

# RAISING THE BAR

Darby Plaza is an 8-storey state-of-the-art 'A' grade office and retail development. The project features smart building technology, superior end-of-trip facilities, informal meeting areas, and a lobby cafe and public plaza that will enrich the lives of its occupants and the wider community.

**GWH is a company built by locals for locals in the Newcastle and Lower Hunter region, positioning the company to tender for the Darby Plaza project in the Newcastle CBD through the Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation (HCCDC).**

The key aim of the tender was to activate a disused site which once formed part of the old Newcastle rail corridor and in doing so provide a public link between the very popular Darby Street and the Newcastle Foreshore. GWH's proposal was to design and construct a multi-storey state-of-the-art 'A' Grade work and lifestyle destination that will enrich the lives of its occupants and the wider community. The combination of smart building technologies, incredible end-of-trip facilities, informal meeting areas, lobby café and public plaza linking Darby Street to the Newcastle Foreshore will create an unrivalled and unique tenant and customer experience.

"True innovation lies in the ability to view, manage and streamline a project from beginning to end. And that's where we're without equal," said GWH Marketing and Communications Manager, Shannon Hutton. "We have a strong reputation for turning possibilities into reality for our clients by delivering on time, high quality, end-to-end solutions that exceed expectations."

There are a number of highlights and unique elements to Darby Plaza including a Kone destination control lift system and precast concrete and post tension suspended slab construction. "The building is supported by continuous flight auger piles (CFA) which extend 14m down to the layer of rock below," said Project Manager, Blake Maxted. "The structure consists of precast concrete structural walls and columns supplied by Hunter Precast. Hunter Precast also constructed the structural cores from precast concrete"

The façade of the building features custom moulded feature patterned precast concrete panels and architectural laser cut feature screening. Hunter Windows custom engineered a strip window system that was hybridised to form elements of curtain wall to produce the continuous appearance over multiple stories on the building

façade. Custom faceted sections were used to form the curve on the SE corner of the building. The window framing was supported on custom made slab edge mounted support brackets. LOW E glass was used throughout to meet and exceed energy efficiency requirements.

The air conditioning system for the building is a Water Cooled VRV system which provides energy efficiency and plant lifespan advantages when compared to other systems. There is also a large solar electricity system on the roof to contribute to the building power and again reduce the building's energy requirements.

Imported Turkish marble features throughout the building and the end-of-trip facilities featuring secure showers, change rooms, lockers and bike & surfboard storage are unlike any others in Newcastle.

However, the development was not without its challenges. "We had to relocate major inground infrastructure from within the site including the underground stormwater culvert, high voltage electricity substations and cables,

telecommunications cables, traffic light control infrastructure and sewer mains," said Blake.

"We're proud of our established network of preferred partner relationships that came together to deliver Darby Plaza," said Shannon. "Having completed more than \$1 billion of projects over our 25 years, GWH has the proven formula to always deliver on time, and within budget while exceeding expectations."

GWH was established in 1995 by Grahame Chevalley and Hilton Grugeon AM and within a year they had completed their first industrial building in Thornton. 10 years and numerous major commercial and industrial projects later, they were awarded the Master Builders Newcastle 2015 Excellence in Building Award.

Major completed projects include AERO and Highpoint apartments, Mercure Hotel - Newcastle Airport, and Wyee Shopping Village.

*For more information contact GWH, Level 3, 352 Hunter Street, Newcastle NSW, 2300, phone 02 4966 3766, email [admin@gwh.com.au](mailto:admin@gwh.com.au), website [www.gwh.com.au](http://www.gwh.com.au)*

MAIN CONSTRUCTION COMPANY : GWH  
ARCHITECT : EJE Architecture  
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER : BG&E  
CONSTRUCTION VALUE : \$19 million



**Below** Onyx Rope Access was hired to paint the façade at Darby Plaza including the checkerboard pattern.

**Onyx Rope Access and Height Safety Solutions provides a unique service that ensured Darby Plaza’s façade was in keeping with the state-of-the-art project.**

Onyx is Newcastle’s premier commercial and industrial abseiling company and they provided the façade caulking and painting, as well as the height safety installation and certification which consisted of roof top anchor points, roof access, static lines and fixed ladders. Once construction is complete, Onyx will also provide a team to clean the external windows and walls of building debris.

