



Sustainability

 Podcast Series eBook

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The industry podcast that continues to grow in leaps and bounds

The Talking Architecture & Design podcast has now reached Season 5, a period that has seen not only marked growth in its scope and subject matter, but also in the industry recognition of its true value.

We launched the podcast at the end of 2017 without an understanding of just how big it would become. But here we are, at the end of 2021, celebrating a podcast series that is firmly established as essential listening for members from all corners of the architecture, design, and construction industries.

The podcast's strength is its ability to delve into the issues that are shaping the industry now, and will be key drivers of innovation and growth in coming years. We've categorised topics into four themes, each of which has been supported by one of our incredible customers and industry stalwarts.

There's no doubt that sustainability is the issue defining the future of our industry. The **Sustainability** series is sponsored by **Interface** and provides unique perspectives on some of

the most interesting developments in the sphere of architectural sustainability. From how Indigenous culture can inform more sustainable design, to how the various product and project certifications in the market are helping us to achieve more environmentally friendly outcomes in a shorter space of time.

As the founder, editor, and host of Talking Architecture & Design, I can say (without bias, of course!) that if you haven't listened to our podcast, you should make a point to do so. If you'd like more information about our increasingly popular sponsorship programme, please visit podcast.architectureanddesign.com.au

Enjoy the listen and the read!
Branko Miletic



Positive about Negativity: Interface's journey towards a restorative carbon footprint

If we stop and think about the damage that we are doing to our environment we should reflect on the words of Hubert Reeve, Canadian astrophysicist and philosopher when he said “Man is the most insane species. He worships an invisible God and destroys a visible Nature. Unaware that this Nature he's destroying is this God he's worshipping.”

Ray C Anderson, CEO, and founder of Interface came to this realization in 1994 just over 21 years after he started up the company. In 1994 when a customer asked what the company was doing for the environment, his response was “not much”. He lost that customer. Looking for answers he turned to Paul Hawken's book “The Ecology of Commerce” and as he read, he had what he called his spear in the chest epiphany. He clearly saw that, as a captain of industry, he was responsible for the pollution and biodiversity loss referred to in Hawken's book.

He became convinced that there is only one business – the business of life. He reimagined everything - the interface, if you will - between industry and ecology, economies and ecosystems, the present generation, and future generations. Ray changed course and the change was dramatic. Interface became a company with purpose, Mission Zero®. That purpose was to reduce its environmental impacts to zero by 2020.

Interface celebrated success in achieving its Mission Zero targets in 2019. Sadly, Ray, like the medieval architect building his cathedral, did not live to see his vision completed. He died in 2011.

Since Ray's “midcourse correction” 27 years ago, sustainability has been imprinted in the Interface DNA and the company is now one of the most innovative global businesses when it comes to not just minimizing, but reversing, its impact on our natural environment.

“As the company neared its Mission Zero goal it realized that doing no harm was not good enough and that the company had to become restorative” says Interface Sustainability Manager, Aidan Mullan, “Industry must repair the damage it has done”. In

2016 Interface set a new plan in action - Climate Take Back. “The key tenet of this plan is that if humanity has changed the climate by mistake, then humanity can reverse that change with intent”. Interface set a new audacious target, to become a carbon negative company by 2040.

Since 1996 Interface has reduced its carbon footprint by 76% and, to make all its products carbon neutral across their full life cycle, it has been necessary to purchase carbon offsets to neutralize the remaining emissions. “A company that declares it will achieve carbon neutrality or indeed carbon negativity, by using carbon offsets only, is greenwashing. Interface recognizes offsets as a necessary short-term steppingstone towards becoming carbon negative,” explains Aidan, “the key focus is real emissions reduction. Interface recently signed up to the Science Based Targets initiative, committing to Business Ambition 1.5°C. This means it will cut current emissions by 50% by 2030 taking it closer to its 2040 goal”.

“To achieve carbon negativity by 2040,” he continues, “requires innovative new technology and rethinking the raw materials that we're using to manufacture our product and reduce climate impact. The company has done this by making a substantial investment in its “Backings of the Future” production lines that will use recycled and bio-based raw material to reduce its carbon footprint. It is the innovative use of carbon sequestering bio-based materials that will take the company to its 2040 target”.

This year Interface launched its first carbon negative, cradle to gate, carpet tile into the Australian market. The Embodied Beauty™ collection is inspired by nature and designed to respect it.



