



# Green Star Fitouts

For building owners

MARCH 2026



Tonkin + Taylor Office Fitout,  
Auckland, Roxy-Pacific Holdings,  
6 Star Green Star - Interiors rating



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 New Zealand Green Building Council has certified hundreds of buildings, interiors and precincts across Aotearoa, 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 resilience 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 New Zealand Green Building Council, 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.



## 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 5–7<sup>1</sup> years, a single space can undergo seven<sup>2</sup> or more full refurbishments over a building's life. The result is a significant and compounding carbon footprint.

In fact, the cumulative embodied carbon of repeated churn can exceed the emissions from constructing the base building itself<sup>5</sup>. And this challenge is only intensifying as average tenancy lengths continue to shorten.<sup>4</sup>





## What rising scope 3 scrutiny means for building owners

As climate-related disclosure regimes in New Zealand and globally require large organisations to report Scope 3 emissions, fitouts and their associated emissions are now firmly in 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%<sup>7</sup> 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 consensus<sup>3</sup> 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 assessments<sup>10</sup>. The 2025 BCG–EcoVadis report<sup>8</sup> 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.

# Waste

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

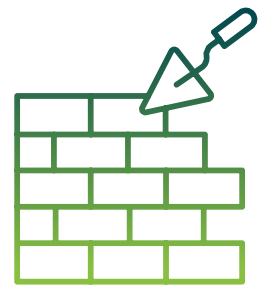
The average commercial fitout in Australia produces 368.6 tonnes of waste, with around \$105 per m<sup>2</sup> lost on materials that are ordered, installed and ultimately discarded. For a typical 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> office, that's more than \$210,000 in wasted materials per fitout.

## Fitout waste snapshot



**368.6**

tonnes waste per fitout<sup>1</sup>



**78%**

of materials end up in landfill<sup>11</sup>



**5-7 years**

Average lifespan<sup>1</sup>



“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

# 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.<sup>15</sup>



### Lighting quality

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



### Acoustics

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



### Layout & Amenity Access

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



### 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.<sup>17</sup>



### 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.<sup>18</sup>

## 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 outcomes.<sup>19</sup>

### **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” symptoms.<sup>19</sup>

Supporting healthier fitouts can reduce IAQ issues and reputational risk, even when tenants manage the works.