Onyx Rope Access is a Dulux Accredited company and can provide a complete Dulux Paint System. The highlight of this project was the unique and complex colour scheme that Onyx supplied.

“Usually this type of complex design would be done by painters on a traditional scaffold where they could walk back and forth, painting one colour after another,” explained Onyx Rope Access Director, Anthony Pellew. “Because of the proximity of neighbouring buildings, there was no other access to the wall other than via ropes.”

The design of the paint scheme involved four or five colours in a checkerboard pattern in which nothing lines up. It was a huge process of working out which colour would be painted first, and then overlaid with the next, and so on.

“It was quite a feat!” said Anthony. “There were lots of diagrams and numbers with colours positioned in just the right place that needed to be reproduced on the façade.”

Onyx Rope Access are building painting specialists and offer a wide variety of professional painting services such as membrane and protective coating, textured finishes and entire building paint systems. The company works alongside some of Newcastle and Australia’s biggest construction, commercial and industrial companies. Rope access services have become an integral part of assisting these industries in project completion, rectification works, and ongoing maintenance.

“By using the abseil method rather than expensive scaffolding we can save you hundreds of thousands of dollars on access

costs and focus on getting the job complete to the highest level of quality, and faster with less disruptions to residents and businesses,” said Anthony.

The team of highly skilled rope technicians are trained and certified under the internationally recognised IRATA (International Rope Access Trade Association) qualification system. Many of them have trade qualifications in other areas as well such as carpentry, electrical, painting & decorating, building and construction, enabling us to provide a range of specialist services.

All work is carried out in accordance with NSW Workcover Authority Guidelines for Rope Access and the Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011. The company adheres to the Australian Standards AS/ NZS 1891 (Industrial fall arrest systems and devices) and ISO 22846 parts 1 & 2 (Industrial Rope Access Systems). Safe Work Method Statements are used for all jobs along with rescue plans, equipment logs/gear checks and risk assessments. The Onyx team is committed to providing the best in elevated inspection, maintenance, and cleaning without compromising safety or quality.

Onyx Rope Access specialises in full external building refurbishments including re-rendering, re-caulking, painting and protective coating.

“Our team are all locals too, which is why we mean it when we say we have a vested interest in helping to maintain Newcastle as one of the prettiest cities in Australia, and the world,” said Anthony.

“We have a committed team who take pride in Newcastle’s appearance from sparkling clean windows to freshly painted and restored building façades creating a perfectly polished city we can all be proud of. We take great delight in servicing some of Newcastle’s most iconic residential and commercial buildings and will continue to do so for many years to come.”

*For more information contact Onyx Rope Access and Height Safety Solutions, 3/51 Hargrave Street, Carrington NSW 2294, phone 02 4929 1638, email [admin@onyxaccess.com.au](mailto:admin@onyxaccess.com.au), website [www.onyxaccess.com.au](http://www.onyxaccess.com.au)*





**Below** Lithic Australia sourced, designed, manufactured and installed the Elevator hobs and Turkish stone paving For Darby Plaza.



**Lithic Australia specialise in imported designer natural stone.** For Darby Plaza they were tasked with sourcing, designing, manufacturing and installing the breathtaking feature elevator hobs and supplying Turkish stone paving for the entrance and external courtyards. Each hob is made of five solid stone pieces weighing 600kg and standing tall at 3m.

“GWH came with an intricate design using 20mm slabs, we conceptualised the use of solid structural pieces. We designed the stone fabrication and install for this project from scratch” said Managing Director, Martin Spencer. “For the external spaces we found stone that was complementary to the existing streetscape and fabricated it to match perfectly.”

Lithic thrive off the adventure that is sourcing stone and enjoy working with the international quarries and factories to bring the finest product to their customers.

Each product carries with it a rich and natural history of millions of years. Lithic believes it is their job to respect and present this stone in a way fitting its creation. “Our mission is simple; from earth to art.”

