

# Learning Environments Australasia 2017 Awards

Melbourne Uni's 'imaginative and sophisticated' Arts West wins the 10th LEA Awards for excellence in educational facilities

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**M**elbourne University's Arts West Redevelopment has been declared the overall winner of this year's awards. Designed by Victorian architectural firms ARM and Architectus, Arts West won the top honour from a field of 72 entries from Australia, New Zealand and Singapore.

The judges noted that Arts West was "imaginative and sophisticated architectural and instructional design at its best – a triumph at multiple scale levels and across many domains. It combines the best of contemporary museum learning with collaborative studio based learning, and achieves a Five Star Green Star rating."

Arts West also won Category 5: An Education Initiative or a Design Solution Innovative Program, and was commended in Category 2: New Construction / New Individual Facility.

Learning Environments Australasia (LEA) is the peak body advocating for quality and innovation in learning environments to enhance student outcomes. Its membership includes over 700 educators, architects, designers, planners and policy makers.

"With new research showing that quality learning environment design can improve student learning, the awards are now more important than ever," said Deb O'Riley, Chair of LEA.

"The Awards showcase the design and use of engaging and innovative learning spaces and programs to improve learning outcomes for students. They support the questioning and challenging of our current practices, to ensure we continue to strive for improvement and excellence in educational facilities."

### Category 1

New Educational Facility Construction/Entire Educational Facility

### Winner

Deakin University CADET  
Gray Puksand

### Citation

This project represents a best practice approach in learning environment design. A collaborative design process including workshops with educators and benchmarking exercises to establish a 'new learning model' is indicative of how learners and learning drove the design process. The ongoing learning and development around an ideal process was made evident through the decision to include educational leaders in all consultation. The inclusion of a TAFE / industry liaison in the consultation process demonstrates a big picture perspective on educational planning and how the consultation process evolved to achieve optimal outcomes in the tertiary engineering context. Overall this project demonstrates how the design process can be leveraged to serve as a



Deakin University CADET



Tarawera High School

change management exercise, with learners and learning at the fore.

The submission demonstrated a strong understanding of the specific educational priorities and the predominant pedagogical objectives and explored in detail how the design responds to these. There was equal attention paid to both pedagogy and architecture in the submission.

Comments on large floorplates and column grids demonstrate a clear understand of architectural elements that affect capacity to deliver good pedagogical outcomes. The emphasis on 'purposeful flexibility' is commendable – the images demonstrate spaces that are activity based with a good balance of enclosed and open space. The aesthetic aligns with the engineering context through an industrial shell tempered by soft furnishings and edgy finishes. The broad range of materials and finishes as well as the exposed services and

structural elements ensure the building can serve as a tool for authentic learning.

### Commendation

Tarawera High School  
RTA Studio Ltd

### Citation

Familiarity is an indefinable element in achieving a sense of wellbeing; often it is recognised as one of the finest qualities of artistic endeavor. Creating emotional links depends on the creator having real understanding of the people who are affected by their work.

The students, staff and broader Tarawera community live in a particular place and have needs which reflect the complexities of challenging social conditions. RTA Studio is commended for achieving that special sense of place which provides true inspiration for its community.



# buildings and grounds



## Category 2

New Construction / New Individual Facility

### Winner

Carey Baptist Grammar School Centre for Learning and Innovation  
*Hayball Architects*

### Citation

The Carey Baptist Grammar School Centre for Learning & Innovation designed by Hayball, is an outstanding example of the fusion of architectural design with future-orientated pedagogy and rigorous design and planning process.

The architecture for the centre evolved from a detailed brief of defined education principles developed for the school's future. The collaborative design approach embraced participation by the school community to create contemporary learning environments which promote the schools vision for learning. The design supports the school's goal of using positive education to develop students who are well informed, independent, motivated learners.

There is a focus on best practice teaching and learning in information, science and literature in an inviting environment that provides flexibility to how students learn.

The centre includes a library, science, humanities and event spaces within a five-level facility in the heart of the school campus. This provides a variety of spaces for large and small group co-operative learning for individual reflection, and purpose built spaces, such as the Information Resource Centre, audio visual Imaginariums, UN and Cabinet Rooms and Science areas. The 4 Star Green Star design communicates its ESD initiatives through static and interactive displays to extend their practical application benefits to enhance learning and research opportunities within the curriculum.

