

Green Star Fitouts

For building owners

Better fitouts,
today and tomorrow.



Founded by the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) in 2003, Green Star is an internationally recognised rating system setting the standard for healthy, resilient, positive buildings and places.

Using Green Star, the Green Building Council of Australia has certified thousands of buildings, interiors and precincts around the country, driving better buildings for today and tomorrow.

-  Reducing the impact of climate change
-  Enhancing our health and quality of life
-  Restoring and protecting our planet's biodiversity and ecosystems
-  Driving resiliency in buildings, fitouts, and communities
-  Contributing to market transformation and a sustainable economy.



Fitouts define the spaces where we spend our days.

They shape how we feel, work, interact and connect. They carry the identity of a brand, the comfort of a workplace and the experience of everyone who walks through the door.

But while fitouts shape the visible experience of a space, they also carry impacts that are far less obvious. Each refresh can lock in significant embodied carbon, generate large volumes of waste, and create financial and operational risks that accumulate over time. In fact, for building owners, fitouts are among the most frequently repeated, yet least scrutinised, elements of a building.

For a long time, these impacts sat outside the spotlight. But as expectations rise around circularity, climate performance and healthier interiors, these once-hidden impacts can no longer be overlooked.

In this document:

- The hidden impacts of fitouts
- The opportunity: turning risks into value
- How to implement Green Star Fitouts across your portfolio

Green Star Fitouts provides a practical way forward

Green Star Fitouts offers a clear, flexible framework that helps building owners, project teams and tenants work together to address the overlooked impacts of fitouts – and unlock the opportunities that better interiors can deliver.

Whether you're delivering a speculative suite or managing fitouts across a national portfolio, Green Star Fitouts offers a practical, scalable pathway to reduce Scope 3 emissions, cut waste and carbon risk, and turn the hidden impacts of fitouts into measurable, manageable outcomes.

At the Green Building Council of Australia, we see every day that high-performing interiors never have to compromise great design. The most inspiring spaces can also be healthier, lower-impact and future-ready – delivering better outcomes for today, and tomorrow.

Green Star Fitouts
Better fitouts, today and tomorrow



SECTION 1

The hidden impacts of fitouts

Fitouts shape how people feel in a space — but behind every finish, material and layout sits a set of hidden carbon, waste, health and business impacts that can no longer be overlooked.



Carbon

Fitouts are one of the biggest sources of carbon in buildings.

While much of industry's attention has focused on base building performance, the interiors we design, build and replace have a far greater cumulative impact than many realise. Because most commercial fitouts are replaced every 5–7¹ years, a single space can undergo seven² or more full refurbishments over a building's life. The result is a significant and compounding carbon footprint.

Fitouts are now recognised as the second-largest source of lifecycle emissions, accounting for 32% of a commercial office building's total carbon impact³.

In fact, the cumulative embodied carbon of repeated churn can exceed the emissions from constructing the base building itself⁵. And this challenge is only intensifying as average tenancy lengths continue to shorten.⁴



What rising scope 3 scrutiny means for building owners

Australia's climate disclosure regime will require large organisations to report Scope 3 emissions from 2026⁶ – including emissions embodied in materials and waste. This puts fitouts, and the emissions they create every 5–7 years, firmly under the spotlight.

Two shifts matter for building owners:



