

# bendigo police station

## architect's statement

Located in the geographic centre of Victoria, 90 minutes from Melbourne, the City of Greater Bendigo is one of Victoria's largest and fastest growing regional municipalities with a population of almost 100,000 people. Impressive Victorian buildings still line its wide streets, harking back to one of the world's most exciting gold rushes. Bendigo today is an emerging fusion of modern and heritage cultures, a place where a bustling tourism industry coexists with thriving local businesses.

The new Bendigo Police Station is located on a prominent corner site on the eastern side of Bendigo in Golden Square. The site is on the main road into the city, set among car yards, food outlets and barbecue sales rooms, but with little of the historical context normally associated with Bendigo. The client's brief required an institutional building that responded to the wider regional context and was simultaneously visually assertive in the public realm.

The new facility (the largest stand-alone police station in Victoria) accommodates an amalgamation of operational police groups historically dispersed throughout Bendigo from four different locations; the masterplan is primarily defined by the particular operational requirements of these police users. The building provides high quality muster areas and offices for the various police divisions, associated ancillary spaces, prisoner holding and

interview rooms and a clearly defined, accessible public entry foyer. A large internal common atrium provides floor plan relief and natural light while assisting with orientation for building users. The atrium is also a meeting place for casual operational exchange or an 'indoor cricket pitch'.

The corner building powerfully addresses the two primary street elevations (north and west) with the most prominent feature of the building being the visually distinguished, inclined glass 'double façades'. The steel-framed, sculptural, glass double façades are an environmental device designed to reduce energy consumption by seasonally shading the western and northern inner façades of the building to create a controllable thermal buffer zone where windows can be opened to access cleaner, cooler or warmer air (depending on the season) without the potential traffic noise and security issues. This zone is also planted with climbers supported

on vertical wires to create a terrarium effect within the depth of the façade. Relief air is supplied from the main atrium via the office spaces or from low-level vents in the facade. These 'double façades' support the dichotomy of a modern police force requiring 24-hour operational security and street surveillance while simultaneously presenting an accessible and transparent public image.

The building is highly automated and integrated with manual overrides, for example when windows are open the air-conditioning system shuts down and other building components respond accordingly. Automated windows, lighting controls, blinds, ceiling fans, façade venting and other mechanical systems are all controlled by the building management systems. Rainwater is collected for landscape irrigation and car washing.

The building is predominantly a lightweight construction of steel, glass and prefinished cement sheet with precast concrete panels forming approximately 50 percent of the façade.

Acknowledgment is given to the historical owners of the land, the Djadjawurrung people and reference is made to their culture with plantings, storyboards and integrated artwork.