The design shows a deep understanding of the project brief, pedagogical thinking and its spatial manifestation to address the challenges of multi-level education to create meaningful physical and cross curriculum connections to reflect the ways the curriculum is delivered in a blended learning environment.

### Commendation

Arts West Redevelopment: The University of Melbourne.  
*ARM + Architectus*

### Citation

The jury of the Category 2 awards is pleased to commend the University of Melbourne Arts West Redevelopment, designed by Architectus and ARM Architecture of Melbourne. It is commended for the extraordinary depth and emotional responsiveness of its design to the Object-based learning pedagogy of the faculty.

### Commendation

The Margaret McRae Centre  
*Woods Bagot*

### Citation

The jury of the Category 2 awards is pleased to commend The Margaret McRae Centre designed by Woods Bagot of Melbourne. It is commended for its architectural elegance that gives a much anticipated glimpse of the next generation of learning space design and future pedagogies.





*Dandenong South Primary School, Junior Centre*



*Ave Maria College, The Mary Centre*



*Cathedral School of St Anne & St James 5/6 Learning Neighbourhood & STEM Facility*

### Category 3

Renovation / Modernisation Over \$2m

#### Winner

studioFive  
PTID

#### Citation

The University of Melbourne and PTID have developed a pedagogy-driven design that accommodates teaching and learning spaces for an unknown future. Although this statement seems implausible, the project is underpinned by an extensive evidence-based brief development and design process.

The existing office building belies the variety of new interior spaces, and their inherent adaptability – achieved by collocating different spaces with dual purposes. A variety of group sizes are accommodated, while spaces designed for specialised subject areas can serve multiple purposes through strategic timetabling. These purposefully activated spaces exist adjacent to an internal “piazza, a common meeting and informal learning area where generative and creative thinking is fostered”.

The result is a teaching, research and engagement centre for the Graduate School of Education that exemplifies the positive impacts of space design upon pedagogy. Creativity, productivity and sustainability underpin a design that promotes imaginative thinking. This conceptual planning model provides practical spaces, with the long-term goal of promoting knowledge creation through ongoing data collection for further research.

To reinforce the distinct purpose and use of each area, careful consideration has been given to the function of spaces and their aesthetic. From large activity spaces to a more domestic scale for quiet retreat, a variety of architectural scales has been achieved. A theatrical ceiling, detailed in an intricate pattern of timber elements, provides a welcoming core that unifies the concept.

This design challenges preconceived notions of educational spaces and speaks to the future of education through its reconfigurability and intuitive use.

### Commendation

Ave Maria College, The Mary Centre  
Hayball Architects

#### Citation

The Mary Centre at Ave Maria College is an impressive example of purposeful and generative consultation. The narratives of education and architecture weave together to prompt and inspire educational transformation while honouring the existing routines of the senior school. The shift toward contemporary teaching and learning is well served by the Hayball design.

### Category 4

Renovation / Modernisation Under \$2m

#### Winner

Dandenong South Primary School, Junior Centre  
Hayball Architects

#### Citation

The insertion of teaching spaces into the gymnasium has been achieved in such a way as to exploit the unique opportunities this larger envelope affords, with respect to planning and spatial qualities.

The footprint of the existing building has been overlaid with a new programme of spaces facilitating a flexible, interconnected environment accommodating a wide variety of activities at a range of group sizes.

Openness, flexibility and connectivity are balanced with the creation of clearly defined ‘purposeful’ spaces and carefully considered acoustics.

The generosity of facility is supported by shared usage, both within the school and with the local community.

The challenges of converting a deep-planned, barnlike building into comfortable, functional series of smaller-scale spaces has been met with broad distribution of natural light, air flow, heating and cooling.

The flexibility inherent in the design acknowledges that, while currently accommodating grade 2, other year levels could easily feel at home without major amendment. Given the ‘loose fit’ of the new work to





Arts West, University of Melbourne

to provide two additional classrooms has been used as a catalyst to transform the learning environment for Years 5 and 6 at the Cathedral School of St Anne & St James. The project supports new directions in teaching and creates engaging and varied learning settings.