Tenants are prioritising low carbon space

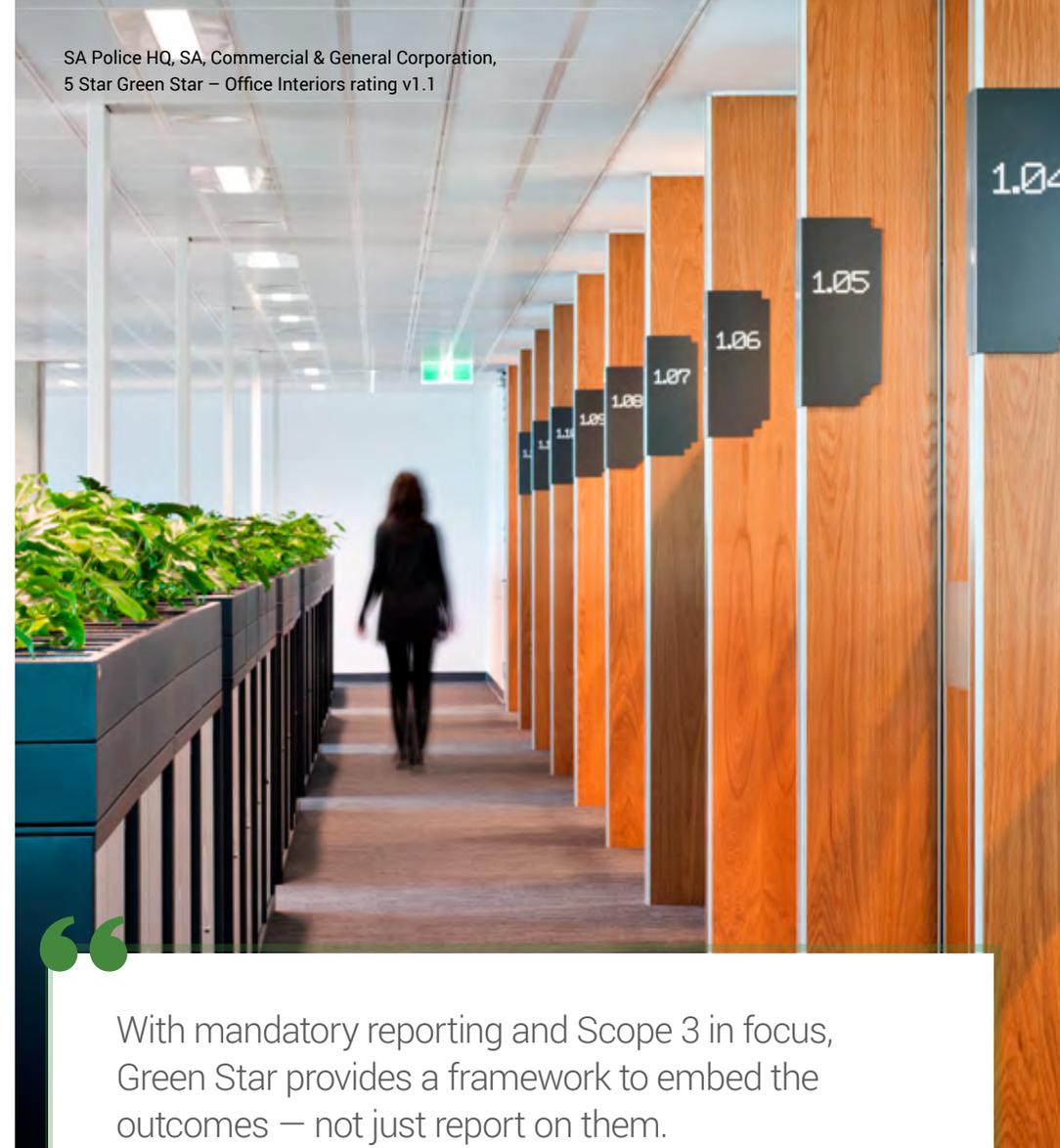
Tenants will need visibility over the embodied carbon of their fitouts and will increasingly favour buildings that make this easier. Demand for low-carbon tenancies is already projected to exceed supply by 70%⁷ across major cities, and mandatory disclosure is expected to amplify this trend even further.



Risk from recurring fitout emissions

Even if tenant-funded embodied emissions are not yet required in asset-owner disclosures, they are increasingly viewed as a material risk, as fitouts generate repeated embodied carbon impacts. There is growing consensus³ that real estate companies should report these impacts and actively manage the risk, a shift reinforced by global benchmarks such as GRESB, which is further integrating embodied emissions into its assessments¹⁰. The 2025 BCG–EcoVadis report⁸ warns that unmanaged Scope 3 emissions could create US\$500B in annual liabilities by 2030.

For building owners, recurring fitout emissions represent a rising regulatory, financial and reputational risk that can no longer be overlooked.



With mandatory reporting and Scope 3 in focus, Green Star provides a framework to embed the outcomes – not just report on them.

Janaki Dhagat
Sustainability Manager, Charter Hall

Waste

Every new fitout generates significant waste – creating both an environmental burden and a direct financial cost.

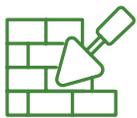
The average commercial fitout produces 368.6 tonnes of waste, with around \$105 per m² lost on materials that are ordered, installed and ultimately discarded. For a typical 2,000 m² office, **that's more than \$210,000 in wasted materials per fitout.**

Fitout waste snapshot



368.6

tonnes waste per fitout¹



78%

of materials end up in landfill¹



5-7 years

Average lifespan.¹



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Fitouts are becoming shorter-lived, particularly post-COVID as lease cycles shrink. That means more frequent demolition and more waste. The problem is getting worse – not better.