Aidan Mullan | Interface



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bit.ly/TAD_E066



Building Sustainably with Green Star and the Green Building Council of Australia

For more than 20 years, the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) has been a leading force in improving the sustainability standards of the built environment in Australia. The GBCA educates industry, government practitioners and decision-makers, and advocates for policies and programs that support their vision and purpose. They also represent more than 550 members including individual companies with a collective annual turnover of more than \$46 billion.

But perhaps they are best known for their best practice sustainability framework, Green Star. Since 2003, Green Star has been Australia's largest voluntary and truly holistic sustainability rating system for buildings, fitouts and communities. It is widely considered to be the shining light of sustainability within domestic construction; people in the industry know that if someone is building to Green Star specifications, they're serious about sustainability.

"The story behind the Green Building Council of Australia is pretty simple," says Jorge Chapa, Head of Market Transformation at the GBCA. "The Sydney Olympics were marketed as the first green olympics, the construction really took the environment into account. And after the olympics, the industry got together and said, 'It turns out delivering great, sustainable buildings does make

sense. And so why don't we just actually do that?'"

In his 14 years at the GBCA, Jorge has seen the industry's approach to sustainable built environments shift dramatically. "It's really gone from a conversation around how we stop making people sick by being in buildings, to a conversation around how we use the built environment to make us healthier and more socially responsible. And that's a big shift from even just 15 years ago, or even five years ago. And that conversation has now become mainstream within the industry."

The GBCA's holistic approach to sustainability means its interests, advice, and expertise extend much further than advising developers on how much solar they will need to offset their fossil fuel energy requirements. They provide advice relating to all aspects of the built environment, including building reuse. "There are a lot of cases where a building needs to have very specific functions - like a stadium, or a commercial block. The challenge we face is to consider what else we can use those buildings for? Or how do we set out the building so that in 20 years, once its initial commercial life has ended, it can be refit and repurposed into a residential space? How do you make residential spaces more adaptable?"

But it's through Green Star that the GBCA aims to have its most significant impact on the construction future of Australia. "Green Star is very much a standard," says Jorge. "It's based on the idea that if we can set leadership targets, we can start changing how industry practices work. So the newest version of the rating system, for example, has requirements that buildings have to be operating at net zero emissions, highly efficient, powered by renewables, fossil fuel free. What we

want is to be able to go to the Government in 2030 with a range of sustainability suggestions and say, 'hey, you should be updating the building code because there are already thousands of buildings that we rated that are able to do what we're asking you to mandate.'"

But when developers and designers are looking to get Green Star certified, a great deal of time and thought must go into specifying the most environmentally friendly products within the building itself. And for commercial or larger scale constructions, flooring is one of the most significant considerations. Interface is one of the leading suppliers of sustainable flooring to the Australian market recycled PVC carpet tiles.

Interface was the first flooring company in Australia to publish Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) for all their product categories. Their EPDs, ratings and certifications can help construction professionals achieve full points towards Green Buildings under Green Star® Materials Calculators and Best Practice Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) Credits.

Interface recently achieved a carbon negative milestone, launching the world's first carbon negative carpet tile, and has been leading the way by reducing the carbon footprint of their products and manufacturing processes for more than two decades.

Jorge Chapa | Head of Market Transformation at the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA).



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Improving WELLness at Interface's Sydney Headquarters

In a time where (even before the world was engulfed by a pandemic) health and wellness are very much front of mind for people and businesses alike, the process of discerning what standards are legitimate and rigorously tested can be a tough one. In a sea of wellness initiatives, the WELL Building Standard stands out. It's one of the few that takes a holistic approach to factors within the built environment and how they impact upon human occupants.

"WELL first emerged in 2014. And primarily, the early adopters were investors looking to differentiate their assets," says Lisa Hinde, Strategic Sustainability Director with real estate company JLL. "More and more occupants are seeking transparency around health and wellbeing, so we know that that's a highly valued attribute to any space that new organisations are starting to adopt. And we know from the peer reviewed research, that sustainable and healthy work environments are leading to more productive and engaged occupants."

"So we saw quite a few big investors investing in this space," she continues. "The flow on effect of that was organisations like Interface, who were deploying their products in these spaces, were thinking about how the health and wellbeing benefits of their products could be brought into their own office. So they were one of the first to adopt it from an occupier perspective, to demonstrate their products that are healthy and sustainable, but also to better the experience of their own staff at their corporate headquarters."

WELL looks at a number of different areas that affect the human experience in the built environment and applies science and rigorous testing to determine their impact. "It's not just a desktop summary of what you've done," says Lisa. "There's someone conducting an independent review of your space and determining that yes, your air quality is good. Yes, your water quality is safe. It's also a cyclical process - you don't just do it once and then 10 years later, you can still claim that you've got these health and safety measures in place or health and well being measures in place. You're constantly checked."

