



Media Release

3 June, 2010

Lyons designs new Melbourne centre for Institute of Architects

Creating the architecture for the new Melbourne centre for the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) was a challenging design competition, open to all Victorian-registered architectural practices.

The winning concept, by Lyons, seeks to create an interface between the building and passersby, while highlighting the fundamental importance of public architecture in the life of the city.

Lyons director, Carey Lyon says the small-scale site on the corner of Exhibition Street and Flinders Lane allowed for a design concept that references the importance of Melbourne's laneways, and helps maintain the fine grain of the city's built environment.

"Too often small sites in the city get land-banked and eventually aggregated, resulting in large-scale developments and a loss of the fine grain elements that can help define a city's character.

"By creating a 20-story building with a total space of only 5,000 square metres on this small footprint site, we are adding variety and interest into the urban streetscape", Mr Lyon said.

A key aspect of Lyons' design is a chiselled staircase that sweeps from the entrance foyer through to the 4th story. The major stair element is designed as an interface with the streetscape, drawing people into the public spaces of the Institute on these levels.

The balance of the building is 16 levels of strata-title office space to be sold to groups seeking to share the AIA development vision.

"This is a very public building, housing the Institute of Architect's public spaces and gallery.

"The staircase is designed as an expression of the outreach between architecture and the public. Through its open nature, passersby can see and access the public spaces inside.

"It is also designed as though it has been chiselled out of the structure, referencing the traditional Spring Street public-buildings of Melbourne that were literally carved out of bluestone.

"A 2nd-floor balcony jutting out over Exhibition Street, and further cut-out elements in the building façade, add to the building's visual interest and public interaction.

"The chiselling and cut-outs introduce a sculptural aspect to the building, expressing a liberating sentiment inspired ultimately by Michelangelo's unfinished "slaves" sculpture in Florence.

"Creating architecture for architects and being judged by our peers has been an intense but thoroughly rewarding experience for the Lyons practice", Mr Lyon said.

For further information contact Katrina Raymond, MediaLink Productions
T: 03 9663 3222 **M:** 0417 303 158 **E:** katrina@medialinkproductions.com
Lyons, Level 3, 246 Bourke Street, Melbourne **T:** 03 9600 2818 **W:** www.lyonsarch.com.au