Clayton Bristow
Managing Director, FF&3



A tightening circularity landscape

Australia's new Circular Economy Framework¹² sets a national ambition to double circularity over the next decade signalling rising pressure on waste generation, disposal, resource recovery and reporting. In this context, waste-intensive interiors are increasingly viewed as a liability for both tenants and building owners.

High-waste interiors create three key risks for building owners:



Regulatory & market exposure

High-waste fitouts can leave buildings out of step with emerging circularity standards¹² and rising expectations for transparent Scope 3 emissions³ reporting.



Escalating waste costs

Rising landfill levies¹³ and disposal charges increase the cost of deficits and speculative suite refreshes across all tenancies.



ESG & reputational pressure

Short-lived, waste-heavy interiors can weaken sustainability claims and influence investor and tenant perceptions of an asset's credibility. 22% of investors in 2025 now integrate circular economy risks and opportunities in their assessments — up from 12% in 2023⁹



Health

The base building contributes to overall health and wellbeing, but the fitout plays a major role in shaping what people breathe, see, hear and feel everyday.

Here's how the fitout directly influences health and wellbeing.



Air quality

Fitout materials such as paints, adhesives, sealants, joinery, flooring and furniture can emit VOCs long after installation. These compounds can irritate the eyes, skin and airways and cause headaches and fatigue.¹⁵



Layout & Amenity Access

Workstation design affects posture and comfort, while the placement of meeting rooms, quiet zones and social spaces shapes ease of use.



Lighting quality

Light fixture selection affects brightness, glare, eye strain and circadian rhythm support. Partition heights and furniture placement influence daylight penetration.¹⁶



Thermal Comfort

Partitions, furniture layouts and added equipment can change how air moves through a space, leading to hot or cold zones. Research shows temperatures outside 22–26°C can reduce creative thinking performance.¹⁷



Acoustics

Fitout elements like partitions, carpets and layout shape how sound moves. Excessive noise exposure has been linked to distraction and stress.¹⁴



Biophilia

Fitout choices determine access to greenery, natural finishes and restorative spaces. One study found workers chose biophilic areas 3× more often, stayed 5× longer, and showed 25% higher utilisation.¹⁸

Why building owners should support healthy fitout design

Whether a fitout is tenant-funded or delivered as a speculative suite, it sits inside the asset and shapes the daily experience of the people using the space. Even in excellent base buildings, certain interior design choices can dilute wellbeing and comfort – making landlord-led guidance and high-quality speculative suites an important part of overall asset performance.

Healthy fitouts improve tenant experience
– driving leasing performance.

Fitouts shape the indoor conditions people feel every day – air quality, acoustics, lighting, materials and comfort. These factors have well-documented impacts on satisfaction, wellbeing and productivity, which in turn can strengthen tenant retention and leasing outcomes¹⁹.

Healthy interiors reduce building-level risks.

Fitouts influence pollutant emissions (VOC-heavy materials), noise, daylight access and layout – common drivers of complaints and “sick building” symptoms¹⁹. Supporting healthier fitouts can reduce IAQ issues and reputational risk, even when tenants manage the works.

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It’s not just the shell or the base building that determines performance. Truly healthy, high-performing environments rely on the base building and the interior working together. Considering these elements in isolation is no longer enough.

Iva Durakovic

Senior Lecturer, Interior Architecture, UNSW





Endeavour Energy Workplace, NSW, Endeavour Energy,
6 Star Green Star – Interiors rating v1.3

Asset performance

A building's performance is no longer defined by its base build alone. The quality of its interiors — the fitouts tenants occupy every day — has become a major driver of leasing demand, workplace experience and long-term asset value.

Demand for certified, sustainable interiors is accelerating

72%

of JLL cost management leads surveyed reported an increased demand for sustainable fitouts²⁰

72%

of organisations in Australia and New Zealand plan to increase investment in space design over the next five years²⁰

65%

of organisations say enhancing employee experience through the workplace is a top priority in 2025²³

87%

of occupiers across Asia Pacific are targeting 100% green-certified portfolios by 2030, up from just 4% today²¹



Government policy is driving further demand for sustainable fitouts

Government procurement frameworks are increasingly embedding sustainability requirements into fitouts. As public-sector tenants raise expectations, these standards are influencing broader market demand.

