

# **NEW** **ACADEMIC** **STREET** **HEROES**



**“A decision has been made to do it, so let’s make it a positive experience for all those involved. It’s a willingness to participate in the project. We see the potential for future students and we’re excited that there’s a new story to tell.”**

Monika Engelhard  
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[nas.rmit.edu.au](http://nas.rmit.edu.au)



**Monika Engelhard, was pivotal in the early internal promotion of the NAS project, as well as helping planning and implementation of initiatives and communications.**

“So there were all the people we had to move and relocate. But we also had to change people’s opinions too and let them know about the project. So I worked with the NAS team for the communication for that and how we made sure we made it as stress-less as possible. There were always going to be people who didn’t initially want to do things, so I did things like go to all the school executives and give presentations for the NAS project when the escalators were installed, and helped with some ideas about what communications were funnelled where – to get the right people communicating. I talked to other people and said ‘You know, we will have some spaces that students will love using’ or ‘This campus will feel more modern, more contemporary’.”

Initially Monika was sceptical about promotion of the NAS project before completion. When it comes to RMIT though, her question has always been ‘How can I help?’ so as soon as the decision was made, Monika was thinking about how to participate and give.

“Once it’s been decided, I’ll go ahead and do it. So to me, I’ve always been about opinion with just about every project. You had the internal arguments, you lose them, and you just have to suck it up. A decision has been made to do it, let’s make it a positive experience as we can for those involved – particularly our students – so they’re at least inconvenienced as possible.

Where I can give my skills to help that is probably around communication and just being really clear around that. My role was really sort of in those initial phases of setting that up. Then I had a few ideas along the way of how we could use the building process for students. I was involved particularly in early discussions and thinking about how you prepare staff for the disruption and how you prepare, and empower, the students. So, that was a lot of conversations and early discussions to think about what the disruption means and how plan for it.”

## Where there’s a WIL

As well as her role communicating the project before commencement and during the initial role out, Monika also helped initiating the WIL program, which has been a feature of the NAS project. Students from across RMIT, in areas as varied as construction, design, writing and editing, animation, film, photography and more, have been given Work Integrated Learning opportunities that have provided real-life professional experiences.

This project has been very different to other RMIT construction, so the way the RMIT has had to work with stakeholders has also been quite different. The NAS project is what is known as a live site, which means that it’s going on in a space that is still open. Compared to the SAB space, for example, which was closed completely until it was ready – so there was just the final relocation of students into the new space.

“And so this project quite different, it’s kind of like a renovation as opposed to a new build. There’s always something more exciting about a new building in your own street. If you see a new house go up, as opposed to someone’s renovation, which you don’t see until you’re invited around. And so I think that the thing is that it feels really annoying because we can’t actually see the impact of what we’re doing, as we’re doing it.”

“This is ambitious. For example the Melbourne Metro Rail tunnel will take ten years... projects do... The conditions in NAS were put on to try and protect the students. I think that’s the really good thing about NAS. It said ‘The student experience is still important; it will be impacted, but let’s try to make sure learning happens.’ They could’ve said, ‘Let’s go and rent an office block and move all the students out and just gut it quickly and do that’ but they didn’t. They said ‘No, you can’t do that, so let’s do it around here.’ We didn’t decant them all somewhere else. So I think people’s fatigue about it is: ‘From what we can see there isn’t a beautiful new building coming up, it’s not something like a new building’, which was the thing about Design Hub and SAB.”

“I think people have worked together to deliver the project really well from my perspective and from the marketing and communications community. Because we are here and we see the potential for future students and staff and that’s exciting and a great new story to tell.”