“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

# 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.

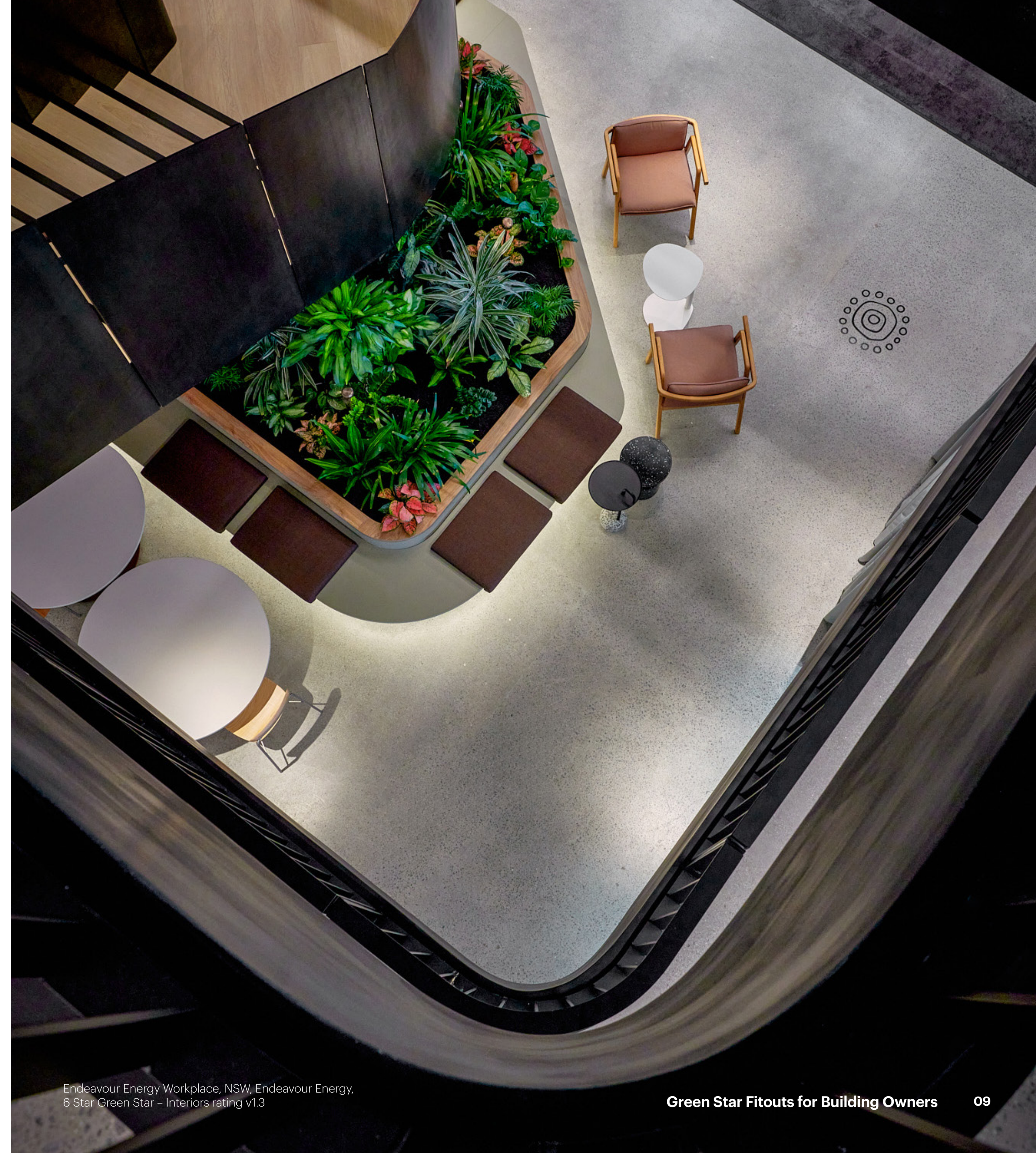
Demand for certified, sustainable interiors is accelerating

**72%** of JLL cost management leads surveyed reported an increased demand for sustainable fitouts.<sup>20</sup>

**72%** of organisations in Australia and New Zealand plan to increase investment in space design over the next five years.<sup>20</sup>

**65%** of organisations say enhancing employee experience through the workplace is a top priority in 2025.<sup>23</sup>

**87%** of occupiers across Asia Pacific are targeting 100% green-certified portfolios by 2030, up from just 4% today.<sup>21</sup>



## 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.

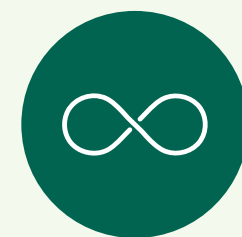
**The next section explores how.**



# 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.



### Healthy

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



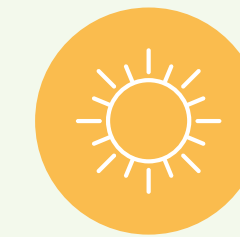
### People

Encourages solutions that address the social health of occupants.



### Responsible

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



### Positive

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



### 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.



### 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.

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.

“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.

“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

# 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.

# 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 the Commerce Commission of New Zealand increasingly focused on green claims, independent certification helps to protect 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.



Salta Properties, Vic, Salta Properties,  
5 Star Green Star – Interiors rating v1.3

**Green Star Fitouts for Building Owners**

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

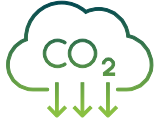


# How Green Star Fitouts works



### 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 Net Zero Ready Pathway.



### Deliver on the Net Zero Ready 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



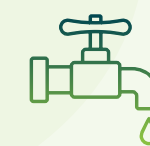
Be fully electric



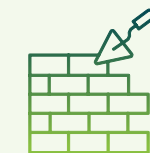
Be designed to consider the diverse needs of our population



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.



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



A 5 Star rated fitout demonstrates New Zealand Excellence



A 6 Star rated fitout showcases World Leadership.

**1** Minimum Expectations



**2** Net Zero Ready Pathway



Meets Net Zero Ready Pathway requirements

Meets Net Zero Ready 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.