Key policy drivers

- **Commonwealth Environmentally Sustainable Procurement (ESP) Policy:** Green Star is a recognised pathway for procurement of construction services of \$7.5 million or above, including fitouts of owned or leased buildings.²⁴
- **NSW Net Zero Government Operations Policy:** All new fit-outs with estimated development costs above \$10 million must achieve a Green Star rating.²⁵
- **WA Government Office Accommodation Standards:** Leased spaces over 1,000 sqm in new developments must meet sustainability targets including Green Star.²⁶



SECTION 2

The opportunity: turning risks into value

While the risks of business-as-usual interiors are increasingly clear, the opportunity is far greater: better interiors can reduce emissions, extend material life, support wellbeing and lower costs over time. Green Star Fitouts provides a practical pathway to achieving these outcomes.

The next section explores how.





Green Star Fitouts: a framework for better interiors

Green Star Fitouts is a clear, practical framework built around six priority areas that matter most. Developed by leading sustainability experts, it gives project teams a ready-made pathway to deliver lower-carbon, lower-waste, healthier and more adaptable fitouts – designed to perform today and evolve for tomorrow.

The six foundations of better fitouts



Circular

Embeds circularity enablers throughout the design and construction of the fitout.



Responsible

Recognises activities that ensure the fitout is designed, procured, built, and handed over in a responsible manner.



Healthy

Promotes actions and solutions that improve the physical and mental health of occupants.



Positive

Encourages a positive contribution to key environmental issues of carbon, water, and the impact of materials.



People

Encourages solutions that address the social health of occupants.



Leadership

Recognises projects that set a strategic direction, build a vision for industry, or enhance the industry's capacity to innovate.



Carbon: unlocking lower carbon interiors

Green Star Fitouts provides clear, practical guidance to help building owners lower the carbon impact of their interiors, supporting Scope 3 readiness.

How Green Star Fitouts helps you reduce carbon



Reduce upfront carbon through design and material decisions

The framework sets clear targets for lowering upfront carbon early in design – while giving teams the flexibility to choose solutions that best fit their project.



Cut operational carbon through smarter energy choices

Green Star Fitouts guides teams on how to eliminate fossil fuels, use high-efficiency systems and transition to renewable energy in areas under the tenant's control. This directly reduces operational emissions while helping tenants meet their climate commitments.



Compensate for what can't be avoided

Where emissions can't be fully eliminated, Green Star Fitouts provides direction on how to compensate for residual upfront carbon in a credible, transparent way.



Extend material life to minimise repeated emissions

Guidance sets clear targets that steer project teams toward interiors that adapt more easily and minimise replacement cycles – reducing the repeated embodied carbon impacts of fitouts over a building's life.



Circularity: designing interiors that reduce waste and extend material life

How Green Star Fitouts helps you create more circular interiors



Keep materials in use for longer

Green Star Fitouts guides project teams to identify what can be reused by setting clear targets and providing consistent ways to measure and calculate circular outcomes. This reduces upfront emissions and avoids unnecessary replacement cycles – one of the key drivers of waste and embodied carbon in fitouts.



Design for adaptability, not demolition

Green Star Fitouts provides direction on how to embed flexibility through modular systems, multifunctional layouts and adaptable service models. This helps fitouts evolve over time without generating large volumes of waste during every change of needs.

Green Star Fitouts gives building owners clear direction on how to support more circular fitouts, extending material life and helping stay ahead of tightening circularity expectations.



Enable future reuse from the start

The framework sets clear expectations for creating a digital asset register, ensuring today's fitout becomes tomorrow's resource. This supports material recovery and helps keep valuable products in circulation rather than landfill.



Choose responsible products

Green Star Fitouts includes practical tools to help teams source responsibly manufactured products and maximise resource recovery during delivery. This removes guesswork and ensures products meet clear, credible standards – addressing a challenge many teams struggle with.

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“When fitouts are designed with circular principles in mind – adaptable, modular and built to last – building owners benefit from reduced strip-outs, lower waste and less disruption between tenants.”

Janaki Dhagat

Sustainability Manager, Charter Hall

Health and wellbeing: creating interiors that support people everyday

While base buildings set the foundation for performance, it's the fitout that shapes the day-to-day experience. Green Star Fitouts provides clear direction to create interiors that are healthier, more comfortable and aligned with modern wellbeing expectations.



Cleaner air and low-toxicity materials

Green Star Fitouts sets expectations for low-VOC materials, reduced chemical exposure and improved indoor air quality, ensuring spaces support occupant health rather than undermine it.



