



COMMERCIAL

Sustainability
Awards 

Sustainability eBook 2022

GH Commercial

The 2022 Sustainability Awards Gala

It was in 2006, way back before smart phones or social media, when we launched what we now call the Sustainability Awards. Little did we realise that 16 years later, our 'little' awards would become the premier built environment sustainability awards program in Australia.

Not that it's a huge surprise really. With the growing awareness of carbon footprints, climate change and rising sea levels as well as the hard work we have put into promoting these awards, it's no great shock that the Sustainability Awards were always destined for greatness. And not only because of the moral imperative, but also due to the economic one.

Realistically speaking, sustainability is a business approach designed to create long-

term value by taking into consideration how organisations operate in the ecological, social, and economic environments.

Therefore, sustainability is built on the idea that developing such strategies fosters business longevity. Without this notion, neither the planet nor the businesses that thrive on it will have much longevity.

With that in mind, I'd like to thank you for your involvement in our Sustainability Awards programme, one that always has been, and always will be dedicated to promoting sustainability awareness in all its forms across Australia's diverse and vibrant built industry.

BRANKO MILETIC, EDITOR



The Awards Jury



JEREMY SPENCER
Director, Positive Footprints



OLIVER STEELE
Director, Positive Footprints



ARIANNA BRAMBILLA
Senior Lecturer, School of Architecture, Design & Planning



KATE NASON
Sustainability Advisor, Frasers Property



SANDRA FURTADO
Director, Furtado Sullivan



DAVID COATES
Founder, Sustainable Building & Design



MAHALATH HALPERIN
Architect & Director, Mahalath Halperin Architects



SIMONE SCHENKEL
Founder, Gruen Eco Design



DICK CLARKE
Princial, Envirotecture



MICHAEL FAINE
Architect, Faine Group Architects



SUSAN TOUMBOUROU
CEO, Australia Council of Recycling

Q&A with with Joel Williamson, National Sales Manager at GH Commercial

From a punk band to the national sales team at Australia’s leading flooring manufacturer - Joel Williamson talks about fusing creativity and practicality in business, his enduring commitment to sustainability and why GH Commercial looks beyond flooring to tackle Australia’s waste problem.



A&D: What is your background and what does your current role in the business entail?

JOEL WILLIAMSON: I started in the flooring industry on the installation side and steadily progressed to project management, to estimating and sales and then moved across to manufacturing.

Before that, I was a musician and involved in leadership roles in various organisations. I have always felt that having a blend of creativity and pragmatic business experience has given me a unique approach to the way I go about things and that coupled with industry experience anchored in delivering solutions at the project level has helped me a lot over the years.

Currently, I am the National Sales Manager at GH Commercial in Australia.

A&D: Has focus on sustainability always been a part of your career trajectory?

JW: Sustainability as a career path has changed so much over the years. I grew up in the Appalachian Mountains in Pennsylvania and have always had a strong connection with nature. While some kids were playing video games, I was hiking through the woods identifying and counting birds to provide reports to various bird societies with my family. I’m not saying I was always happy about it but it was ingrained in me and no matter what I have been doing, I have always been very aware that we are all part of this amazing ecosystem, and we have a responsibility to look after the world around us.

As I have gotten older, I have become more and more excited about the concept that industry is and needs to be shifting from being part of the problem to being part of the solution. Marcus Aurelius famously said “What stands in the way becomes the way.” I firmly believe that the industry is waking up to this now and in countless ways is looking to the very problem as the solution. I am excited to be a business leader that is part of this revolution.

A&D: And how does sustainability show up in your day-to-day as GH Commercial’s National Sales Manager?

JW: A lot of it boils down to communications, and assisting with decision-making and prioritisation. It’s fantastic to have a focus on a certain area, but it’s important to ensure that it’s something our architecture and design community, and end consumers, care about as well.

My team and I talk to our clients about the solutions that they need, and then we relay that back to our internal teams to inform how we do things. We see ourselves as part of our clients’ supply chain and if they have a goal to achieve – for example in terms of pursuing specific

certification marks – those are the things we need to be able to interpret and say “This is how we need to be thinking about it.”