“When we include a stone in our range it is not just selected on its beauty, but also its technical attributes. Strength, abrasion resistance, slip resistance, salt resistance, freeze thaw, and continuity of supply are all critical in our selection process,” said Martin.

Lithic has strict quality assurance processes. The first batch of stone that was sourced for Darby Plaza failed quality assurance before it had even arrived, requiring a second batch to be procured and brought to Australia without any delay to the project. “It is all part of our innovation mindset. The diligence with which our company operates allows us to take on these complicated projects and turn them into massive successes,” said Martin.

Lithic Australia has over two decades experience and services all east coast capital cities and most regional areas. For more remote locations, custom arrangements can also be facilitated.

**For more information contact Lithic**, phone 02 4966 8474, email [sales@lithicaustralia.com.au](mailto:sales@lithicaustralia.com.au), website [www.lithicaustralia.com.au](http://www.lithicaustralia.com.au)

**Below** DAB Air & Electrical installed an innovative air conditioning system to ensure quality and longevity for Darby Plaza.



**DAB Air & Electrical has established itself as one of Newcastle and the Hunter Valley’s leading air conditioning companies built on a reputation of providing high quality solutions at a competitive price, making them the installer of choice when it came to Darby Plaza.**

The design and location of Darby Plaza meant an innovative air conditioning system was needed to ensure quality and longevity.

“The Mitsubishi Electric Watercooled VRF System was perfect for Darby Plaza due to the building’s proximity to the ocean. This system will limit exposure to salt spray to the equipment, ensuring a longer lifespan,” said Darren James, Director of DAB Air & Electrical.

The system has a double heat recovery operation. The first heat recovery is within the refrigerant system. Simultaneous cooling and heating operations are available with heat recovery performed between indoor units. The second heat recovery is within the water loop, between the units.

“It was a highlight to design the air conditioning as part of this building,” said Darren. “Although the system has been within the industry for some years, it is unique to the Newcastle area.”

DAB worked on this project for over six months with a team of 15 sheet metal workers, aircon installers and plumbers involved.

“DAB has become the preferred partner of GWH and this has helped to grow our business substantially,” said Darren. “We really appreciate the relationship we have with them.”

DAB are specialists in the design, supply, repair, service and installation of air conditioning systems for commercial and residential sectors. They strive for market leadership through expert design, quality workmanship, and friendly and professional customer service. Their team of highly qualified air conditioning technicians has more than 25 years of experience.

DAB is currently working on Stage 1 and 2 of Sky Apartments in Newcastle; a job with 189 apartments.

**For more information contact DAB Air & Electrical**, mobile (Bradley) 0410 515 884, mobile (Darren) 0457 333 445, email [admin@dabairconditioning.com](mailto:admin@dabairconditioning.com), website [dabair.com.au](http://dabair.com.au)



Below Oxworks created a custom laser-cut-screen design that wrapped around the entire frontage of Darby Plaza.

Below Rocpac put the finishing touches on Darby Plaza with concrete repair and rendering in the lobby.



Since our inception in 2001, Oxworks has grown to become one of Australia’s leading stockists of glass, aluminium, and steel fencing products. Our major focus is the custom manufacture of aluminium and steel architectural building products for both domestic and commercial markets.

We pride ourselves on superior customer service, competitive pricing, and short production lead times – attributes that have given us the opportunity to work with GWH Builders on such an iconic project as Darby Plaza.

Using GWH’s initial design outline for the decorative fascia, we created a custom laser-cut-screen design spanning more than 100 screens and wrapping around the entire frontage of Darby Plaza.

Strength, weight, and low maintenance were key factors in the material selection and our use of high tensile powder coated aluminium was the perfect choice. Using our automated pre treatment and powder coating plant at our 10,000m<sup>2</sup> manufacturing facility, we finished the decorative screens in a specialist pearlescent gold powder coating, giving the building façade impressive wow factor.