Better comfort through lighting, acoustics and thermal performance

The framework provides direction on designing for high-quality lighting, effective acoustic performance and stable thermal comfort — three of the biggest drivers of occupant satisfaction and productivity.



Ergonomic, inclusive and supportive layouts

Guidance on ergonomics, amenity and accessibility helps ensure spaces are comfortable, inclusive and supportive for a diverse range of users.



Connection to nature and place

Green Star Fitouts encourages incorporating biophilic design elements and natural materials, supporting wellbeing.

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Investing in the quality of an interior environment is an investment in people. Healthier, more comfortable spaces support sustained performance and wellbeing. It should be a no-brainer that better environments translate into better outcomes.

Iva Durakovic

Senior Lecturer, Interior Architecture, UNSW



Space & Co Darling Park, NSW, GPT,
6 Star Green Star – Interiors rating v1.3

Choosing responsible products with confidence

One of the biggest challenges in any fitout is knowing which materials are genuinely responsible. With thousands of products on the market – and rising scrutiny around greenwashing – project teams often struggle to identify options that have a lower environmental impact, are transparent, respect human rights and support a circular economy.

The **Responsible Products framework** provides a clear, structured way to navigate this complexity. Through the Responsible Products **score checker**, teams can search recognised product certification initiatives and understand how certified products score against Green Star requirements.

This makes it far easier to identify materials that are environmentally responsible, transparent, ethically produced and circular – and, in turn, secure the Green Star points needed to achieve certification.



Reducing cost through better fitout design

Adaptable, more efficient spaces create more desirable workplaces and can reduce core costs for building owners including vacancy downtime, maintenance and waste handling.

How Green Star Fitouts helps reduce cost



Reduce upfront spend through smarter reuse

The framework helps teams identify where existing materials, furniture and equipment can be retained or reused before purchasing new, helping lower procurement costs and reduce demolition and disposal expenses.



Design spaces that can evolve with changing needs

Guidance on maintainable materials, flexible layouts and adaptable systems helps reduce the need for major interventions during future updates. This supports lower churn costs and fewer large-scale refreshes.



Lower operating costs through efficient systems

Energy-efficient lighting, equipment and HVAC components — along with water-efficient fixtures and tenancy-level metering — help control operational outgoings. This can reduce energy and water bills for tenants and lower shared operating costs for owners.

Myth: Green Star Fitouts add significant cost to projects

Evidence from completed Green Star Interiors projects shows the cost uplift is modest and predictable, even at higher certification levels.

Typical share of total project budget associated with Green Star certification:



Unlocking opportunities through certification

Certification strengthens everything you deliver through Green Star Fitouts. Here are four opportunities you unlock only with certification:



Easier, more robust reporting

Independent certification provides clear, structured documentation aligned to recognised standards – supporting ESG reporting, investor disclosure and internal governance. It simplifies evidence gathering and strengthens the credibility of what you report.



Reduced reputational risk

With 100+ ACCC investigations²² underway and 85% of investors²⁷ concerned about greenwashing, scrutiny is rising. Independent certification protects your reputation by ensuring claims are credible, verified and defensible.



Stronger alignment across stakeholders

Certification establishes a clear, shared benchmark for success. Whether you are certifying your own fitouts or encouraging tenants to do the same, it creates consistent expectations, improves collaboration, and aligns all parties around the same outcomes.



Verified sustainability leadership

Certification shows that sustainability is a genuine priority – embedded in how you operate, not simply expressed in messaging. It aligns your brand with independently verified performance at a time when the market expects nothing less.



SECTION 3

How to implement Green Star Fitouts across your portfolio

A step-by-step approach to implementing Green Star Fitouts across your assets.



Three pathways to scale Green Star Fitouts

There are three effective pathways to embed Green Star Fitouts at scale. Building owners can choose one approach or combine them depending on asset type, tenant profile and leasing strategy.