Pablo Albani is Principal of Interior Design at group GSA, and has a wealth of experience in applying a holistic health and wellness approach to design. He consulted with Interface along their

journey towards implementing WELL standards in their office. "The Interface office is in a heritage building, which - in terms of the building - means you never know what you're going to find," says Pablo. "But once they decided to go down this road, they were committed. There were challenges in the building constraints in terms of clean air, there were existing conditions of the building that we needed to consider from a WELL perspective. So we spent a lot of time working out if things we wanted to do were physically possible to achieve. And if they weren't, then we found other ways to satisfy the WELL components."

The cost of these fitouts can be seen by some as prohibitive - and there's no doubt that, like anything, opting for a higher wellness performance costs more than just doing the bare minimum. But for Interface, the holistic lens of the WELL framework applied to cost too. "They looked at their organisation internally, they knew they were a sustainable company," says Pablo. "So when it came down to cost, they really looked at the whole picture. Their expenditure on the WELL certification is offset by things like staff wellness and happiness, staff retention and so on. So they said, 'yes, we're spending this much, but we're going to get so much value out of it across the organisation over time.'"

It's both poetic and indicative of Interface's company values that their thinking and approach is guided by a holistic, long-term worldview. As they continued to learn and iterate through the journey of WELL certification, they identified new ways of working and beneficial processes that could inform the way they operate across their business. "One of the cool things about the Interface project is that a number of the policies that were implemented just for this project for certification have been adopted, Australia wide for the organisation," says Lisa. "So it's really a great outcome overall."



Pablo Albani | Principal of Interior Design at GroupGSA



Lisa Hinde | Strategic Sustainability Director with JLL's Energy & Sustainability Services team



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bit.ly/TAD_E080



How Indigenous knowledge is informing more sustainable building design

Australia's colonial history is evident throughout our architecture and design - monolithic sandstone buildings in our cities and towns, victorian terraces in our suburbs, and everything from art-deco to mid century modern and ultra-contemporary now dotting our skylines. However, there's a notable lack of design that is informed by the knowledge and traditions of our first nations peoples; design that is informed by a deep understanding of landscape and climate forged over 60,000 years of culture.



Christian Hampson | Proud Woiburrung and Maneroo man and with an extensive background in Indigenous Cultural Heritage management

Christian Hampson is a proud Woiburrung and Maneroo man with an extensive background in Indigenous Cultural Heritage management. In 2018, Christian co-founded Yerrabingin, a visionary

start-up that seeks to disrupt conventional approaches to ending Indigenous disadvantage and create intercultural opportunities for future generations to thrive. Yerrabingin has become a leading force in the commercial design industry by delivering environmentally conscious native landscapes and place making designs enriched with Indigenous narratives.

"We have this design sensibility in Australia, that, in many cases, is borrowed from other cultures," says Christian. "So even when we look at current designs in Australia, if you had a bunch of pictures of buildings, you probably couldn't tell which ones are Australian. But if you lined up 10 pictures of 10 different landscapes, nine times out of 10, you'd be able to pick which one is the Australian landscape. So I think our design identity can mature to the point that we have an identifiably Australian signature approach."

Better integration of First Peoples' knowledge into solutions for design and climate change is something that is coming to the fore not just in Australia, but globally. Christian sees the benefits that Australian indigenous peoples' culture brings to our current climate issues. "So there's two factors, there's tens of thousands of years of close connection to landscape and climate and the changes, and what that's meant at a cultural level. And then the other thing is that environmental consciousness is actually the key component of our spirituality. We don't believe in heaven or hell, we live in it right now. And therefore, you must look after your own nest. There's a mental and a physical well-being aspect to country, and even in an urban environment, we can have that if we design these

places properly. And that is the opportunity."

"I think, just by people wanting to have that bit of that connection to the landscape, it recommends materials that are sustainable, that fit our environment better," he continues. Christian advocates for an approach that could be considered hyper-local, relying on the innate knowledge of different first nations groups about the prevailing environmental and micro-climatic conditions on their country. "Different mobs have different seasons, and it's all based around when certain things are happening. And I think if we get down to that level of awareness of local environments, we can build larger buildings that perform better because they're really in tune with their location. So if I'm on George Street in Sydney, down near the harbour, that's different to when I'm building a house up in Liverpool."

Ultimately, the elevation of first nations voices when it comes to architecture and design within Australia stands to create positive outcomes on social, economic, and cultural scale - not just for indigenous people, but for all Australians. "There's a really big opportunity to ensure First Nations people in the design conversation. Creating the opportunity to narrate and have their fingerprints on those places is really quite empowering and something that I think that visitors and people who live in different suburbs would be very open to."