Another crucial element of my role is collaborating with various certification bodies to understand how our offering fits in with their requirements, and to be able to offer the architects, designers and specifiers more assistance with how our products can help them achieve their goals in the certification space. Constructing a building that ticks the relevant boxes is one thing, but having to figure out how every single product that they have to choose fits within that scheme is a huge task.

A&D: How important is sustainability to your organisation? How does this commitment manifest through various stages of product development and company operations?

JW: Our company fully believes that our success comes through what many would call the triple bottom line principles of people, planet and performance. We like to sum it all up in our “Believe in Better” concept. We’ve been proud to make PVC-free carpet tiles in Australia for years and have received multiple sustainability awards for our innovation and our ability to incorporate sustainability into our everyday processes.

That’s why sustainability is not an independent factor in what we do – our sustainability steering committee is formed from most of the key leaders and individuals across each department to ensure that all decisions are balanced, that we can achieve our goals and that fresh ideas come from the places that are most aware of the issues.

As part of Mohawk Industries, the world’s largest flooring manufacturing company, we not only look inwardly at our own operations here in Australia or New Zealand, but we also take into account the global goals of the company. It’s important that the steering committee helps to drive the prioritisation and the coordination of projects, and to interpret reporting and

provide oversight along with ensuring that positive outcomes are achieved, and that we meet the relevant timelines and goals as well.

Because of this collaborative approach, there is often much better uptake in what we do across the entire organisation and it’s great to see the passion that many of our team have for the projects that affect them or their departments most. Where we can, we like to use external frameworks to help with benchmarking our own standards. For example, Declare Certification on products not only provides a benefit to our customers, but it also positively affects the people working in the manufacturing side who have to be around the raw materials we are using every day. It’s a win-win solution, but the process itself also helps us with driving better decision making from a procurement point of view and ensures that our change management processes are rigorous enough to maintain our certifications that get reviewed regularly.

A&D: What are the company’s current priorities from a sustainability point of view?

JW: We are working on a few fronts. Significant changes in the cost of energy mean that we need or have the opportunity to fast track many of our planned projects relating to increasing renewable energy production or use in our processes. In addition to this we are working on multiple ways to increase recycled content in all of the products that we manufacture along with creating real solutions to recycle pre and post-consumer waste into product lines that deliver better circularity for our industry here in Australia and New Zealand.

Carpet sits on this cusp between textile and building products. So for us, it’s really interesting to be looking at how we can start to solve textile waste problems and start to create solutions for the products that are currently going to landfill in Australia, and be putting them into really key applications throughout commercial and residential buildings around Australia.

And this isn’t limited to flooring, particularly because there aren’t many flooring brands that make their products in Australia. For instance, we collaborate with GT Recycling, here in Geelong, to help them create a product called fibre crete which takes the recycled carbon fibre and incorporates it into concrete, allowing a major reduction in the use of reinforcement steel in applications like footpaths or driveways. So even though we’re not in the concrete business ourselves, we’re definitely happy to be part of that conversation and those kinds of collaborations. Because collaboration is going to be the solution moving forward.

A&D: Speaking of the future, what are the company’s aspirations, goals and ambitions for the future from a sustainability point of view?

JW: Globally, Mohawk Industries wants to remain a leader in sustainability and at GH Commercial, we intend to partner with our global counterparts within a greater company to achieve goals such as reducing our impact in order to keep warming below 1.5 degrees. Locally we want to lead our industry to innovate and create solutions that make a real impact in Australia and New Zealand. This is beyond a specific product category but is across all categories.

We believe that as the largest flooring manufacturer across commercial and residential applications we are in a unique position to affect real change where the impacts are the greatest. We’ve already started the journey with Climate Active certified carbon neutral operations being achieved in 2021 and also now have a vast rollout of products that are Declare Certified to be Red List Free, PEFC certified timber products and more.

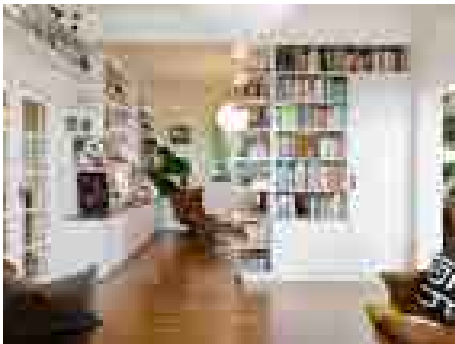
We are working to reduce our absolute emissions across all scopes and have set ambitious goals in both the inclusion of recycled or biobased renewable content in our products and the ability to recycle all products by 2030.