Certify all speculative suites

Ensure every speculative suite you deliver meets Green Star Fitouts. This provides:

- a clear low-carbon, high-quality offer for prospective tenants
- stronger leasing outcomes and differentiation in a competitive market
- a consistent baseline of sustainability performance across your assets, reducing the risk of uncertified, high-impact fitouts

Partner with tenants on a case-by-case basis

Support tenants to certify their own fitouts during leasing, renewal or major upgrade cycles. This approach helps to:

- align with tenant ESG and Scope 3 reporting requirements
- strengthen relationships and improve retention
- create shared responsibility for sustainability outcomes
- integrate certification into individual leasing deals

Scale Green Star Fitouts across your entire portfolio

Move beyond individual projects and establish a portfolio-wide strategy across your entire portfolio of buildings. This approach helps to:

- Reduce risk across repeated tenancy cycles
- Ensure consistent sustainability performance across assets
- Establish internal material banks to support reuse and circular outcomes

How Green Star Fitouts works



Space & Co Darling Park, NSW, GPT,
6 Star Green Star – Interiors rating v1.3



Meet Minimum Expectations

All Green Star Fitouts projects must meet a set of Minimum Expectations. These establish a strong baseline – ensuring the fitout maximises opportunities to integrate reused products, delivers higher performance in energy, water and health, and aligns with key outcomes of the Climate Positive Pathway.



Deliver on the Climate Positive Pathway

Projects must achieve a set of required credits that drive meaningful reductions in upfront and operational emissions. This supports owners and tenants in managing Scope 3 impacts across the fitout lifecycle.



Achieve additional points

Beyond the required elements, projects target additional credits to reach their desired rating. Teams choose the pathways most relevant to their goals – whether that's carbon, circularity, health and wellbeing, responsible materials, cost efficiencies, or all of the above.



What every Green Star Fitout must deliver

At the heart of Green Star Fitouts are a set of **Minimum Expectations**. Together, these create a consistent baseline that supports organisational climate goals, improves occupant experience and reduces environmental and operational impact. Every certified project must demonstrate it meets these expectations.



Identify opportunities to include reused elements in the fitout



Be verified to work and be maintainable over time



Provide good lighting and acoustic comfort



Be fully electric



Be designed to consider the diverse needs of our population



Provide improved air quality and ensures procurement of low toxin materials



Be water and energy efficient



Ensure almost all materials are low toxin



Have lower upfront carbon



Implement site practices that support a reduction in wasted materials

Understanding the ratings

Green Star Fitouts offers three rating levels, providing flexibility depending on the ambition and scale of the project. Projects can also choose to obtain a Green Star Designed assessment, which demonstrates they are on track to achieve certification.



Space & Co Darling Park, NSW, GPT, 6 Star Green Star – Interiors rating v1.3



A 4 Star rated fitout is Best Practice compared to industry standard.



A 5 Star rated fitout demonstrates Australian Excellence.



A 6 Star rated fitout showcases World Leadership.

1	Minimum Expectations	✓	✓	✓
2	Climate Positive Pathway		✓ Meets Climate Positive Pathway requirements	✓ Meets Climate Positive Pathway requirements
3	Credit achievements		✓✓ Must achieve 20 points from a range of credits	✓✓✓ Must achieve 45 points from a range of credits.

Better together: How all four Green Star rating tools strengthen your asset

When used together, Green Star Fitouts, Green Star Buildings, Green Star Performance and Green Star Communities create a powerful, whole-of-place sustainability strategy



Green Star Fitouts ensures the interior spaces people use every day are healthy, low-impact and future-ready.



Green Star Buildings ensures new assets are designed and delivered to a high standard.

