



Towering city school softened with Tarkett and Desso flooring colours

Project: Prahran High School, VIC

Awards: 2019 Education Architecture Award,
Australian Institute of Architects
Best Project above \$10 million,
2019 Victorian School Design Awards

Product: DESSO Airmaster®

A clever colour scheme employing Tarkett vinyl and Desso carpet tiles has helped bring a sense of vibrancy and the essence of the natural world into an Award-winning high-rise city school.

Located in Melbourne's inner suburbs, Prahran High School (PHS) was recently constructed on a highly constricted yet premium site. This dictated vertical building, at five storeys high, is amongst the first and tallest vertical high schools in Victoria.

Rather than just taking the building to the site edges and creating a simple, boxy footprint, the client, Victorian School Building Authority, engaged architecture and integrated design practice, Gray Puksand.

The architect devised plans to create two slipped and shifted building plates around a central light-filled internal void which brings a sense of the outdoors in, and allows for large external balconies at either end of every floor.

The goal of infusing the urban building with elements of the natural world was in the architects' mind when it came to selecting colours for the school's flooring.



Gray Puksand associate and lead interior designer, Kristine Piggford, said “It is a very small site and as such doesn’t have a great deal of outdoor area. So, in understanding that, we wanted to create as much connection as possible to the outdoors and to nature” said Ms Piggford .

“Many schools in Australia have traditionally been built on large greenfield sites but with an inner-city environment a different building typology needed to be investigated. We wanted to juxtapose the largely grey, concrete, urban environment with bright and fresh colours. Tarkett’s wide range of colours was helpful in that regard.”

Desso carpet tile colours were chosen not just for the colour scheme, they are also used to delineate areas and to assist wayfinding.

“The floor colours identify different building levels and the Desso feature carpets are also used to define the spaces within levels,” said Ms Piggford. “It’s nice to see that the students follow the colour-coding quite naturally.”

Gray Puksand liaised with Tarkett early in the project planning stages and Tarkett Victoria projects manager, David Smyth, said Tarkett’s broad colour palettes across its range of carpet tile and vinyl flooring appealed to the architects, given their colour-driven intentions.

“Gray Puksand planned their interior colour schemes around refreshing and unique colours, and, pleasingly, our wide colour palettes accommodated that,” said Mr Smyth.

“The colours selected were in keeping with the theme of connecting with nature, as well as being vibrant and fresh,” Mr Smyth said.

Gray Puksand was impressed by Tarkett’s service during the consultation process. Extensive samples and advice were provided during the consultation stage, which they found most-helpful. ”

“We really liked the variety of patterns and the range of colours in the carpets and the resilient flooring ranges,” said Ms Piggford. “Once we found the colours to match our scheme, the specification process grew from there.”

Over 3600m² of Tarkett flooring products, comprised of Desso carpet tile and Tarkett vinyl sheet flooring, were used throughout PHS' interiors.

One of Tarkett's most innovative and urban-suitable flooring products was specified for PHS: Desso AirMaster®. AirMaster®'s unique yarn structure helps improve indoor air quality by capturing and retaining fine dust particles, making it perfect for asthma- and allergy-sufferers.

Studies by Radboud University in the Netherlands have shown that the concentration of fine dust in a school classroom was dramatically reduced over a two-week period using Desso AirMaster® along with an air purifier. Particulate matter was reduced by 60 percent during the weekend and 30 percent on weekdays.

When it was time to install the flooring products, Tarkett was again on hand to assist. "We were using a quite complex variety of colours and patterns," Ms Piggford said". Tarkett helped streamline the laying process for our builder by providing clearly coded and coloured installation diagrams.

"With a project of this nature there is a quite extensive consultation process involving the Victorian School Building Authority and stakeholders made up of educators, parents and the wider community. We presented to them with colour-boards, renders, samples and fly-throughs of the building to clearly illustrate our design. Everyone liked the scheme straightaway, which was great."

Students and staff express admiration for the school environment and such sentiment was shared by the Australian Institute of Architects, which commended Prahran High School for Educational Architecture in the 2019 Awards. PHS also won Best Project above \$10 million at the 2019 Victorian School Design Awards.

