors and automatically adjusts several items of plant across the whole campus. The project began last year and in 2006 a further $0.5M will be expended. The benefits of the project have begun to be felt already with improved levels of client comfort but the whole project will not conclude until December 2007.
Property Services is currently undertaking the upgrade of the University’s existing CCTV systems with a state-of-the-art computer-controlled system. Additional cameras are being installed to a number of external locations at various city campus sites. Our Security personnel will have a far superior system in the support of their response to any emergencies.

Property Services Website and the Integrated Infrastructure Plan

Property Services’ website is undergoing a makeover.

One of the pages now features a link to the current Integrated Infrastructure Plan. This document has also been made available to all Heads of Schools on CD. It was developed with considerable consultation and input from the University community and is refreshed annually to outline the planning for projects for the capital works required to achieve this.

More information on the foregoing projects is available in the Plan, as is information on future projects.

Campus Signage

Since the finalisation of the RMIT Signage User Guide at http://mams.rmit.edu.au/3nu6vngqhw6j6.pdf, Property Services continues to work towards updating and standardising the University’s signage. Significant signage projects include a new “sky sign” on Building 14 and a replacement for the Building 8 canopy.