



The Gipson Commons, St Michael's Grammar School, St Kilda

Project Details

Client: St. Michael's Grammar School
Approx. Value: \$20m
Floor Area: 6000 m²
Completed: 2016

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Awards

Association for Learning Environments
Australasia, An Education Initiative,
a Design Solution for an Innovative
Program, Commendation, 2016

Architectus has completed a new K-Year 12 educational building for St Michael's Grammar School, known as The Gipson Commons.

Rising over three levels The Gipson Commons includes spaces for Knowledge, Science, Food Technology and School Café within an urban context of adjacent apartments, townhouses and individual residences amid a busy road.

At ground level the building works seamlessly with the ground plane of the School campus – revealing a cafeteria space that is almost part of the landscape – a space for refuelling, recreation, learning and social interaction.

The stairway to the upper levels marks the transition into more dedicated spaces for learning. The uppermost floors of the building are dedicated to a hybrid Science/Knowledge facility, where practical areas are defined by the need for specialist services and the interstitial space can be used by class groups, individual learning and group work with reflective zones located away from social 'centres'.

These 'spaces for possibilities' are premised on the Balinese House – consisting of a spacious courtyard (atrium) with small pavilions (pods), and ringed by a wall (façade). These visually and acoustically screened pods are the structural framework and also provide a further array of learning environments and opportunities. This is not a single building but a neighbourhood of purposeful spaces.

The dual-level blending of Science Technology and Knowledge is part of a reimagining of Science through 'socialising' it and making it more attractive to students by seamlessly combining research with experimentation and discussion so that teaching and learning synergies are fully supported and encouraged.

The central atrium 'connects' the specialist and general learning spaces, promoting 'possibilities' through varied and targeted use of space. This central space is the physical manifestation of "The Commons" as an area that is used and enjoyed by all.