

Rothe Lowman

plays with height



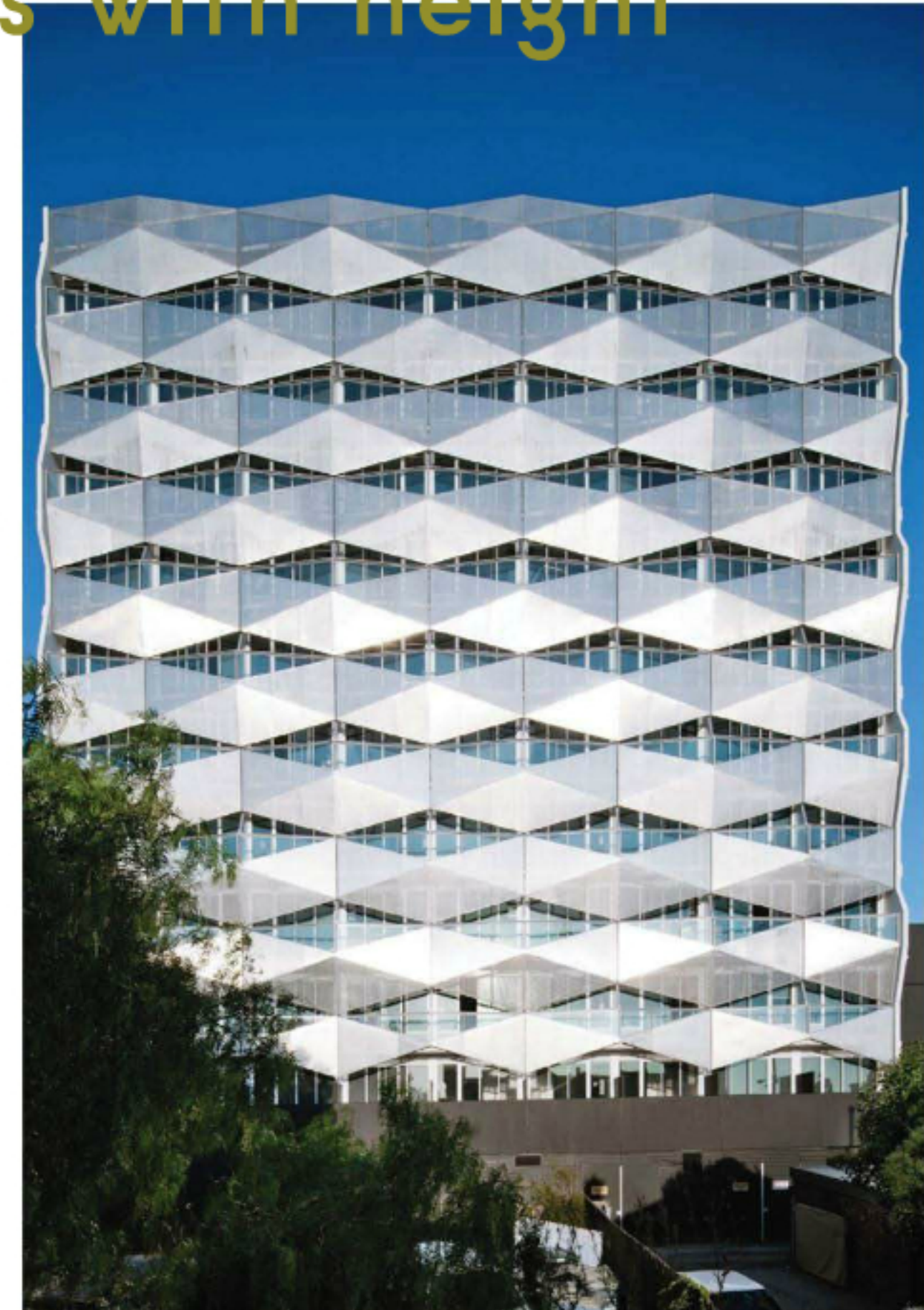
Text Lorna Gibson
Photos Gabriel Saunders

New student accommodation in Hawthorn, a suburb of Melbourne, Australia, has transformed an awkward site – occupied by Telstra office buildings of varying heights – into a graphic work of art. Rothe Lowman's new 11-storey building conceals the west façade of the tall Telstra Exchange. A four-storey building on the street side abuts a smaller three-storey Telstra building. Between the two a third new block, six storeys high, stands atop another existing building. Together, the three volumes and the Telstra buildings create a continuous block, not to mention an enhanced aesthetic.

Although expansive city views are a positive consequence of the site's due-west alignment, its location also presented the architects with difficult shade and heat concerns. The ensuing bespoke, external, metallic 'wallpaper' was a direct response to these key issues and to the anticipated modular formation of the programme. Now views across the city from different angles and distances bask in the shining, geometric forms of the new façade, which bends and folds like a work of origami as it plays with full exposure to the sun. At night, internal spaces determine the patterns seen by passers-by; the skin's metal scales make the lit apartments almost transparent.

Architects worked with town-planning consultants to bring about this more agreeable solution for buildings that sat clumsily on the large site. The student-accommodation building achieved a five-star first-rate accreditation for sustainability as a result of the building fabric and an orientation that enables high thermal performance. Rothe Lowman's statement piece of architectural inspiration forms part of a group of contemporary buildings that surround the neighbouring Swindon University.

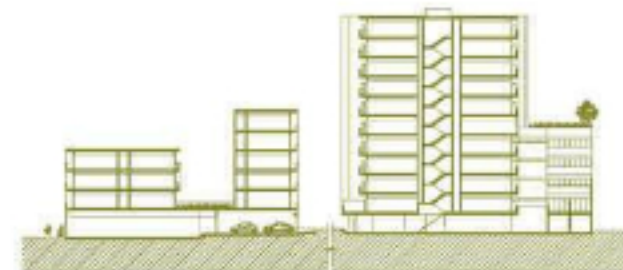
www.rothelowman.com.au



Ground floor.



First floor.



Long Section.