As well as offering a high impact aesthetic for the civic space, the fascia was required to provide weather protection and ventilation to the carpark levels of the building. Oxworks’ solution for this was to use custom designed LV60 industrial louvre screens, which were installed directly behind the decorative fascia.

Further works required a secure bike store within the carpark with automated access control via the use of fob keys. Maintaining the design aesthetic of the building’s fascia, we delivered a range of decorative panels and automated sliding gates with powder coated perforated mesh backing for optimum security.

Within the Oxworks team it took the combined effort of our commercial sales specialist (based in Newcastle) and our head office design and manufacturing team to bring this project to life. It was a pleasure working alongside GWH on such an iconic project within the Newcastle CBD.

The result is one we at Oxworks are extremely proud of.

*For more information contact Oxworks, [www.oxworks.com.au](http://www.oxworks.com.au)*

**Rocpac Rendering and Painting Pty Ltd is a professional painting and rendering service with a joint commitment to quality and customer satisfaction.**

The company put the finishing touches on the state-of-the-art Darby Plaza. Their works included concrete repair, rendering of concrete façade beams, and the applications of concrete effects to balcony balustrades.

“It was a great opportunity to be part of this project,” said Rocpac Director, Michael Thompson. “Darby Plaza is such a unique building.”

Over three months, Rocpac completed the job with a team of six workers.

Rocpac is all about delivering a high quality product combined with high quality customer service. Their team can undertake all forms of painting, rendering and architectural coating. This includes solid plastering, cement rendering, texture coating, plaster setting, polystyrene applications and natural finishes.

Rocpac Rendering and Painting, along with BRP Building Services and Masonry Pacific form The Rocpac Group. The Rocpac Group are

professionals at providing, masonry, painting and rendering services with a joint commitment to quality and customer satisfaction. “We pull out all the stops to meet client expectations. Whatever the weather, we are onsite when we say we will be,” said Michel. “Where others see a problem, we use our innovation to find a workaround.”

Company headquarters are based on the Central Coast of New South Wales. With over 25 years experience in the industry, the Rocpac Group services Newcastle, the Central Coast, the Hunter region, Sydney, the North Coast and the ACT.

They are supported by a professional team of qualified tradesmen and experienced labourers who can tackle everything from small insurance jobs to large, multi-million dollar developments, and always put safety first.

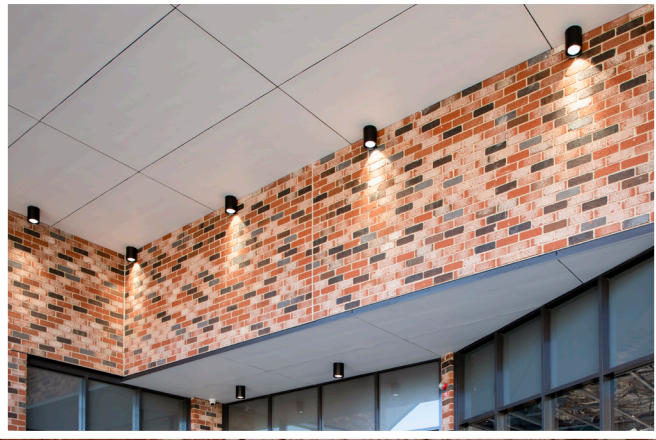
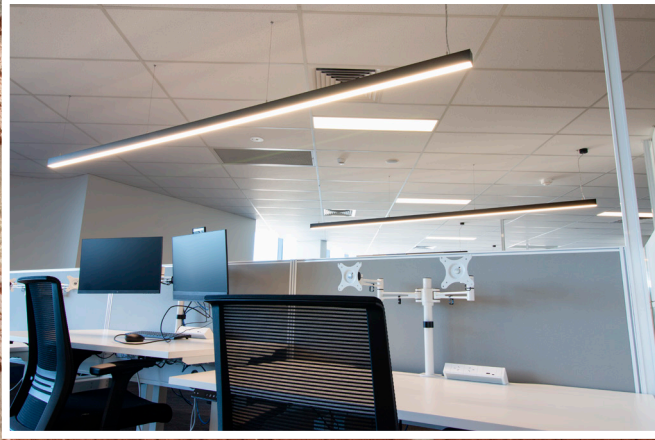
“The Rocpac Group upholds a robust reputation for quality, efficiency and reliability by applying our knowledge across every industrial, commercial and residential project we put our group’s name to,” said Michael.

