

**Major works do not mean  
major disruption**



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As the largest shopping centre in Australia by GLA, south-east Melbourne shopping centre Westfield Fountain Gate cannot afford disruptions. When it came to the installation of over two kilometres of guardrails and half a kilometre of new walkways across a sprawling rooftop, Scentre Group Facility Manager Jason Mottley knew careful planning was needed.

“Although the processes and culture at Scentre Group is set up to respond proactively when we identify safety improvements that need action, we need to be sure that we partner with the suppliers that are aligned to that culture and can also bring into play a level of professionalism and expertise that reduce the friction when developing specific technical solutions or dealing with the knock on effect that these projects can create. Although these type of projects are managed on a day to day basis by our internal Special Projects team, getting the right contractor involved with the right solution is invaluable to me as a facilities manager,”

“Take the installation of our roof access safety upgrade; we’ve found in the past that when contractors installing equipment penetrate the roof sheeting, this in turn causes leaks down the track, for example” Mr Mottley explains. “Fountain Gate is open 363 days of the years and we just can’t afford to deal with additional leaks caused by contractors who don’t think about the impact of their work on the building as a whole.” And the less time spent dealing with disruptive contractors, the better.

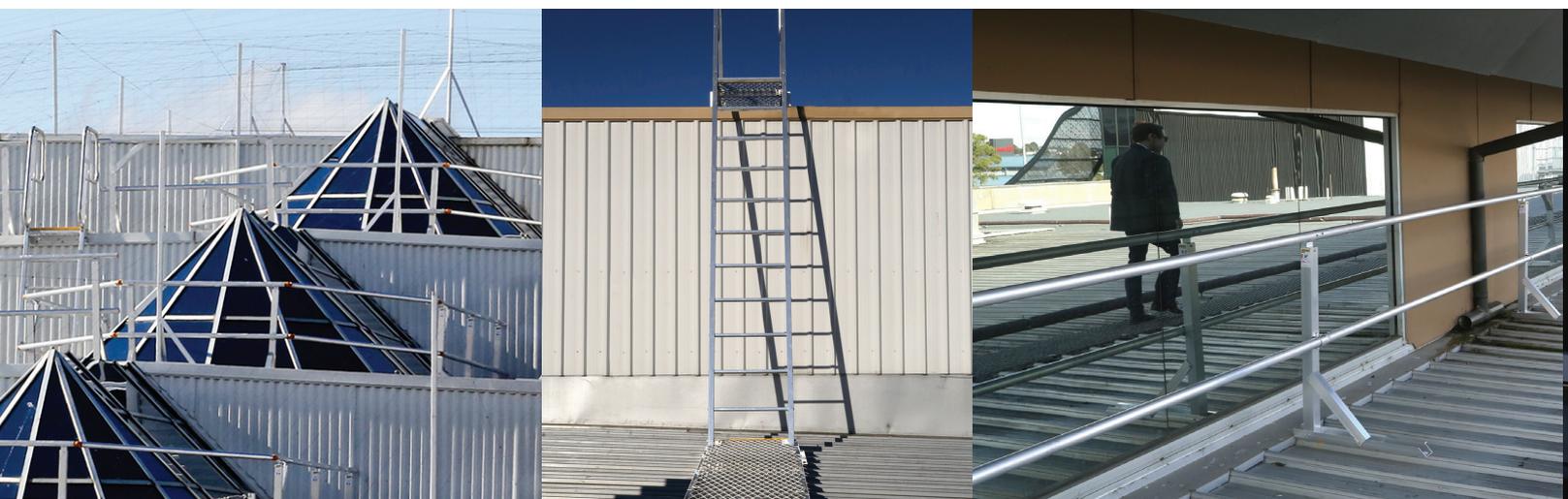
“Effective management of a major works project in an operating shopping centre really boils down to a matter of trust,” Mr Mottley says. “Trust can be lost very quickly in this type of project. Contractors who understand that our core business is running a shopping centre minimise the disruption this type of work can cause.”

“They create an environment where we can trust them to get on with the project, without Dean or myself watching over their shoulder.”

“I don’t want to sound like I don’t care about any project per se, but a contractor that can keep the trust that we place in them, have effective onsite management practices and report on key milestones effectively, frees me up to focus on the many other things that I’m also working on.”

As an ambassador of Scentre Group’s strong safety culture, Mr Mottley was absolutely determined to address issues identified by a nationwide height safety audit that created large no-go or restricted access zones on the roof as quickly and comprehensively as possible. The solution presented itself via word of mouth. Other Westfield sites had already enjoyed hassle-free walkway installations by height safety specialist Workplace Access & Safety for their tenants, Coles Supermarkets and Target.

Even so, after it won the tender for the Fountain Gate work, the project was assigned to Scentre Special Projects Manager, Dean McGoldrick to manage the procurement, technical aspects of project as well as the day to day management, in order to minimise any impact on Fountain Gate’s busy Facility Management team.



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Rather than exposing Fountain Gate to the risk of ongoing roof maintenance problems and leaks, the team turned the installation of the new walkway to its advantage by upgrading existing infrastructure and introducing equipment designed to maintain the roof's integrity.

Workplace Access & Safety's Aaron Carratello explained the innovative Defender™ walkway structure means far less risk to the roof, requiring 73% fewer penetrations than most conventionally-mounted walkways. Each fixing or screw is finished with a silicone sealant to prevent corrosion and leaks, while the more rigid structure avoids the flexing and movement of poorly supported walkways that can cause leaks.

The design also met Westfield Fountain Gate's brief for minimal disruption to centre operations. The patented track-mounted system reduces site time by 60 per cent. Modules are prefabricated off-site in Defender's factories so there is less time on site, less time working at heights and less disruption to trading.

"The modular design allows us to install walkways and ladders very quickly and far more quietly," Mr Carratello says. "For example, cinema-goers had no idea that new equipment was being installed right above their heads."

"As well as the two kilometres of guardrails and half a kilometre of walkways, we installed 60 anchors, 20 rung ladders, four parapet cross overs, two cooling tower access systems and one midway landing in just two weeks, while traditional systems would have taken a good eight weeks – four times as long."

Following the completion of the installation, most of the roof can now be accessed for maintenance without any special protocols, training or equipment. Best of all for the Fountain Gate customer and retailer, the work by Workplace Access & Safety was barely noticed and the installation is very unobtrusive, says Mr Mottley.

"I wasn't expecting the very comprehensive written report and revised roof access plans we received at handover, so that was an extra benefit" he says, "but the main benefit was that the whole project just seem to happen without me needing to input into it."

"The worst thing with these type of projects is when you need to get involved to a level where you are effectively managing the whole project every day."

"With our roof access equipment installation project, it was really my expectations that were managed. Once we had finished planning phase of the project and had started the work, I didn't really have to get involved in directing specific aspects of the work or dealing with noise complaints etc and could concentrate on other things affecting the centre both short and long term, while the work just happened around us."

### BY THE NUMBERS

- 1 midway landing
- 2 km guardrail
- 4 parapet ladders
- 20 rung ladders
- 60 roof anchors
- 500 meters of walkway
- 73% fewer roof penetrations with Defender™ walkway
- 35% of the total project time spent on-site





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