

When **Melbourne University** opened its Faculty of Economics and Commerce building, it set a new benchmark in sustainability in the education sector, in which **leading edge automated window systems** played a critical role.

BELINDA SMART — REPORTS

An education in sustainability



DESIGNED TO ACCOMMODATE UP TO 400 STAFF and 1,800 students, Melbourne University's state-of-the-art building has been awarded a 5 star Green Star – Education PILOT rating by the Green Building Council of Australia, a milestone in the university's plans to be carbon neutral by 2030.

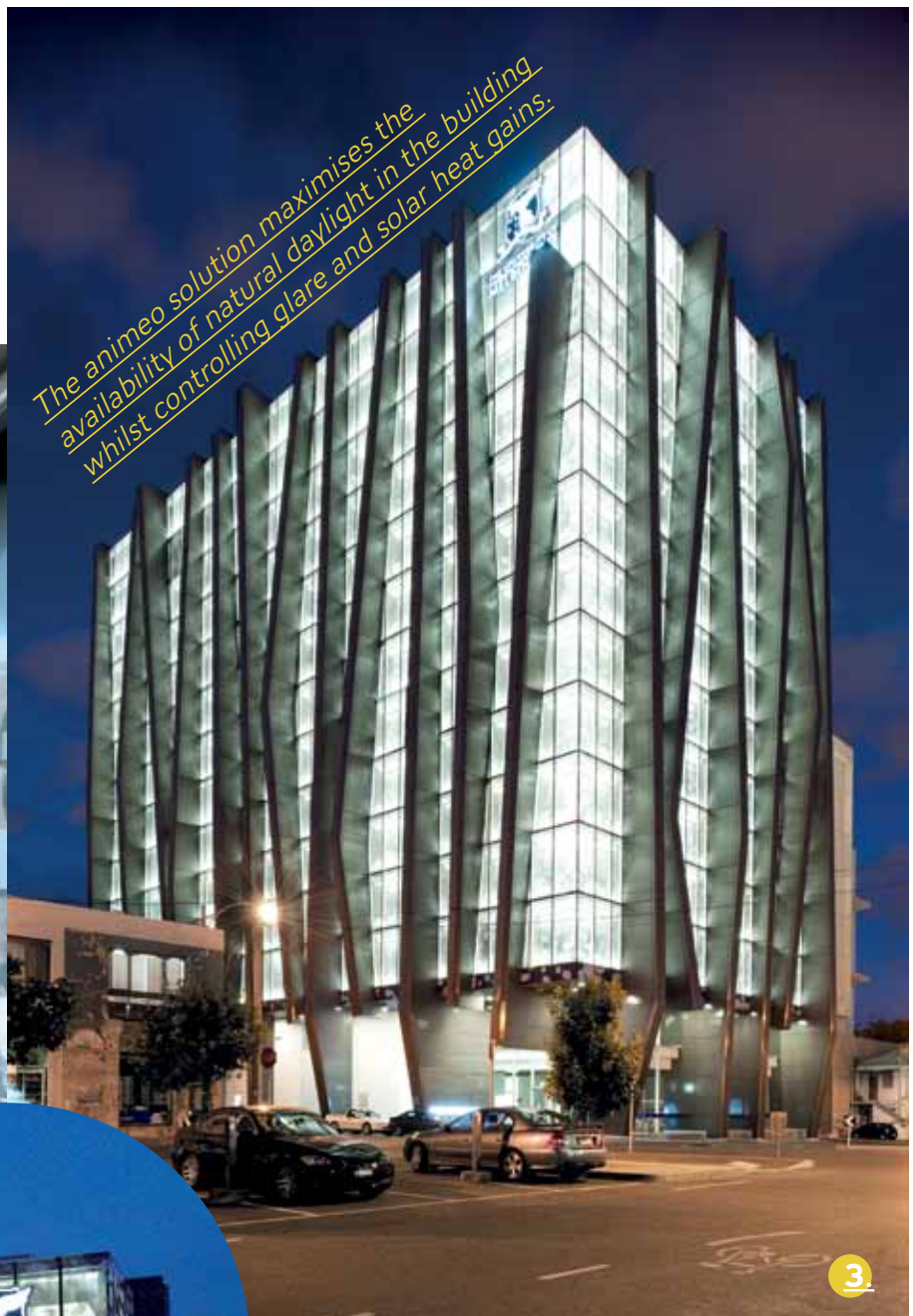
To support this goal the design of the Faculty of Economics and Commerce building focused primarily on indoor environment quality while reducing CO2 emissions, water and energy usage. After one year in operation a post occupancy study demonstrated a 46 per cent reduction in the use of electricity when compared with other typical tertiary education facilities, equating to savings of around \$260,000 a year.