Listen to episode here
bit.ly/TAD_E085



Biophilic design: An opportunity for architects, an opportunity for the planet

The onset of the pandemic compelled us to have a hard look at the role of the built environment in our lives, with lockdowns highlighting the stark limitations of contemporary residential design. These circumstances - that the majority of Western and developed countries haven't perhaps explored or considered in too much depth before - have further compounded focus on biophilic design and sustainability, and the paramount role these concepts have for the future of our planet.

"The restrictions on movement and going outside have really accelerated this awareness that we are really far away from where we need to be," says Stephen Choi, the Living Building Challenge Manager at Frasers Property Australia. "Being locked into a home has made us far more attuned to the environments that we've set up."

A UK-qualified Project Architect and Australian-qualified Project Manager, Stephen co-founded not-for-profit environmental building consultancy, Architecture for Change and has been a long-time ambassador for the Living Future Institute in Australia. "I have found lots of projects that have benefited from thinking about biophilic design and having incorporated it - spaces that are inside that actually have a feeling like you're outside," Stephen says. "We have this desire to be outdoors, to feel something, even if it is the rain that we may never have wanted to walk out into."

The ability to maintain the connection to the wilderness that can be achieved through biophilic design has incredible, and very current, wellness benefits. But it has also got the potent ability to define our future. "When you think about the trajectory that we're on right now - changing climate, air pollution, water quality problems, ecosystems being degraded - I'm sure that we don't want to sustain that kind of trend. We have to be in a place where we are regenerating," the winner of the Australian Institute of Architects' 2020 Leadership in Sustainability Prize explains. "Biophilic design is a perfect gateway into that," Stephen adds. There's a lot of research demonstrating that whatever we are exposed to as children, we care more about as adults. "If you grow up in an external environment,

where you have a lot of connection to the natural world, you're far more likely to have a strong environmental bias when you are an adult." Because of that biophilic design has a really key role to play. "We have to get people to care about the natural world of which we're part of - even though they might not be directly experiencing that wild nature on a daily or even monthly or even annual basis."

And while some flippantly suggest the only way forward would be to go back to the caves, Stephen respectfully disagrees. "I understand the sentiment but I feel that it's not helpful. We need to be pragmatic and hopeful about what we're doing. There are many things about our society that are systemically difficult to address - that we live in a very car centric place, for example - but there are so many things that are changing," he says decidedly. He goes on to mention a transformative initiative that saw biophilic design principles breathe a new life into a public housing neighborhood in Malmö, Sweden, and the biophilic wonder that is the Khoo Teck Puat Hospital in Singapore as real-life examples. "Khoo Teck Puat Hospital was the only hospital in the world where as a result of arriving I felt better," he shares.

Stephen thinks there is a lot of opportunity for a positive change here, in Australia. "If you go up high in Sydney and you look down, and all you're seeing is air conditioning systems - not even solar power in a lot of cases - that's quite depressing. There's so much potential there - it just takes some care, and some levers that will make changes in economics. In and around the Melbourne area, there's a lot of councils that have declared a climate emergency, and yet they are approving buildings every day that are actually degrading the very climate they say is in

an emergency situation. It's very dangerous to use terms, and then not follow through on them because they become weaker over time. And the word emergency is a very strong term."

There is no doubt that legislative levers are at least a part of the answer. "It is an absolute requirement. We can rely on some private developers to do innovative things but until we go from the bottom up approach, we're talking about such a radical change needed in the shortest amount of time possible. That's not all going to happen through a handful of innovative developments."



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Stephen Choi | Living Building Challenge
Manager at Frasers Property Australia.





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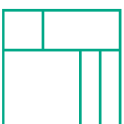
The Embodied Beauty™ collection is designed to help restore the health of the planet and lower the carbon footprint of your space with style. The collection features a range of beautiful carpet tile designs, including our first-ever cradle to gate carbon negative products in three unique styles: Shishu Stitch, Tokyo Texture, and Zen Stitch.

The collection is inspired by the Japanese aesthetics of minimalism, restoration, and the organic beauty of the natural world. From narrow monochromatic patterns to large scale graphic tufted textures, these styles all combine and contrast tastefully.

The Embodied Beauty collection lives up to its name and shows that the pursuits of beautiful design and sustainability are inseparable. In addition to the three cradle-to-gate carbon negative styles, as part of Interface's commitment to Climate Take Back™, all of the styles that are featured within the collection are carbon neutral across their full product life cycle.

Together, we can build a healthier planet.

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