



# Tarkett vinyl flooring an 'animal attraction' for 6 Star Green Star Melbourne uni vet hospital

Project: Melbourne Uni Vet Hospital, VIC

Product: iQ One

**A university in Melbourne's tertiary veterinary hospital and teaching buildings have been recently redeveloped to include 4000 square metres of Tarkett's PVC-free iQ One vinyl flooring, which provides sustainability credentials that can contribute to Green Star points.**

Tarkett's iQ One flooring also offers extreme durability, stain and abrasion-resistance for heavy traffic areas, hygienic properties, and outstanding aesthetics.

Located 30km south-west of Melbourne, the two buildings include over 8500 square metres of world-class veterinary teaching, learning, research facilities and full veterinary services, with the veterinary hospital receiving over 25,000 animal visits per year. With a specialist equine centre, it provides care for horses, exotic species such as reptiles and has specialist facilities for small animals such as cats and dogs.

The \$63 million campus redevelopment includes a modern simulation centre to reflect how medicine is taught, learned, and practiced – facilitating the development of skills essential for modern veterinary practice.

Being entirely PVC-free, Tarkett's iQ One vinyl flooring sports many sustainability credentials that contributed to the buildings being 6 Star Green Star-certified by the Green Building Council of Australia.

Tarkett specifications manager, Louisa Keleher, said iQ One has unique properties that are recognised by prestigious sustainability bodies. "iQ One is our new generation of resilient flooring and its non-PVC, non-plasticisers formula makes it the only homogeneous floor range on the market to be certified Cradle to Cradle™ Gold," said Ms Keleher. "It is also certified as Gold Plus GreenRate Level A by Global GreenTag and can help contribute to Green Star points."

Design Principal Tonya Hinde, of architects Billard Leece Partnership (BLP), said all materials for the buildings' redevelopment, including flooring, were carefully scrutinised for performance in a number of areas including aesthetics, durability and sustainability.

"There were multiple considerations," said Ms Hinde. "The main Green Star driver, though, was that iQ One is non-PVC and it met the environmental and other related requirements, so that was a big plus.

"It is actually quite difficult to achieve a Six Star Green Star rating in a building that consumes so much energy and because of the health guidelines around infection-control."

According to the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA), healthcare facilities are among Australia's most energy-intensive – using at least twice as much energy per

square-metre as commercial office buildings and around six times as much water. Such estimations also apply to the veterinary hospital because it is certified to human standards and, like human hospitals, is open 24 hours a day.

GBCA says the rationale for green healthcare facilities encompasses not just economic advantage, but also improved patient outcomes such as reduced cross-infection rates and better staff health. It says expenditure on sustainability has grown in response to this by 2.5 percent of total construction costs on most major hospital projects over the last five years.

Tarkett national marketing manager, Stacey-lee Smith, recognises that healthcare facilities must juggle limited budgets and said that floor maintenance is an area in which enormous savings can be made over time.

"The choice of the right, easy-to-clean flooring offers significant savings in terms of energy, labour and the quantities of water and cleaning agents required over the product lifecycle," said Ms Smith.

"Tarkett's iQ vinyl range is renowned for delivering the lowest lifecycle costs on the market – providing substantial cost-savings on cleaning and maintenance over the life of the floor."

Tonya Hinde of architects BLP said lifecycle was a key consideration for iQ One's specification. "Because many of the animal hospital's facilities are open 24 hours, it would be very difficult to close it down and reapply the flooring. The flooring really does need to have a long life and perform really well for its entirety. So, lifecycle is definitely a predominate consideration in our healthcare

specification process. It's also a consideration for Kane Constructions, the builder, which has a vested interest in the longevity for the flooring and considers the likelihood of any defects in the product."

Tarkett's lifecycle cost analysis shows that it is up to 10 times more expensive to clean and maintain the flooring in a public place (assuming it lasts 20 years) than the original purchase and installation costs. "This means that in just two years, cleaning and maintenance can cost as much as the flooring itself," said Tarkett's Stacey-lee Smith. "Flooring treated with wax, polish or other surface treatments is labour-intensive to maintain and ultimately less cost-effective over its lifetime than our alternatives.

"Stripping and polishing also has negative environmental impacts due to higher water and chemical consumption. With iQ One, there is no need for polish or wax. A simple dry-buffing is enough to restore this floor's original appearance."

"It helped a lot that the iQ One surface is homogenous in that it has self-healing properties because scratches and damage can just buff out," said Ms Hinde. "That helped it satisfy the hygiene criteria.

"We have worked on a lot of health projects before and infection control is a paramount issue," she continued. "That's where impervious flooring becomes so important. For example, the uni's top floor has a very large teaching surgery room and iQ One is perfect for the area. Most human surgeries have only one patient, but the vet's teaching surgery has up to 30, so durability is even more important."





“The application of the Tarkett vinyl flooring is vast throughout both buildings and is a driver of the effects we sought to achieve. Just because it’s vinyl doesn’t mean it can’t be an effective design tool. We played with the flooring colours and patterns to great effect.”

Tarkett’s Stacey-lee Smith agreed and said the practical applications of colour, pattern and texture are particularly important for flooring in healthcare facilities.

“Flooring is not just a surface covering, it is a functional element of good interior design and can affect inhabitants in many ways, contributing to patient reassurance and recovery, and hospital staff wellbeing,” said Ms Smith.

“Flooring colours and patterns can provide a contribution at psychological and sensory levels by creating a calming atmosphere that promotes wellbeing and calmness.”