## architects

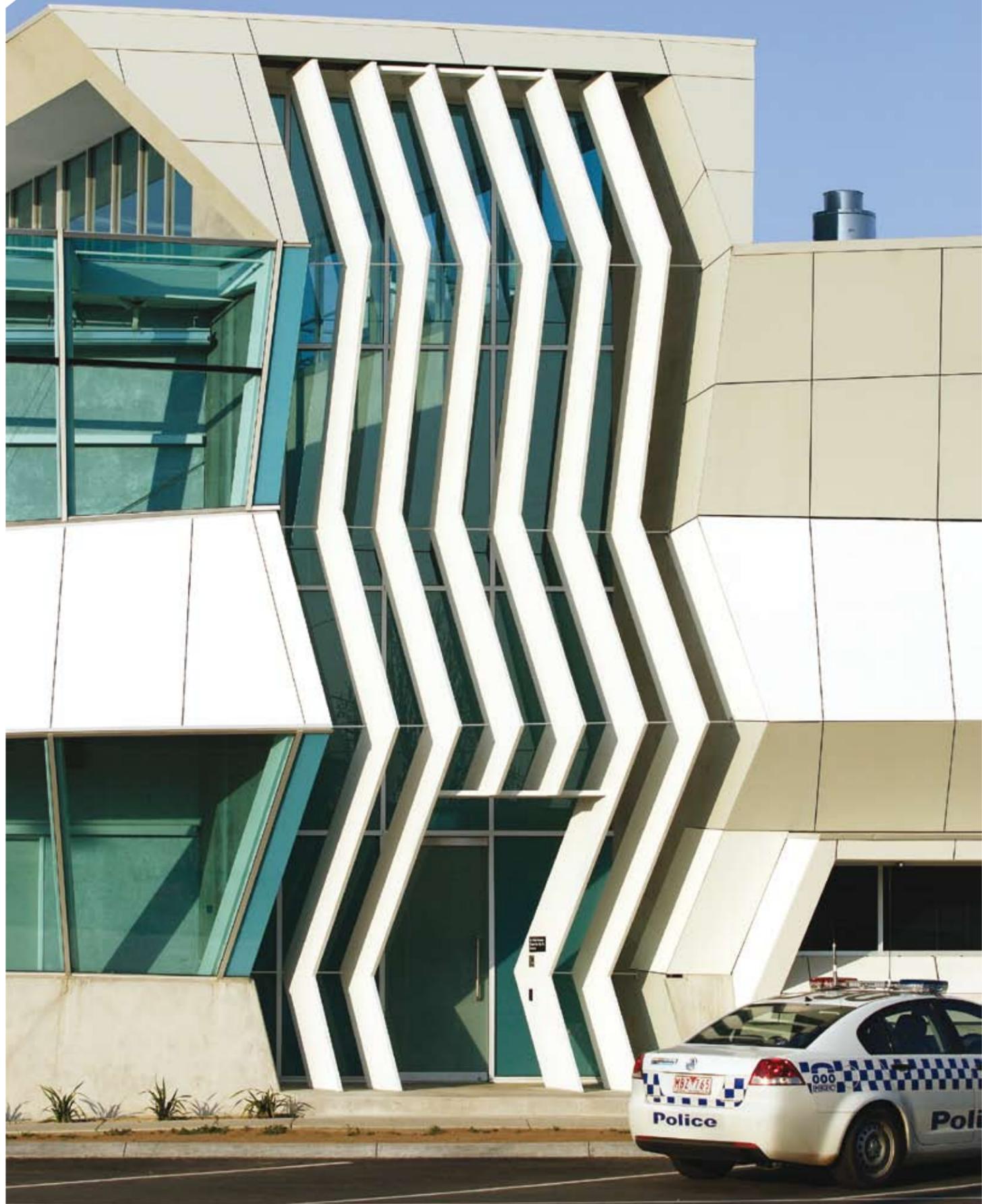
Fooks Martin Sandow Anson Architects (FMSA)

## photography

Mark Munro

## text

Stuart Harrison

**01.**

Speaking with authority – the site for the Bendigo station is located on a prominent corner on the main road into the city. The station's location outside the historical context of the city proper has allowed for a visually assertive form.

**02.**

FMSA have invested the Bendigo Police Station with something often lacking in the contemporary institutional building – personality.

**03.**

The glass double façade allows for the expression of a strong formal language, but also acts as a thermal buffer zone, providing seasonal shading and improving natural ventilation and passive climate control.

**04.**

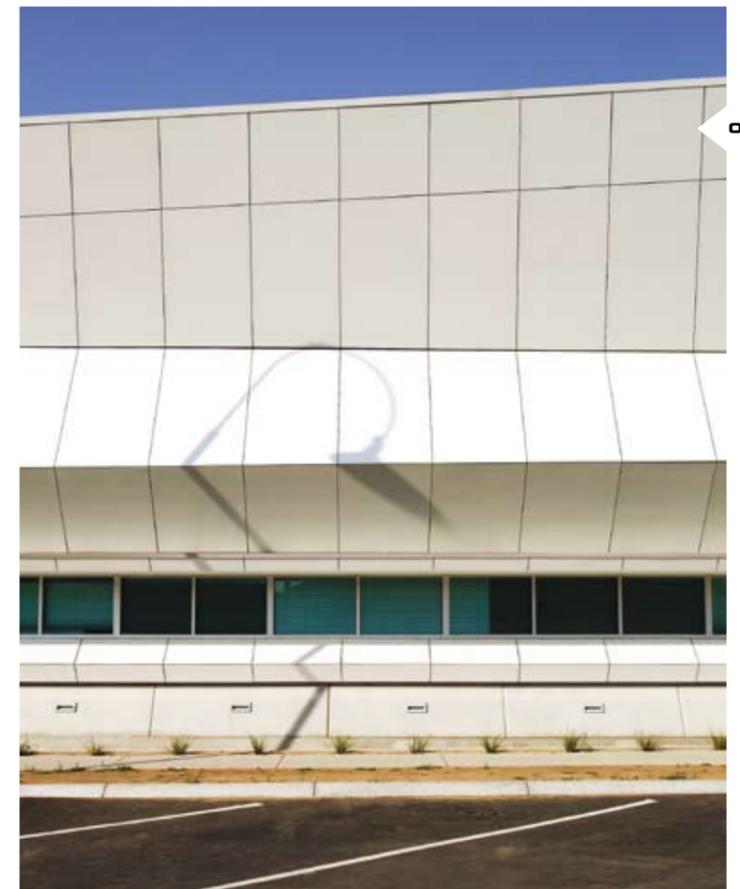
Precast concrete panels form approximately 50 percent of the façade.