Interior Design Award Shortlist

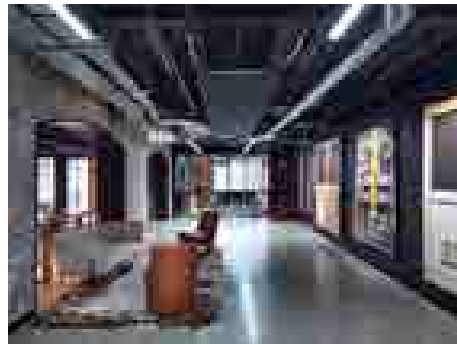
 proudly partnered by GH Commercial

A renovation or fit-out of the interior of an existing building where the sustainable design is involved with such factors as determining the efficient and effective use of space, selecting construction materials that offer low environmental impact and lowering pollution, waste, and the lowering of the overall energy consumption.

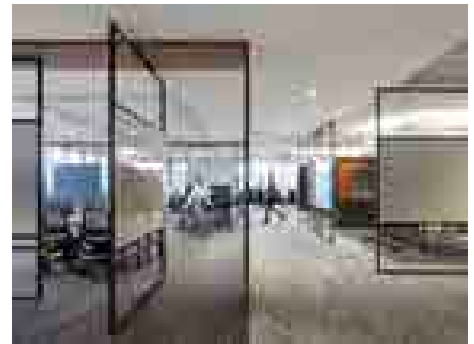
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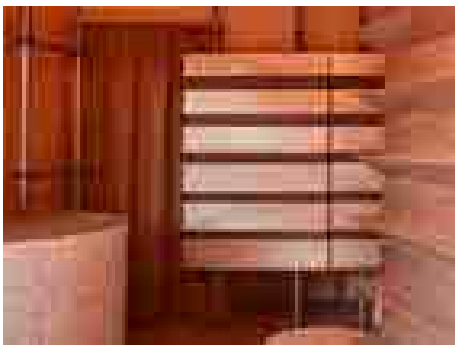
50/50S HOUSE
GREEN SHEEP COLLECTIVE



BUILT/SUBSTATION NO. 164
FJMTINTERIORS IN COLLABORATION WITH
FJMTSTUDIO



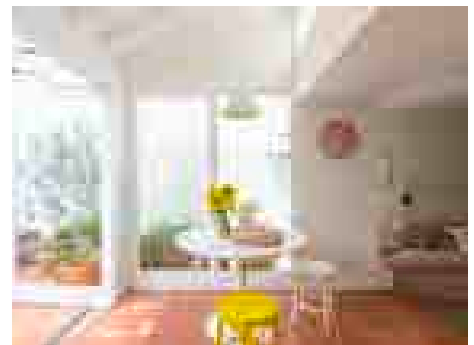
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT, VICTORIA
PECKVONHARTEL



FINESSE SHOE STORE
STUDIO EDWARDS



**KOOROOTANG COURT RETIREMENT
VILLAGE – COMMUNITY CENTRE
AND LODGE BUILDING CORRIDOR
REFURBISHMENT**
LENLEASE RETIREMENT LIVING IN
COLLABORATION WITH ARKEE CREATIVE



PIVOT HOUSE
SSD STUDIO

Award Winner

PROJECT PHOTOGRAPHY Toby Peet



BUILT/SUBSTATION NO. 164

FJMTINTERIORS IN COLLABORATION WITH FJMTSTUDIO

fjmtinteriors has created a new Head Office for Built Sydney within the adaptive reuse development SubStation No.164. A heritage warehouse and electrical substation are seamlessly integrated through modern insertions and interconnecting stairs, providing multiple view lines and circulation paths that provide a modern, sustainable and healthy workplace.