Critical to the design of the building was its façade, in which window systems played a key role. Lidi Group and Somfy were appointed to meet this aspect of the brief.

With the project rolled out in 2009, Somfy market manager, specification, high-end residential and electrical channels Alistair Grice, recalls a fully automated solar shading system controlled by Somfy's animeo IB+ Premium Façade Management System was the solution of choice.

"The animeo solution maximises the availability of natural daylight in the building whilst controlling glare and solar heat gains."

"The Somfy animeo IB+ package is an independent, off-the-shelf,



control solution that monitors the ambient light levels to ensure that the blinds are always in the correct position. Additionally it features a built in sun-tracking algorithm and timers that can easily be configured during commissioning to manage the reaction of the façade at different times during the day and on different days of the week to reflect occupancy levels within the building.

The animeo IB+ system can also receive inputs from the building's management and HVAC systems as well as giving users overriding control of the blinds in their local area, meanwhile the building reset function of the animeo system enables architects to create a uniform look for the building, a quality highlighted with all blinds retracted on the translucent night-time façade.

"This project highlights the success of Somfy's automation systems in delivering cutting edge green buildings to the market," says Grice. "Facades are a key element in the transfer of energy in and out of the building and a well-designed automated facade brings significant increases in occupant comfort, productivity and reduced operating costs for a building. These benefits can be accessed by buildings of all sizes and types, not just high-profile 5 and 6 star Green Star buildings."

Grice says Somfy in Australia has experience with a number of significant projects of this scale.

"There were no specific challenges to this project over and above the usual time constraints with a project like this. One of the key components to managing a project is to ensure that there are open lines of communication to all project stakeholders."

"Lidi has been a long-time customer of Somfy and as such we have an excellent working relationship. On commercial projects Somfy specialises in supplying a turn-key solution for the control system. This means that a company like Lidi can concentrate on project managing the overall blind installation knowing that the control system is being

wfa case study

looked after by Somfy. This includes liaising with other site trades such as electricians; supplying wiring diagrams and installation details of the controllers."

Somfy now takes this even further to supply electrical contracting and project integration and commissioning services to its markets, he says.

"At this stage the electrical connection is only for the Sydney market but we will expand Somfy Electrical Services to other markets in coming years. We've also just recruited a Master's Degree qualified mechanical engineer to our commercial projects team to assist with project management and commissioning."

One of the key lessons to come out of the project experience was the need for constant communication, he says.

"All projects have their challenges, big and small, and the various stakeholders need to be kept aware of this. Keeping the lines of communication open ensures that when answers are needed they are freely available."

"Somfy is working with many customers on a number of large projects throughout Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. With the increasing specification of high-performance facades the quality of support and

product performance is key to delivering a positive outcome."

For Lidi the introduction of a user friendly and environmentally sound product which encompassed the designer's vision and incorporated good use of natural energies was key to specifying the products for the project, confirms Lidi managing director Carlo Licciardi.

"The builder's brief was to incorporate the use of customised daylight, therefore allowing the building users to tailor the amount of sunlight required on a daily basis, as well as the inclusion of fresh air and the ability to reduce the energy consumption of the building. The reduction of energy costs was a big plus as it aligns well with the University's plans to be carbon neutral by 2030."

"Lidi's business relationship with Somfy is a highly valued one and works extremely well in the delivery of products to its clients. Somfy ensure that all their products are backed up with product knowledge and support, leaving the blind installation and technical phase completely unencumbered for Lidi to complete works."

"With more and more emphasis being placed on environmental sustainability Lidi will always offer its clients a greener choice for commercial projects, the University of Melbourne was no exception." _WFA



THE PROJECT	
Melbourne University Faculty of Economics and Commerce building	
CLIENT	University of Melbourne
BUILDING	Educational
SIZE	25,000m2
ARCHITECT	Metier3
BUILDER	Probuild Construction
PRODUCT	500 Lidi Internal Roller Blinds powered by Somfy
SOMFY SOLUTION	animeo IB+ Premium LS40 motors
PROJECT MANAGER	The Lidi Group

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1_2_3_4_ Photography by John Gollings. Supplied by Somfy.