#### Category 5

An Education Initiative or a Design Solution for an Innovative Program

#### Winner

Arts West, University of Melbourne  
ARM + Architectus

#### Citation

The dominant narrative of the Arts West redevelopment was the notion of the Wunderkammer – or Cabinet of Curiosities – designed to create a sense of wonder through the artful juxtaposition of diverse museum collections amidst an assortment of different space typologies.

In as much as these new spaces can support traditional modes of instruction, they have been designed to scaffold increasingly active modes of instruction that promote interaction between staff and students and create exciting opportunities for team teaching. A focus on abundant natural light, good lines of sight and generous proportions facilitates human connection and movement, and the capacity to easily configure collaborative, seminar and small group formats ensures that all disciplines and programs are engaged with the opportunities offered by the new build.

This memorable pallet of spaces is the product of iterative rounds of consultation and a rigorous process of prototyping. Described by the architects as having ‘good bones’, this Five Star Green Star building has a robust base that can adapt over time to accommodate new ways of teaching, future technologies and changing class sizes.

This is imaginative and sophisticated architectural and instructional design at its best—a triumph at multiple scale levels and across many domains.

#### Commendation

The Hive  
CPG Consultants Pte Ltd

#### Citation

The Hive provides 56 teaching spaces arranged organically in a vertical structure providing a solution which will promote discussion and interest for both its architectural statement and promotion of modern teaching methods and collaborative learning.

The project encourages interaction between students and staff with generous circulation spaces and atrium at the focus of activity. Around the perimeter, 12 towers form a stack



The Hive



Learning Space at Sacred Heart Primary School, Tatura

the building shell, a more significant reworking would also be relatively easy to accomplish.

The project offers an exemplar of creative re-use of an existing building, and of a carefully crafted and engaging built environment facilitating a thoughtful, progressive learning environment.

#### Commendation

Cathedral School of St Anne & St James 5/6 Learning Neighbourhood & STEM Facility  
Stephen de Jersey Architect Pty Ltd

#### Citation

What might have been a conventional project



Presbyterian Ladies' College –  
Beth Blackwood Senior School and Quad



Eastwood Primary School



Extension of Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

of circular teaching spaces, tapering inward towards the base.

#### Commendation

Transformation of Learning and Learning Space at Sacred Heart Primary School, Tatura

Trish Miller, Self Employed Consultant & Catholic Education Sandhurst

#### Citation

This project exemplifies research informed participatory (re)design in a school setting. What sets it apart is that this process continues to play a role in the evolution of teaching and learning practice in this community—which is surely the heart of what it means to engage in sustainable educational innovation.

#### Category 6

Landscaping / Outdoor Learning Area

#### Winner

Presbyterian Ladies' College – Beth Blackwood Senior School and Quad  
MCDF Architects

#### Citation

The PLC Beth Blackwood School and Quad, designed by MCDF architects in

close collaboration with the broader school community was developed to improve the connectedness with the Middle School and Cafeteria as well as make improved use of the valuable central hub.

The Quad development has resolved the disparate levels surrounding the original space with the clever use of decking and tiered seating, combining passive recreation opportunities with fluid movement between surrounding buildings. In addition, adjoining learning spaces can be opened up to allow their use as inside/outside spaces during school events.

The school philosophy is to prepare students for the world beyond PLC, recognising the growing independence of senior students. The Quad fosters this philosophy of a transition period by providing benches and tables in covered areas, a variety of seating options including natural turf, encouraging group study and social interaction in a tertiary style environment.

A timber podium complete with audio capabilities adds to the flexibility of the Quad, allowing the school community to gather in the space for assemblies and other large group activities.

The use of natural turf is a wonderful feature of the Quad. It serves not only as a space for students to relax on a cool, soft and natural

surface but also as a heat sink in the very heart of the school.

#### Commendation

Eastwood Primary School  
RB Landscapes

#### Citation

The Eastwood Primary School Central Courtyard provides a rich variety of activities and learning opportunities for the students and a connection with the broader school community through their involvement for the duration of the project. Even to the point of getting their hands dirty!

#### Commendation

Extension of Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve  
CPG Consultants Pte Ltd

#### Citation

The Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve has been developed as an outdoor education learning park and research centre through sensitive and sophisticated insertions into this fragile ecosystem. This provides an excellent example of how large numbers of people can be brought into a natural environment without creating a negative impact. **ET**