Ms Hinde said another strategy to help calm the animals was to design a new reception with segregated waiting areas for individual animals and different species of animals.

“We did a lot of consultations with vets – as well as researching veterinary waiting rooms – about how to best reduce stress levels amongst animals. A calming, soft and friendly environment helps the animals and also their owners. De-stressing the animals also makes their treatment easier for the vet.

“In the front of the vet building entry area, we have protective furniture pods and we used a lot of earthy tones on the iQ One flooring such as greens and greys, referencing textures from surrounding farmlands. So with colour, we were blurring that front entry as an inside/outside zone.

“Most companion animals are familiar only with their homes and the park, so it was good to have that parkland on the threshold to the entrance and waiting rooms before the inner consulting rooms – there’s not this sharp, jarring environmental transformation. Colour is very powerful in that regard. Also, the Tarkett IQ One flooring has an almost pre-aged texture, so that also ties-in to the grains of nature.

Some unusually thorough practical testing was conducted before the ultimate specification of iQ One flooring was decided on.

“We at BLP have specified flooring for many human health environments, but not so many animal environments. There are a few differences in behaviour, said Ms Hinde.

“It was at the vet’s request that they could trial the product for an extensive period and Tarkett was really helpful in that they supplied us large rolls of samples, enough to cover a long corridor between the rooms in the surgery area. That way, the veterinary clinicians could actually test

Ms Hinde said the client brief was to expand and modernise the existing veterinary building and ensure a correlation with the new teaching building.

“The original vet building was a 1960s brown brick double-storey utilitarian structure. The uni really wanted the new extensions and interiors to make a contemporary statement and the colour schemes were essential to that,” said Ms Hinde.

“The colours we used are derived from the buildings’ regional context. Treated materials make contemporary references to rural Australia, celebrating both flora and fauna.”

The Tarkett vinyl flooring range – which also includes 1000m<sup>2</sup> of Granit Safe .T in wet/scrub areas – has helped realise the design intent of the hospital’s interior colour scheme.

Ms Hinde said that Tarkett’s extensive range of iQ One colours led it to specify the product over a different proposed material. “We originally chose linoleum flooring but the extensive colours in the iQ One range meant we could match the colours and ensure the product had greater wearability, and hose-down cleanability, while still meeting our Green Star requirements,” said Ms Hinde.

Even the welding rods for the iQ One flooring can be colour-coordinated and are also non-PVC.

Ms Hinde said the colours were selected with a goal of creating a relaxing, reassuring atmosphere. “We were trying to create a non-institutional feeling, a very welcoming inside/outside feeling and the colours were central to that,” she said.

the flooring's practical performance with their dogs, who ran around on it with nails that hadn't been cut for ages, scratching, urinating, vomiting – everything dogs get up to. They were particularly impressed with the slip-resistance.

"We really appreciated that Tarkett provided a large volume of sample product for us to trial and test, and be confident in. That was very valuable to us because the vets are scientists and they really do like to test and trial things, and gather information and evidence.

"There were four other products from other suppliers that were also tested, but after we trialled iQ One we found it to be the most suitable amongst the range of products from different manufacturers, and also different Tarkett product types.

"One of the key reasons we found it fit-for-performance in the context of its usage was that it showed less abrasions, it remained a smooth, continuous surface and we couldn't see any pronounced marks. As architects, we don't like to risk there being performance issues through usage later on.

"Also, we chose an earthy-grey colour for the surgery with the idea of it providing a clinical feel and that colour also helps with resistance to marking. There's a lot of trolley usage and it's really practical and forgiving of that. Otherwise, with up to 30 trolleys coming in and out of surgery, you're going to get a lot of scuff marks from the wheels. Even if you try to clean those scuff marks, they linger. It might be clean but it's still marked-up. Having that practical grey colour and the durable qualities of iQ One makes it feel new and clean. So that's really good for high-traffic areas and really heavy trolleys – especially with horses and cows."

Flooring installers Aywon, handled the job and managing director Stuart Broomfield said it was another example of his business' longstanding working relationship with Tarkett.

"I've been working at Aywon for 35 years and my relationship with Tarkett goes back about 30 years and, in that time, I've noticed Tarkett products have continuously improved and are easier to work with," said Mr Broomfield.

"We had never used iQ One before and it was a little different to install than some other Tarkett vinyls because it's non-PVC but we just changed a few things from the usual installation. We used a different contact adhesive for the coving, for example, and we worked our way through it, so it was all good. At the end of the day it was pretty straightforward. Also, it was our first time working with iQ One so in the future we'll know exactly what to do."

Mr Broomfield said his dealings with Tarkett throughout the process were "Spot-on."



"They helped all the time, especially with lead times," he said. "There was a lot of communication during the project, so that was really good. They even came through with us for a fair bit of the inspection process." Asked what his impressions of the job were, once concluded, Mr Broomfield said: "When it was all done, it looked smart. I think it came up great."

Ms Hinde was similarly impressed with the final finish. "I think it looks wonderful," she said. "Something I'm particularly fond of is that, although iQ One flooring is used in the in the learning building's clinical zone to great effect, it just looks so great in the vet building's main entrance. It's warm, it's friendly, it's reassuring for furry mates, and non-furry mates, and their human companions.

"In that space there's a lovely sense of friendliness and equality. You don't feel like you're in a cold, clinical place and the colouring and the warmth of the iQ One flooring is a large part of that. We're really proud of the result."