

NEW
ACADEMIC
STREET
HEROES

"I think people just see me as the type of guy who likes to have fun, whatever I'm doing and make a lot of jokes—probably some bad ones sometimes... but I think people think they can talk to me."

Russell Lightfoot
Manager, Security Operations
Property Services

nas.rmit.edu.au



Russell Lightfoot and his security team are always ready for the numerous situations they face on a daily basis at RMIT. As the manager of Security Operations, Russell has taken to the field, alongside his team, to make sure that the safety of staff, students and the general public remains a top-priority.

Joining RMIT back in 2015, Russell Lightfoot dove head-first into the NAS project as the Security Operations Manager. The NAS project is a massive beast and the physical safety of staff, students and the wider CBD community is a number one priority.

From the outside, it wouldn't seem as though a construction project requires security personnel, but upon further enquiry it is clear that RMIT Security was an essential part of the NAS project.

"It did take a little bit of time trying to understand what people really wanted out of it from a security point of view. Then I found out about access control and CCTV would be involved as well. So, it wasn't so much physical security," Russell says.

That doesn't mean that there aren't security personnel out in the RMIT City campus – security are available around the clock every day of the year, responding to emergencies immediately and less critical situations in 10 to 15 minutes.

An integral part of the NAS precinct's build has been the passageway on Bowen Street between various parts of the campus. Home to many of RMIT's iconic buildings, thousands of staff, students and trucks pass through the area every day. As expected, this has been one of the most difficult areas for security to navigate, as not only do they have to ensure the safety of staff and students, but they have to make sure trucks can move in and out efficiently and safely out of a live construction site. Russell notes that despite their best efforts, occasionally there can be a little confusion.

"We just have to make sure that we make it as safe as possible for people. The biggest challenges are Bowen Street and pedestrian safety and just trying to make sure that everyone goes about their job properly.

Guardians of the NAS precinct

People accessing the buildings where they shouldn't be has been a real challenge for us."

Russell is a regular in the NAS weekly meetings. Making sure he knows what's going on as manager of Security Operations is paramount, as he relays this information to his staff once a week, briefing them on the schedule and impacts of the works.

Shutting down the power in various buildings during Christmas 2014 has been one of the toughest aspects that security has had to deal without throughout the lifespan of the project. Vigilance and care had to be taken to pull off such a big shutdown successfully.

"From a security point of view, we first had to shut down our access control equipment, because if we didn't, the power could come back on and damage it. We did a whole walk through of the buildings and found out where all our equipment was and used our maps and plans of course, arranging to have that shutdown," he says.

"Then we had to secure – physically secure – the buildings and the doors. That meant taking out key cylinders and replacing them with others that people didn't have. Now we have a set of locks for any shut down. That was a big win for us to be able to do that, and then we just made sure we had the patrols through the place."

Russell graciously commends the effort of his team for being able to get through such an extensive shutdown and for the hard work they do on a daily basis. Security Operations is a continuous role at RMIT and Russell and his team are always ready to deal with many all sorts of situations.

"It's a team effort. I am hands on; that's the way I work. I'd rather be there with the guys, show them what's needed and explain it to them. I can't ask them to do anything that I don't know about or would not do myself. Yes, they are long days, but it's got to be done."

Although it's not part of his job description, Russell prefers to be out on the field, having a chat to people in affected areas, networking and making sure they understand the situation. He always goes above and beyond what is expected of him to show resilience and dedication in tough circumstances.