*For more information contact Rocpac/Masonry Pacific, 7/14 Reliance Drive, Tuggerah NSW 2259, phone 1300 356 705, website [rocpac.com.au](http://rocpac.com.au)*



**Below** Laminex provided Laminex Raw Birchply for the end-of-trip facilities and fitout across the Darby Plaza development.

**Below** Nelson Bay Electrical Services strives to provide premium, stress free services across every project.



**Darby Plaza provided the perfect opportunity to showcase the versatility of the Laminex Waterloo Partitioning System Range.**

With a broad array of colours, substrates, fittings and fixtures, Laminex Waterloo provides all of the security, comfort and aesthetic appeal that is required in effective contemporary design.

Laminex provided all of the end-of-trip facilities, amenities on every level of the complex and 79 banks of lockers with keyboards for the Darby Plaza project. This included the manufacture and installation of all work.

“The textured finishes on the Waterloo range is a new product,” said Project Manager, Jake Rowland. “In fact, they were fresh out of production and this was the first big job they have been used on.”

Laminex Waterloo Partitioning Systems are assembled in Australia using Australian made Laminex Compact Laminates, and can be standard or custom designed.

The partitioning range consists of five systems ideal for a variety of applications, looks and budgets. The impact resistant board and

anodised aluminium hardware are integrated into a design that offers exceptional durability and stability, is easy to clean and offers overall low maintenance.

“Bringing the Waterloo Range to a project of this size was a real highlight,” said Jake. “Our only challenges were the same that everyone else faced during the COVID lockdown period.”

Laminex was established in a tin shed in Melbourne in 1934. Almost 90 years later, Laminex is a surface solutions specialist with multiple large-scale manufacturing plants in cities and country locations right around Australia.

Laminex is dedicated to keeping manufacturing local, investing in industry skills growth as well as supporting communities and our industry. Through innovation and a strong belief in Australian Made, Laminex continues to invest in new technology to produce locally made products with a focus on sustainable business practices.

**For more information contact Laminex**, phone 132 136, website [www.laminex.com.au](http://www.laminex.com.au)

**Nelson Bay Electrical Services was contracted to supply all of the electrical work for the Darby Plaza Project.** This included lights, power, fire alarms, CCTV, access control and integrated fit outs within each of the tenancies.

“It was a big job and very intense,” said Matt McGarry, Director of Nelson Bay Electrical Services. “The work itself was standard and the only real challenge – apart from COVID restrictions – was finding parking in the city.”

10 staff worked on the project for 18 months.

“Darby Plaza was an excellent project to be part of,” said Matt. “GWH are always good to work with.”

Nelson Bay Electrical Services is a large project specialist electrical contracting company servicing Newcastle, Port Stephens, the Central Coast and the greater Hunter area. With over 20 years experience in the industry, the company specialises in multi-unit residential apartments, subdivisions, commercial, industrial and government works. The team consists of 18 highly skilled staff, many of which began their career with Nelson Bay Electrical.

Matt is a great supporter of the NSW Government Apprenticeship Initiative, with the majority of the team completing their electrical training with him. Each year they take on two or three new apprentices.

“We are proud of being able to provide jobs for some of the young people in our local area,” said Matt.

The company’s focus is on providing premium, stress free services for all their clients across every project. The expert team at Nelson Bay Electrical Services are flexible and adaptable and can design and construct your project or work in with your existing design team to deliver high quality results, on time and on budget.

“We understand the importance of working alongside the client to get the job done in a timely and safe manner, and have an impeccable safety record.”

**For more information contact Nelson Bay Electrical Services**, 3/16 Shearwater Drive, Taylors Beach NSW 2316, phone 02 4981 9811, email [office@nbcs.com.au](mailto:office@nbcs.com.au) website [www.nbcs.com.au](http://www.nbcs.com.au)