



School with a river running by

In 1873 approximately 156 acres of land on the right bank of the Yarra River, known at the time as the Yarra-Yarra River, was permanently reserved for public park and recreation to be designated as Richmond Park.

The City of Richmond was appointed to manage the lands in 1948 and in 1967 an area of around six acres of the park was reserved as a site for a state high school. In 1970, a further 2 roods and 34 perches was added to provide for a boathouse for the high school, bringing the total land area of what is now Melbourne Girls College to 7 acres and 34 perches in the old measurements (28,500 sq metres).

The long narrow site on the west bank of the river is bounded to the north by Bridge Road, to the west by Yarra Boulevard and slopes steeply down to the river on the east. A popular walking/bike path passes through the school's property in front of the new boatshed, causing walkers and riders to stop and watch for a minute or two when boats are being taken down to the river or returned to the boatshed.

In Melbourne's early days, when a local wit suggested that it should be renamed Smellbourne, the Yarra was a noxious sewer. These days it flows through a beautiful and tranquil linear part that extends from the city for more than 40 km to Warrandyte State Park and beyond.

The straight stretch of water in front of the school is the final dash to the finishing line at the Bridge Road Bridge for the Annual Head of the Yarra rowing regatta when 200 crews rowing eights, from all parts of Australia and overseas, compete in an 8.6 km handicap race from the CBD.

The boatshed development presented significant site challenges. The College site is on reclaimed land, Melbourne Water had a floor level requirement for the boatshed in respect to flooding, a suitable ramp grade from the boatshed down to the existing pontoon had to be achieved, there was a requirement that the Main Yarra Trail bike path that passes through the site had to be maintained, all existing vegetation had to be retained which necessitated the construction of elevated decks and ramps and the building had to be sympathetic with the surrounding environment.

In addition to meeting all these requirements, construction access could only be gained from Yarra Boulevard and there were environmental



requirements that had to be met because of the proximity of the building to the river.

The College was originally built with its address to the Yarra Boulevard with its back to the river, however with the construction of new facilities, alterations and extensions to the existing buildings and extensive landscaping the College now enjoys a much greater use of, and focus to, the river.

The boatshed building is a two-storey building with a footprint area of 600 sq m. The lower boat storage area was created by excavating down to the existing Main Yarra Trail Bike path and then providing ramp access to the river. The area houses up to 50 boats, ranging from eights down to sculls, an office, fitness area and storage.

The upper level, which is at ground level, accommodates the two food technology rooms.

Toilets have also been included which gives the College unlimited flexibility in how the building can be used from both an educational and community perspective. **ET**