

**Walert House**  
**RMIT Bundoora West Student Accommodation**  
**- Fact Sheet -**

**Project Name:** RMIT Bundoora West Student Accommodation

**Client:** Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)

**Architect:** Richard Middleton Architects (RMA)

**Budget:** \$52.5 million (Australian dollars)

**Start Date:** February 2014

**Completion Date:** February 2016

**Location:** McKimmies Road, Bundoora Victoria Australia 3083

**About the Building**

372 beds

174 single bedroom apartments

3 x 3 bedroom apartments

45 x 4 bedroom apartments

9 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant beds

**Facilities**

RMIT Bundoora features some great common areas with a resident lounge with TV, pool table, and table tennis; a gourmet kitchen with dining tables and chairs; two themed game zones: The Den and The Deck; learning spaces with project rooms and video conferencing; dedicated postgraduate club-style lounge area; and an outdoor terrace with BBQ.

To manage the facility, RMIT has appointed UniLodge a professional management company. UniLodge is a specialist operator of student accommodation providing innovative and responsible pastoral care.

Currently, there are 5500 full-time and 1200 part-time students studying at Bundoora – from vocational education and undergraduate, to postgraduate research. Programs include health and medical sciences, science, engineering and education. The new 11,000m<sup>2</sup> facility include:

- **The Village Hall:** combines the functions of common room/shared kitchen/ TED Talks and Discursive Zone, plus ample study and relaxation space
- **The Living Room:** includes dedicated themed game zones – The Den and The Deck
- **The Postgraduate Research Hub:** dedicated space for postgraduates incorporating a club-style lounge area, with a distinct look and feel, and study niches for individuals or small groups

- **The Project Zone:** dedicated informal learning space that includes a project room and meeting rooms with video conferencing
- **The Pit Stop:** provides an opportunity for all students to touch base with reception, guests and each other
- **The Gourmet Kitchen:** a space for group gourmet cooking on Level One, plus a Veggie Patch on campus to access fresh produce
- **The Communal Laundry:** provides commercial washers and dryers in a social space that is central to all residents
- **Secure resident car park:** feature lighting, CCTV, boom gate access and can be rented by resident students for a fee from RMIT University

Other features of the development include:

- An urban plaza to McKimmies Road
- Integrated landscaping, including sensitive treatment of the Keelbundoora Scar Trees and significant existing red gums
- A façade, featuring powder coated aluminum and zinc cladding.

## **Materials Used**

**Façade** - black zinc and powder coated aluminum with bronze forms.

**Hub Structure** - Laminated Veneer Lumbar (LVL) Blackbutt or Tallowwood timber.

**Interiors** - aluminum skirting boards, polished concrete floors in common areas.

## **About the Structure**

RMIT Bundoora West Student Accommodation (BWSA) is built around a social and educational central 'core hub' with two accommodation wings branching out from this. The hub is a timber structure, using laminated veneer lumbar (LVL), while the accommodation wings are clad in zinc and powder coated aluminum. The central hub is a double-height space for presentations, functions and includes a cinema screen that is concealed in the ceiling. The building sits within an Aboriginal heritage trail and surrounded by 400-year-old red gums and scarred trees and located in the Northwest sector of the Bundoora campus and is bordered by McKimmies Road. RMA worked closely with the Project Arborist to ensure appropriate tree projection zones for these trees, some of which hold particular cultural significance to the local indigenous community.

RMIT BWSA, operated by Unilodge, provides accommodation for 372 students and is the University's first on campus accommodation building. The broad mix of unit types, single bedrooms, share rooms and apartments for undergraduate and postgraduate students, offer a genuine choice to students and appeal to those remaining on campus over the course of their studies.

## **About the Exteriors**

RMIT BWSA's façade is clad with black zinc and powder-coated aluminum with bronze powder forms. The central hub's exposed wooden beams make a striking statement when viewed from different angles.

The building forecourt has a large outdoor wooden deck and around the future retail space, within the window pop outs, are timber seats for students to enjoy.

The building achieved a 5-star Greenstar design rating. The building uses thermal chimneys, window actuators, solar hot water systems and harvesting of rainwater. Rainwater harvesting is used for toilet flushing, laundry and landscape irrigation. Reduced temperature warm water distribution is used to reduce ongoing loop losses. Water efficient fixtures and fittings have been installed.

## **About the Interiors**

RMA has used a lot wood throughout the interiors, including the main staircase and corridors that provide a welcoming and inviting space for those living within the building.

Tasmanian oak flooring is used within the central core hub and main stairwell that snakes its way up through the building's core. Plywood is used throughout the hub's ceiling and common areas.

Also, plywood lines all corridor walls throughout the building and has been used on shared kitchen ceilings and within the interior walls of apartments.

The Hub's timber structure is exposed internally and can be viewed from the street as well from different levels.

We considered the residences as a mini community with a distinct set of functions and how that community will interact with the broader campus community.

We achieved a degree of privacy whilst also providing amenities such as acoustic separation, abundant natural lighting, thermal comfort and safety.

All of this was delivered with a focus on using wood throughout the building challenging conventional student housing accommodations and how a building interacts with nature and natural products such as wood.

## History of Area

Building sits along Aboriginal heritage trail - **Keelbundoora Scarred Trees and Heritage Trail** - named after a Wurundjeri clan ancestor. As a child in 1835 he was present at the signing of the Batman Treaty, which marked European colonists' arrival. Keelbundoora's descendants helped create this trail. It leads from the café near building 202 out to plenty road via the lake and frog pond.

Situated near Red gums that are well over 400 years old.

This tree shows evidence of three different scarrings. The original scar may have been of cultural origin, but later scarring – probably caused by fire – has obscured the evidence.

This woodland used to have a sparse cover of red gums over scattered wattles, with a dense ground layer of grasses and forbs, such as kangaroo grass and yam daisy. Yam daisy tubers were a staple Aboriginal food.

The area once had kangaroos, goannas, snakes, birds of prey, ground-dwelling birds, and invertebrates such as beetles, ants and grasshoppers. Local Friends of the Bundoora Red Gums Group is currently restoring the area to its original appearance.

Source:

<http://bit.ly/1qtqKKE>

## 5-Star Green Rating Design

- **Environment and Sustainability:** the building achieved a 5-star Greenstar design rating and showcases advanced environmental features including:
  - Solar-boosted hot water
  - Underground storm water retention tank and separate rainwater storage and reuse
  - A large landscape Swale – a water harvesting channel built on the contour of the landscape, for passive water management
  - Motion detector controlled lighting/air conditioning in common areas
  - An allowance for future connectivity to tri-gen electricity ([RMIT Sustainable Urban Precincts Program](#)).

All taps rated to 6-star minimums

**Key Partners**

Client – Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)

Architect – Richard Middleton Architects

Builder – BUILT

Project Manager- DCWC

Documentation – Detail 3

Structural & Civil Engineer – Bonacci Group

Mechanical, Electrical, Communications, Security, Acoustics Fire and Hydraulics –  
Norman Disney Young

Landscape – TCL

Building Surveyor – PLP

Signage & Wayfinding – Buro North

Arborist / Arboriculture – Andrew Long & Associates

Cultural Heritage – Andrew Long & Associates

**Software Used**

AutoCAD

Revit

Adobe Creative Suite

**Professional Photography Credits**

Dianna Snape

[dianna@diannasnape.com.au](mailto:dianna@diannasnape.com.au)

[www.diannasnape.com.au](http://www.diannasnape.com.au)