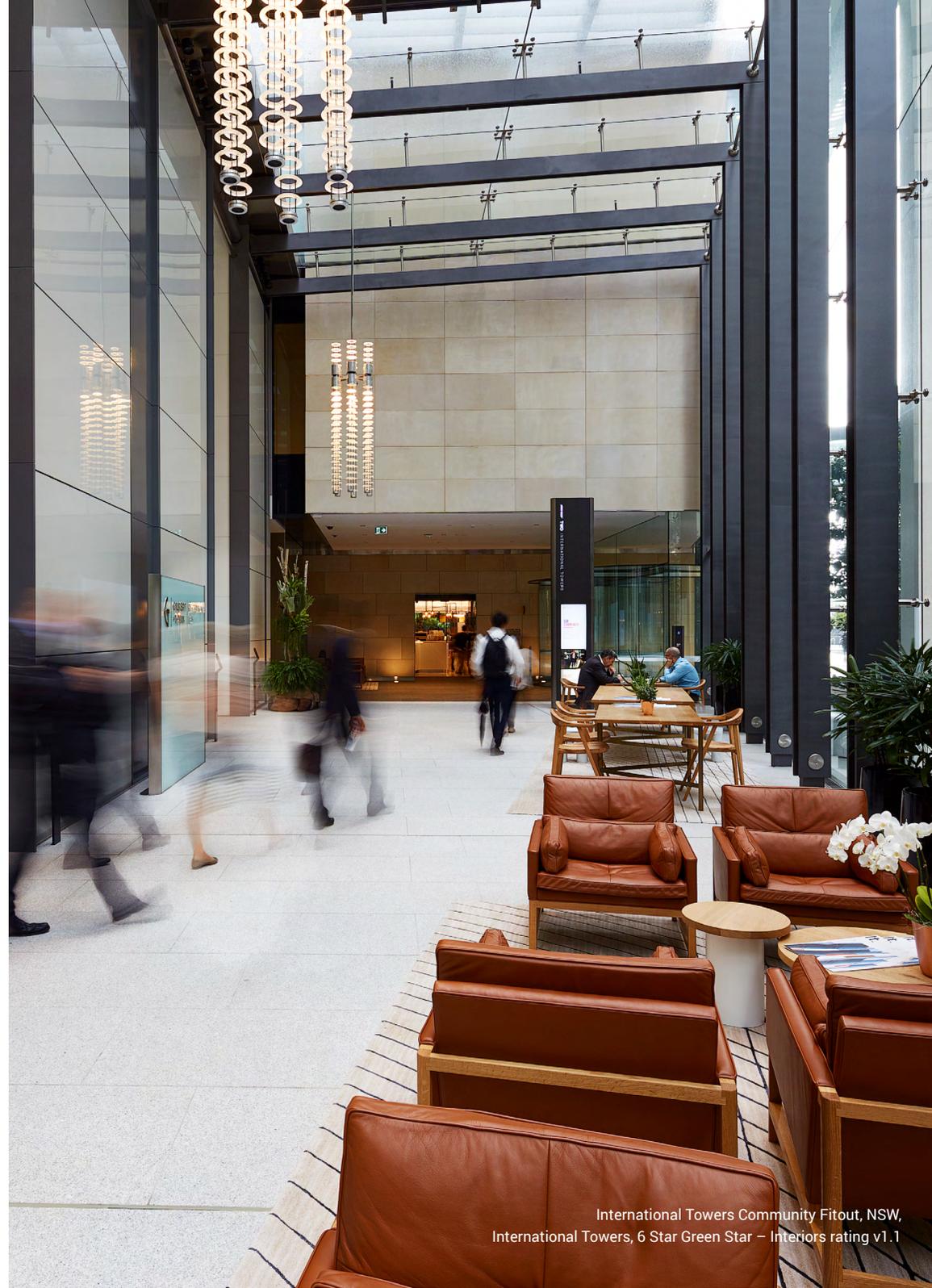


Green Star Performance ensures ongoing operations continue to meet best practice.



Green Star Communities sets the foundation for resilient, high-quality precincts.

Together, the four tools create integrated, resilient, future-ready assets that stand out to tenants, investors and government.



CASE STUDY

International Towers

How a team created the first Green Star Interiors Volume Program in Sydney

When you think of the phrase 'carpe diem', it is unlikely that the image forming in your mind is a workplace in the heartbeat of a city. But for the team behind the first Green Star Volume approach of its kind, and the 6 Star Green Star rated International Towers in Barangaroo, Sydney, it meant seizing the day in a different way. What began as a placeholder name for a secret project that would turn commercial real estate on its head, Carpe Diem Community organically stuck, resonating with everyone involved well into the post-project phase.

CDC is an innovative 6 Star Green Star rated workplace concept at International Towers that opens the door for small and emerging enterprises seeking tenancy that have traditionally faced barriers to entering world-class commercial environments.

Initially, the team faced the challenge of how to support dozens of the small tenancies through Green Star certification. At this point, the solution emerged in the form of a Green Star International Towers Volume Certification program that would standardise not only the pathway but the documentation and material selection for tenants – removing barriers faced by smaller organisations.

For Kim Dawson, Fund Manager at International Towers, delivering the CDC as a fully certified 6 Star Green Star community was both a privilege and a defining moment for the team. The process reaffirmed that sustainability leadership can, and should, be shared, not siloed.