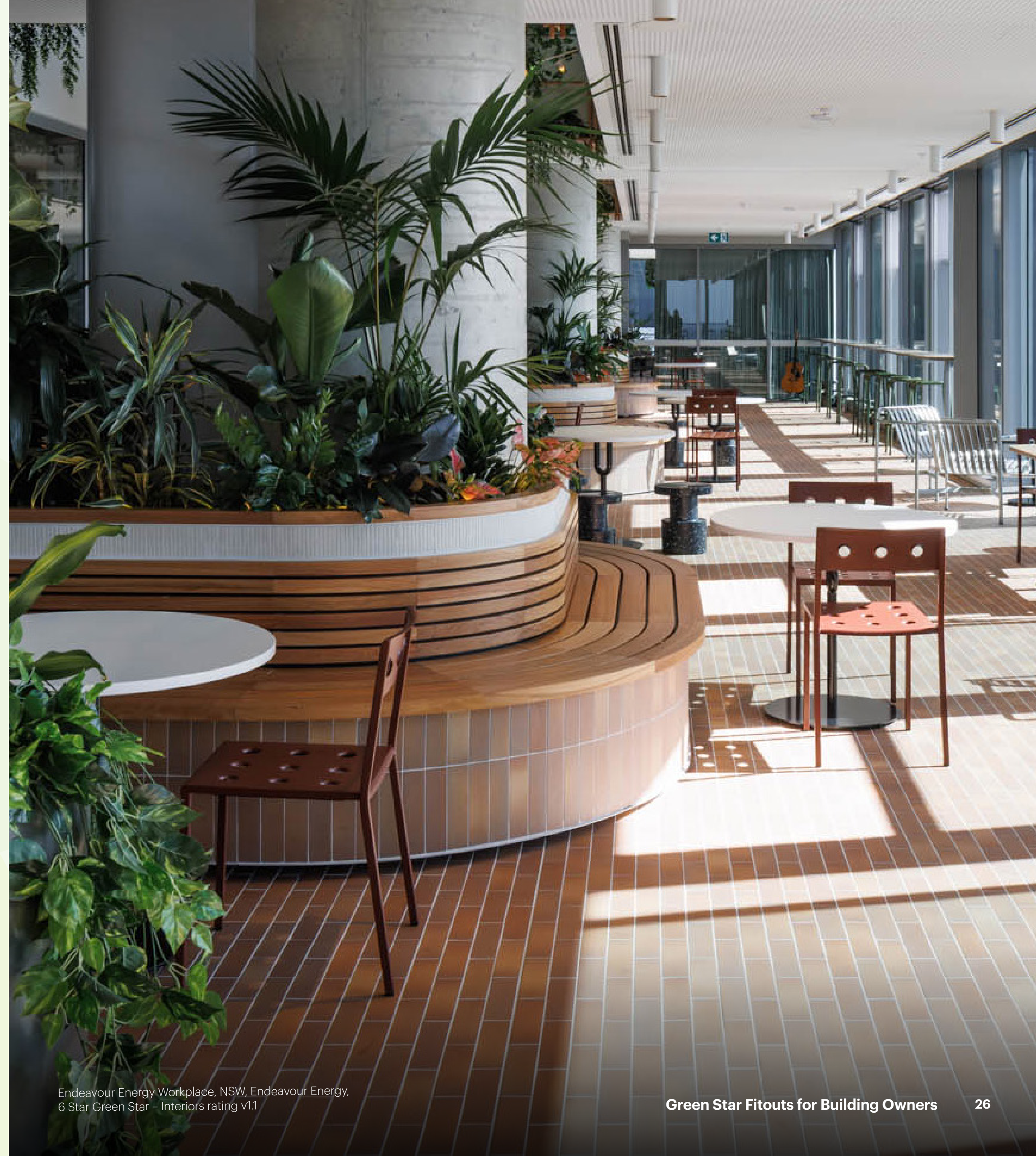
“The Green Star ratings established by GBCA are globally respected, and achieving 6 Star Green Star certification represents world-leading practice. We’re certainly proud of our investment in delivering best-in-class workplace environments for the people of our community. The concept of Carpe Diem was 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.



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