**bendigo police station**

Take the Calder Highway out of Melbourne until you are in Bendigo, and on your right opposite a servo and former Chinese restaurant is a new, sharp and prominent cop shop. Ask a local – they know where the new police station is and what it looks like. Many suburban and regional institutions have for too long been losing their presence from the streets. Post offices, banks and municipal stations have often left their original (older) building and moved in to something far more generic and inconspicuous – a strange desire to suppress the nature of the public institution and rely on what the market throws up. The Bendigo Police Station, along with several other new police stations from the last few years, goes against that trend. Using a contemporary architectural language and an ethical emphasis on sustainability, it has become an important and well-resourced facility and headquarters for the local force. It does this without attempting to become an 'icon'.

Sustainability is a wonderfully large area of contemporary concern. It has become both a buzzword on one level, and a moral direction on the other. This new facility boasts a range of sustainable design initiatives, but also makes the fundamental, socially sustainable step of being a decent building – a real budget, an appropriate contemporary language and good site. All these things should help the building endure over time; nothing is more sustainable than not knocking buildings down.

On a more direct level, architects FMSA have integrated several ESD systems into the building. A double skin system





for the main street façades acts as a thermal buffer, but also allows the 'pointy' expression of the building's form on the corner, and the giant glazed raking eave along the street. This corner is the key end of the building, a sort of urban diamond. The wall behind is concrete with openable windows ventilating into the void space. Glass, often used to suggest a transparency, is more intelligently employed to create the form, with a conventional vertical wall behind. The glass's solidity is embraced, and it offers a view into the buffer – a space of a sustainable system rather than of occupation. Glass avoids a compound mentality, a reassuring gesture in a world where high security buildings are often fortresses.

The most visible sustainable features are the water storage tanks (used for grey water) located at the front of the building along the main footpath. This is assumedly a deliberate step, apparent sustainability. The use of slightly awkward landscape screen elements, however, seems to confuse this strategy. The public entry of the station is along the highway, from a triangular forecourt created by the building pushing in from the boundary. The entry canopy continues the generally 'cranky' language of the building, and is clad in 'police' check blue and white tiles. The public foyer inside is a small and slightly unwelcoming space for a reasonably sized building. This is a room of doors – a hinge point in the building's circulation. Interview rooms are immediately adjacent as is the 24-hour operations centre.

Beyond the public areas, the building's key central atrium cuts the building into halves, and gives vertical and linear circulation. This long atrium is a winner – getting light into the centre of the building, celebrating the key circulation and giving a series of frontages to what feels like a small street without descending into the cliché of 'lanes'. It is a light, genuinely pleasant space to be in and is well-handled architecturally. A series of workspaces and offices have front doors and windows onto this linear space, almost like shops. Striking yellow perforated panels run the length of the walls narrowing and expanding in a perspectival manner. The primary wall finish is precast concrete, giving a solidity and robustness that helps the 'street' reading. The atrium is a double-height space with clerestory windows that gives this spine a presence from the outside, and is integral to the building-wide air management system, which relies on traditional air-conditioning and natural ventilation when appropriate. This spine reaches the western façade with a two-level glazed wall with a series of cranked vertical fins screening western sunlight. These painted steel blades act as a moment of intensity and centre point along this edge.

Beyond the double-height 'street' a series of more generic corridors branch out to give access to the various types of rooms, mostly office spaces, but also a gym, changing rooms and sleeping quarters. These interiors tend to be more generic – plenty of blue carpet and acoustic ceiling tiles. The principal indoor space on the first floor is

**05.** The giant glazed raking form of the front façade – transparent, formally expressive – lends the building a presence quite distinct from that of the "bunker" typology commonly associated with law enforcement buildings.