[Read the full case study](#)



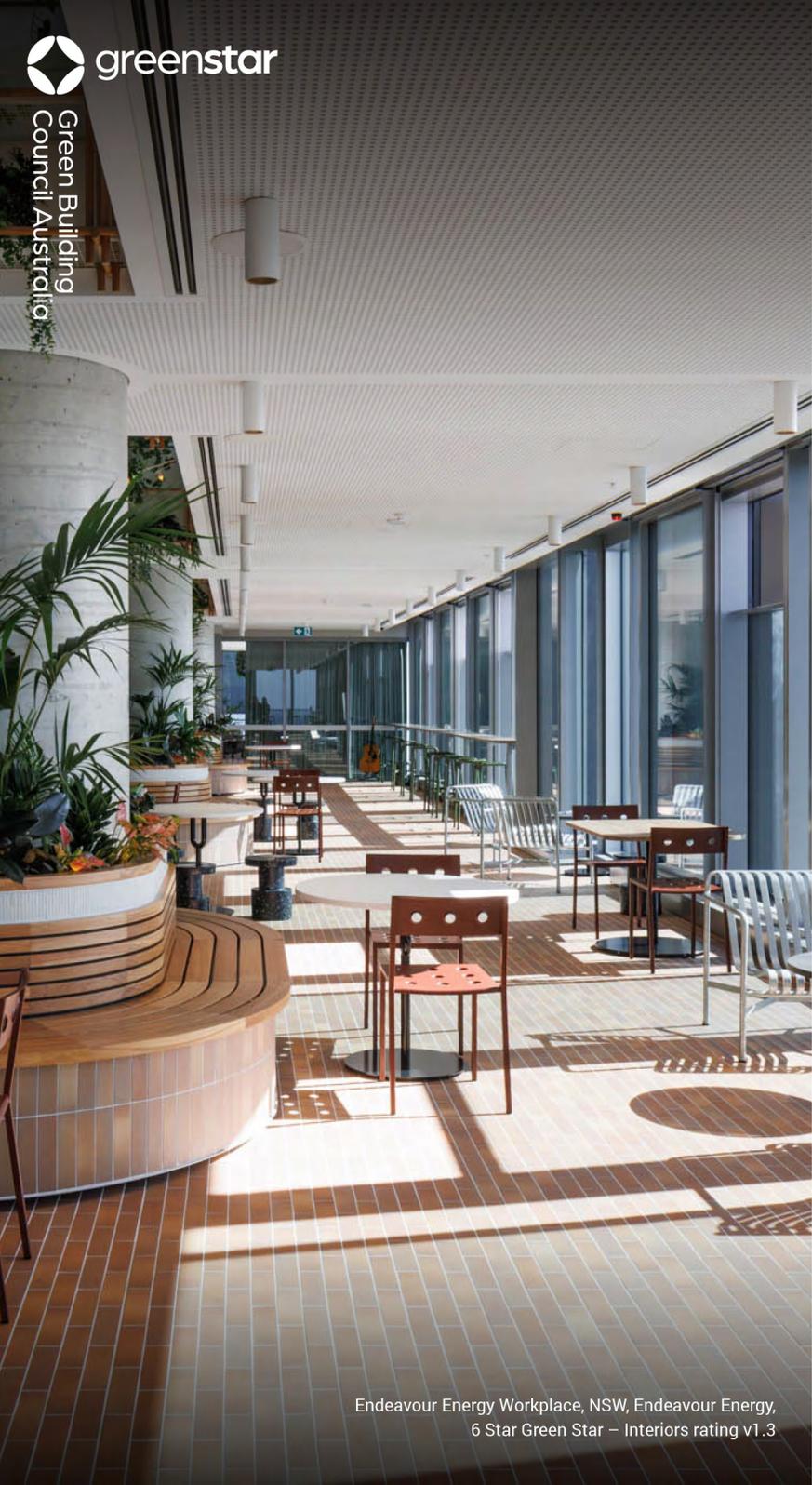
International Towers Community Fitout, NSW,
International Towers, 6 Star Green Star – Interiors rating v1.1

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The Green Star ratings established by GBCA are globally respected, and achieving 6 Star Green Star certification represents world-leading practice. We're certainly proud of our investment in delivering best-in-class workplace environments for the people of our community. The concept of Carpe Diem was to establish an egalitarian opportunity for smaller organisations to benefit from robust sustainability standards in a way that was accessible and efficient. Our partnership with GBCA has enabled this vision to be realised, and it is delivering both financial and social dividends for all involved.

Kim Dawson

Fund Manager, International Towers



Start the journey towards better

If you're ready to start the journey towards a better built future, [contact us](#) for more information or to request a briefing.

Better fitouts,
today and tomorrow.

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