Originally two adjacent heritage buildings, the Shelley Warehouse and Electrical Substation No.164, were integrated by way of penetrations through their adjoining walls. As the Substation and Warehouse levels have differing heights, a series of stairs were used to unify the floors. Above, a new curvilinear glass tower is supported by a core and columns that penetrate through the heritage structure.

fjmt Interiors worked together with Built to determine which floors of the new development would best suit their business needs and heritage Levels two to four were selected to create the 2410 square metre mix of client-facing and open plan work space.

The two existing buildings are Heritage Listed along with the fit out targeting a 6 Star Green Star Interiors and WELL Platinum Rating. The combination of all three of these governing bodies and rating systems added an extra level of complexity and challenges to the project that were incorporated from the onset.

The design centres around respecting the heritage and celebrating the new, while incorporating an industrial aesthetic befitting a construction company. The introduction of biophilic elements and materiality for occupant comfort and well-coordinated technology inclusions compose the future-forward workplace.



Certifications: Intangible compliance or opportunistic value of the highest order?

Certifications. For a long time, they've been seen as a trivial tick of a box at best. Or, at worst, a confusing hindrance that can complicate a project. But we're turning a page on what used to be just an inconvenient piece of paper, and Lachlan Howell, GH Commercial's Corporate Sales & Sustainability Coordinator, weighs in on the strategic role certifications can play in the architecture and design industry.

“Our company wholeheartedly believes that certifications are not just an intangible form of compliance, rather opportunistic value of the highest order,” says Lachlan. “They provide integrity, transparency, and confidence for our customers and stakeholders alike. Today, certifications are much more than just a flashy piece of paper. It is the systematic change that is cultivated by the shifting significance of certifications and certifying partners, and the supplementary value that can be captured from an operational and commercial point of view.”

Any architecture and design professional will be familiar with the layered landscape of building and construction schemes and certifications. But while the complexity in this space might be challenging to navigate, it also offers a great benefit. “Uncovering and aligning with the right certifications can be pivotal to the success of an organisation’s strategy and provide additional value to its customers and stakeholders,” Lachlan points out. “At GH Commercial, we are challenging ourselves to design, manufacture and distribute innovative products with reduced environmental and social impacts – and aligning ourselves with the right types of certifications will be pivotal to future success.”

At the heart of this pursuit is a consideration of why they're in business, what their mission and goals are, as well as what customers and stakeholders value. “These are the types of concepts that need to be raised before one can understand the types of certifications that are appropriate,” says Lachlan. “Particularly, as they come in various forms and cover elements like product, operations, transparency and sourcing of raw materials, to name a few. And

it's to understand how certifying a particular product or operation can create value.”

The company's key framework and aspiration to 'Believe in Better' is anchored by a suite of independent and third-party verified certifications and schemes – such as Declare Red List Free or Global GreenTag. “We've already started our journey with Climate Active certified carbon neutral operations being achieved in 2021 and also now have a vast rollout of products that are certified Declare Red List Free, PEFC certified timber products, luxury vinyl planks and hybrid products certified Global GreenTag – GreenRate Level A and many more.”

Informed by the ambition to constantly uncover new avenues to minimise GH Commercial's social and environmental impacts, the certifications actively contribute to the organisation's commitment to constant improvement. The Declare programme – widely referred to as a “nutrition label” for building products – reflects the company's commitment to transparency. Participation in the PEFC – the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification – enables GH Commercial to help promote sustainable forestry, as well as provide their customers with products made with wood that has been responsibly cultivated and sourced.

Similarly, on top of the Global GreenTag's GreenRate Level A certification, some of their products are also certified under the Environmental Certification Scheme (ECS). Run by the Carpet Institute of Australia as an extension of the Australian Carpet Classification Scheme (ACCS) labelling scheme, ECS is concerned with the environmental performance of a carpet. The flooring-specific scheme offers

four levels of standards – the Green Star Level 4 certificate providing maximum Green Star points.

With the pivotal role certifications play for GH Commercial, as well as its umbrella company – Mohawk Industries – it is no wonder that the organisation always strives to hold the most integral and suitable certifications – both for the domestic, and the international clients.

