



Tarkett Flooring Unifies Congress's New Six-Star Workplace

At the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Health Hub in Alice Springs, Tarkett's DESSO Linon Carpet Tiles and iQ Surface Homogeneous Vinyl lay a durable, low-maintenance foundation that echoes the riverine landscape and supports 6-star sustainability goals.

Susan Dugdale and Associates – SDA Architects – has designed the new 3000m² Congress headquarters over two levels, as a contemporary, practical workplace with room to grow. 'From the outset, the brief was clear,' says Claire Robertson, interior designer at SDA Architects. 'The building had to be practical, adaptable and future-focused, because the organisation is growing quickly and their needs are constantly evolving.'

One of Australia's largest health organisations supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Congress has served the community for more than 50 years. With around 600 staff based across Alice Springs, they chose to consolidate many services in a purpose-built facility beside the Todd River.

'The building is more than just an office,' says Simon Duke, Congress's Infrastructure and Capital Projects Manager, 'It's designed for our staff to collaborate across functions'. Drawing on the natural setting of the Todd River and cultural guidance from Congress's advisory team, it reflects the riverine landscape and creates a workplace that feels culturally grounded.

Design drivers from the river setting

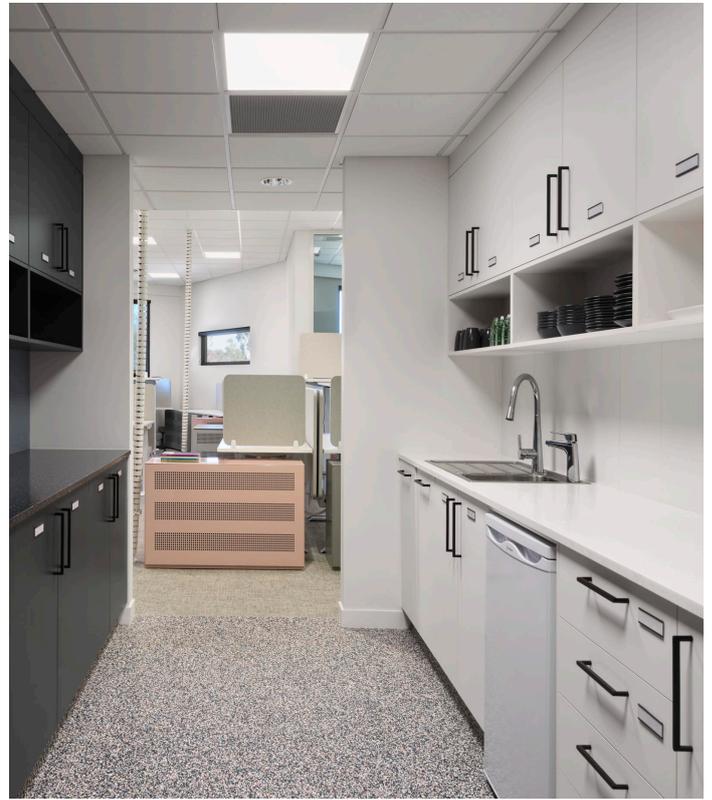
Congress wanted the building to honour cultural signifiers, such as the sacred tree cared for on the grounds, while presenting a modern, uncluttered workplace. For the SDA team, that meant balancing structure with flexibility, and function with a calm, contemporary palette.

'We created a flexible open-plan building for workspaces, meeting rooms and staff areas, as well as an area dedicated to non-clinical consult rooms and education spaces,' Claire says. These private consult rooms are designed as discreet, calming interview spaces with a natural and serene palette.

A mix of Tarkett's DESSO Linon Carpet Tiles and iQ Surface Homogeneous Vinyl adds colour, texture and visual clarity.

'We drew inspiration from the dry river setting,' says Claire. 'Look out the windows and you see blue sky, silver eucalyptus leaves and sandy river bed. We also nodded to the "cheeky galah", often seen around the site, with pale pink and soft warm greys throughout the office.'

To keep things simple, DESSO Linon runs continuously through circulation areas, meeting rooms and open workspaces. 'We didn't want lots of flooring breaks,' Claire explains. 'Linon's subtle, non-directional pattern reads as one continuous surface across large spaces.'



'Lilon has a natural, woven feel without strong directionality, so you get the look of Broadloom Carpet with the practicality of Tiles,' adds Claire. 'Those subtle flecks add warmth without distraction.' Kitchenettes shift to iQ Surface Homogeneous Vinyl, a terrazzo-style finish with pink, white and deep-blue flecks; a darker variant in the main staff kitchen creates a relaxed, restaurant-like mood. 'In the staffroom and training room we moved to a darker colour palette,' says Claire, 'so people feel they're stepping away from work at lunch.'

Performance, acoustics and sustainability

Both floor finishes meet Congress's practical brief: durable, low-maintenance and acoustically calm while supporting the project's sustainability goals.

'Quality was important, reducing ongoing maintenance and maximising product life with a supplier like Tarkett,' says Simon. 'The building targets a 6-star rating and needed to do more than provide four walls; it needed to show leadership in environmentally conscious design.'

The acoustic gains are noticeable. 'People are amazed by how quiet the building is,' he says. 'It's very conducive to focused work and the Tarkett products play a role in that.'

For Congress, the outcome is simple: a place that feels like theirs. 'Congress is about service delivery – Aboriginal health by Aboriginal people, for Aboriginal people,' Simon says. 'People feel, "This is our service, our building, our doctors and our support for families, culture and community." It's a welcoming place, and it won't take long for visitors to feel the same way.'

Project: Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Health Hub

Products: DESSO Lilon, iQ Surface

Designer: SDA Architects

Installer: Ozwide Flooring, Alice Springs

Photographer: Tom Roe Photography