**06.** While the building is decidedly individual in character, the blue and white check tiling on the front entrance portico ensures there can be no confusion as to its function.

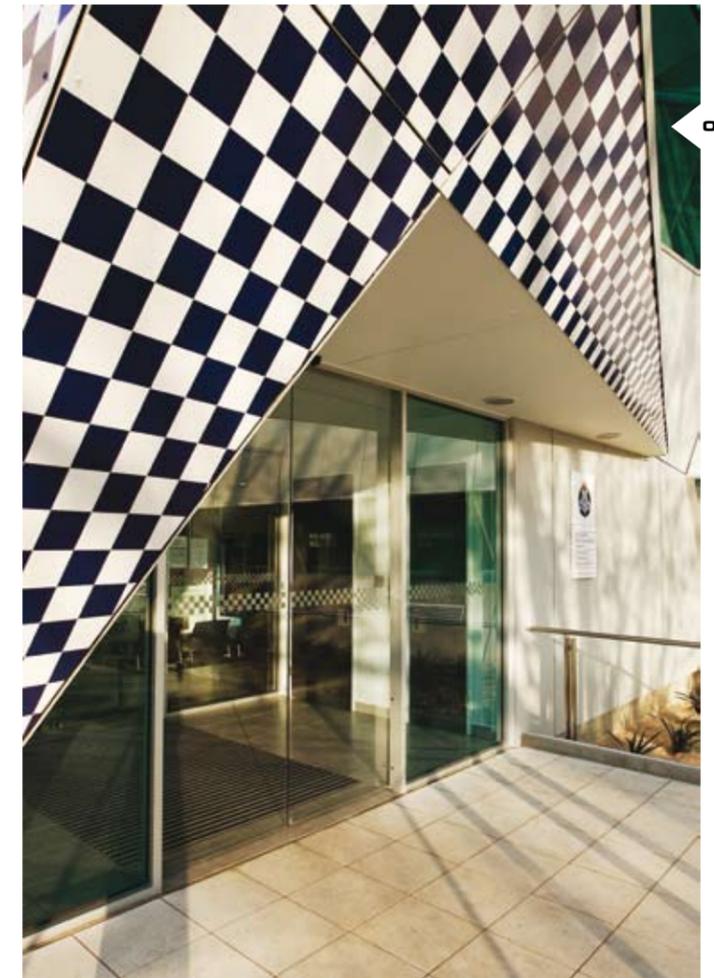
**07.** Precast concrete walls contribute to a reading of the atrium as more "street" than corridor.

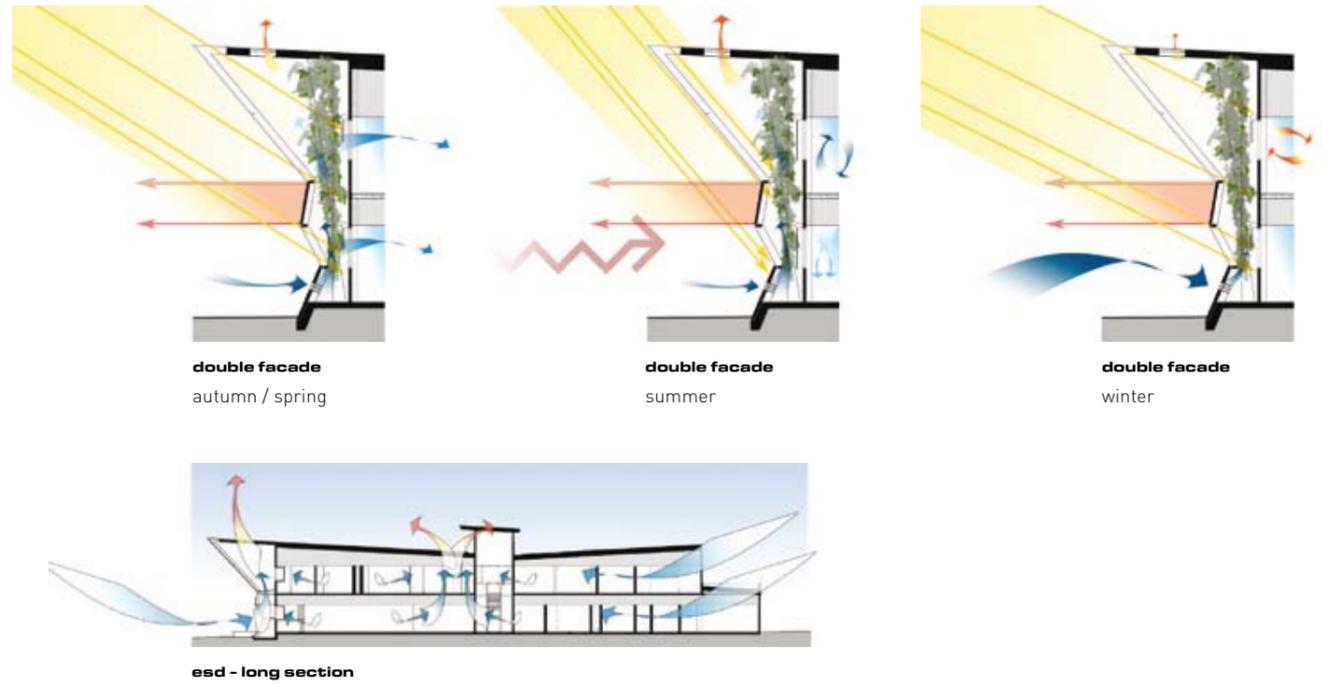
**08.** Flooded with natural light, the large internal atrium provides a casual meeting point, excellent vertical and linear circulation, and assists with building orientation.