“The fact that our products are made in Australia and New Zealand – and Australian Made certified – adds an extra layer of confidence for our local clients. GH Commercial is part of a global network, adhering to local regulations – and we are trying to provide the best value in terms of sustainability certifications.” This elevated level of integrity Australian Made certification offers is further enhanced by the global prowess of Mohawk Industries - and its incredible benefit when it comes to certifications' transference.

“Being able to transfer specific certifications across different regions is yet another fundamental consideration for a number of multinational or international organisations, specifiers, as well as clients,” Lachlan explains. “To be able to hold it in one region and then use it on a different project somewhere else is crucial to building an offering that achieves both the specifiers' and client's objectives.”

GH Commercial's commitment to the wider architectural community goes beyond Oceanic borders – and beyond flooring. With a strong stance on the strategic role environmental certifications can play for any business or industry professional, GH Commercial's is certainly one of the most prominent voices in both the domestic and global sustainability discourse.



Shine on: The future of local manufacturing is bright with GH Commercial

While more and more businesses in the architecture and design space invest in local production capabilities, only a handful can pride themselves on an Australian manufacturing heritage that stretches over 150 years. GH Commercial is one of these companies.

The company which forms the Oceanic division of the world's largest flooring manufacturer, Mohawk Industries, was first established in Geelong in 1865. Founded under the name of Godfrey Hirst, the establishment was Victoria's very first textile mill. With time, the shape of the facility – and the brand itself – has evolved, but this rich local heritage continues to inform the outstanding quality of the GH Commercial products, and the company's strategic and operational trajectory.

Today, GH Commercial's large local network spans three manufacturing plants and two distribution centres in Australia, as well as four world-class production facilities in New Zealand. "Having such a robust local manufacturing capability, we are able to have full control over how the products are made," explains Aaron Dawson, Commercial Carpet Manager at GH Commercial. Not only that – thanks to its strong local presence, the company was able to continue offering its high-quality products to Australian clients throughout the pandemic.

"Generally, a lot of our raw materials are sourced from offshore so we were impacted by the logistical challenges of the pandemic," Aaron says. "However, in the midst of COVID, we were able to construct a large facility at our North Geelong manufacturing plant which became our raw material warehouse. Having

all the material already in the country and on site, our exposure to what happened globally was dramatically reduced. In addition, being a local manufacturer with a bigger local logistical imprint, we were able to get around some of the hurdles that a lot of the importers faced through that time."

GH Commercial's local manufacturing facilities play a crucial role in advancing the organisation's sustainability, too. "The company is investing heavily in its sustainability journey with resources, training and knowledge," Aaron explains. "And with carpet manufacturing relying so heavily on electricity and gas, everything we can do in the renewable energy sector will help us maintain a viable and sustainable product portfolio."

Reducing the company's carbon footprint through solar energy plays a pivotal role in pursuing these ambitions. The facilities in Truganina and Laverton, with 220 panels at 100 kw and 216 panels at 99.36 kw respectively, were the first ones to be fitted with solar energy systems. The warehouses' robust footprints, as well as extensive flat rooftops, created the perfect conditions for panel installation and today, the systems power around a half of the facilities' energy use.

This year, however, GH Commercial completed the largest solar power project to date in their North Geelong carpet tufting

facility. Aaron explains that the plant in Geelong is a heritage building with an original roof, which is why the panels couldn't get installed any sooner. "In the old mills saw tooth roofs were useful because they let light into the factories," he adds. "But the shape of the roof makes it difficult to install solar panels, and so we had to prepare the building first"

However, the new system boasting 1088 panels at 460 kw each has most definitely made up for the time it took to get the building ready. "This is the first major generation of clean energy on any of our Godfrey Hirst sites," Aaron adds. "The system is 500 kW in size, uses five inverters and supplies almost 30% of the site's electrical energy requirements."

"From a sustainability point of view, the North Geelong system produces approximately 719 MWh of electrical energy each year, which will save around 12,886 tonnes of CO₂ over its lifetime," Aaron explains. "That is the equivalent of planting around 51,000 trees."

The transformative system which will power the production of over 16,000 lineal metres of carpet each day is yet another milestone on GH Commercial's sustainability journey. The solar energy investment on a local level is also a testament to their aspirations to continue honouring the Australian heritage well into the future. And that, Aaron says with a smile, is looking bright.