the main meeting and conference room, which has great views onto the intersection outside and feels genuinely connected to the contemporary and booming city of Bendigo. The Victorian state government, for all its failings in Melbourne in attempting to expand a bursting train network, did manage to upgrade the regional rail link to Bendigo, and this project is evidence of further proper investment in a regional centre. The rear of the building uses a simpler language, the underlying precast concrete slips from under the glass and FC sheet and becomes the exterior walling. This area services the back of house with vehicle inspection and prisoner delivery bays.

Day and night, this building sits as horizontal landmark, a well-sited and considered transformation of a corporate architectural language. This is achieved through distortion in the building's form and integration of sustainable systems, creating a new recognisable public building. This is a return to public architecture that tells us something about what it is. This building is not a post office. It is not a bank, nor an office building. It is a police station. **ar**

**09.** Expanding and contracting perspectively, the yellow perforated panels running the length of the atrium make for a dynamic embellishment.





**bendigo police station**  
**principal architects** Fooks Martin Sandow Anson Architects (FMSA) **project team** Greg Anson, Peter Martin, Najib Zohab, Eric Ng, Karen Tan, Michael Thom, Kristine Piggford  
**project manager** Gallagher Jeffs Pty Ltd **structural engineer & ESD consultant** Sinclair Knight Mertz **building surveyor** Reddo Consultants **builder** Hansen Yuncken Pty Ltd **landscape architect** Roberta Rees & Associates **façade engineer** Green Facades **security consultant** IPP Consulting **mechanical, lifts, fire, electrical, hydraulic, communications, PABX, AV, IT** GHD **acoustics** Marshall Day Acoustics **disability** Blythe Sanderson **traffic** Urap - TTW **design software** Revit, AutoCAD **size** 5508m<sup>2</sup> **council** City of Greater Bendigo **client** Victoria Police **walls** James Hardy compressed cement sheet **wall linings** plasterboard and cement sheet **acoustic wall panels** perforated MDF panels/2Pak paint/ATKAR **cladding** precast concrete **roof** Bluescope Lysaght KCliplock **guttering** Zinalume **paint** Dulux **paving** Urbanstone **windows** DMS Glass, toughened and laminated with colour interlayer, low E tinted **operable walls** Hufcor **glazing** Bremner Glass and Aluminium Hardware Dorma **signage** Identicorp **ceiling** acoustic plasterboard tiles **fittings and fixtures, hardware** Dormer **carpet** carpet tiles by Interface **rubber floors** Spectrum Floors **tactile floor tiles** Spectrum Floors **floor and wall tiles** New City Ceramics **joinery** Formica Laminate, Duropal Laminate, Forbo Countertop, Parbury 'Trezza' public counter **screen fabric/operable wall fabric** Woven Image