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MELBOURNE OFFICE FITOUT PLANNING GUIDE

2026–2027

Practical guidance on workplace planning, budgets, project delivery and the decisions that shape a successful office fitout.

ESTABLISHED 1989 • MELBOURNE & NATIONAL PROJECT DELIVERY

INTRODUCTION

Plan with confidence

A practical starting point for a new workplace, refurbishment or relocation.



GOOD PROJECTS START WITH GOOD QUESTIONS

An office fitout is a business investment, not simply a construction project. Start by defining the operational problems you need to solve, how staff use the workplace, what the premises can accommodate and when the space must be ready. Use this guide to establish a brief, identify risks and ask more useful questions before requesting quotations.

01 DEFINE THE BRIEF

What must the new workplace improve?

02 DEFINE THE LIMITS

Budget, lease, approvals and move date.

03 TEST THE DESIGN

Headcount, work styles, meeting needs and flexibility.

04 PLAN DELIVERY

Procurement, services, staging and handover.

PROJECT BRIEF

Five decisions to make first



PURPOSE

What business problem are you solving?

PEOPLE

How many people attend on a peak day?

PLACE

What does the existing building allow?

PRIORITIES

What is essential versus optional?

PROGRAMME

When must the workplace be operational?

TIP Record who approves the brief, the cost plan, design changes and final handover. A single decision pathway helps avoid expensive late revisions.

BUDGETING

Understand the whole project cost



Published rates per square metre can be useful for early comparisons, but they rarely describe the complete project. An older building may require upgrades to air conditioning, power or fire services; an occupied site may need after-hours work; and a premium joinery package can alter the budget significantly. Ask for a cost plan that identifies scope, provisional allowances, exclusions and a separate contingency.

BUILDING WORKS

Partitions, ceilings, flooring and finishes.

SERVICES

Power, data, lighting, HVAC and fire interfaces.

FURNITURE

Workstations, seating, meeting and storage.

PROJECT COSTS

Design, approvals, move, testing and contingency.

Ask for clearly identified assumptions, exclusions and allowances.

WORKSHEET

Build a preliminary budget

Use this worksheet to compare quotes on a like-for-like basis. Confirm GST treatment, exclusions, contingency and validity dates.

Design, consultants and statutory approvals	$ _____
Partitions, ceilings, floors and finishes	$ _____
Electrical, data, lighting and AV	$ _____
Mechanical, fire and other services	$ _____
Workstations, seating and storage	$ _____
Joinery, reception and breakout furniture	$ _____
Relocation, disposal and commissioning	$ _____
Contingency (separate allowance)	$ _____
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET	$ _____

Include allowances for after-hours work and landlord requirements.

WORKPLACE PLANNING

Design around how people work



Do not equate total staff numbers with required desks. Measure peak attendance by team and day, then consider confidential calls, focus work, collaboration, visitors and storage. Map which teams need to sit together and test circulation, accessibility and meeting-room demand. Allow for foreseeable growth without paying for large areas that may remain unused.

FOCUS

Quiet settings for concentrated tasks.

COLLABORATION

Spaces for team discussion and project work.

SUPPORT

Kitchens, lockers, storage and circulation.

FLEXIBILITY

Room to adapt as work patterns change.

Furniture is part of the infrastructure



Workstation selection should happen alongside space planning—not after the fitout design is finished. Desk dimensions and screen configurations determine clearances, power/data locations and cable pathways. Consider sit-stand adjustment, ergonomic chairs, acoustic screens, personal storage, maintenance access and future reconfiguration. A sample workstation can help resolve specification issues before bulk ordering.

ADJUSTABILITY

Consider electric height-adjustable desks.

ERGONOMICS

Provide suitable seating and monitor positioning.

CONNECTIVITY

Coordinate soft wiring, power and data.

MAINTENANCE

Confirm warranties, access and replacement parts.

TECHNICAL PLANNING

Coordinate the building services



The most attractive layout can fail if the building services cannot support it. Confirm available electrical capacity, lighting, data routes, air-conditioning zoning, fire detection and egress before signing off the plan. Changes to partitions and occupancy can trigger additional consultant or authority requirements. The landlord and qualified specialists should verify the project-specific obligations.

ELECTRICAL & DATA

Power capacity, lighting, network and AV.

MECHANICAL

Ventilation, cooling, zoning and operating hours.

FIRE & EGRESS

Fire interfaces, evacuation and occupancy.

APPROVALS

Landlord, consultants and permits as applicable.

PROGRAMME

The six stages of a fitout



01	Brief & site review
02	Concept & early cost plan
03	Documentation & approvals
04	Procurement & trade coordination
05	Construction & installation
06	Testing, defects & handover

Delivering while the office is occupied



Working around an occupied office is often more complex than fitting out an empty tenancy. Divide the programme into zones, agree temporary desk locations and schedule disruptive works outside core hours where practical. Document shutdown windows, dust and noise controls, emergency access, deliveries and IT changeover. Nominate one client contact to communicate each stage to staff.

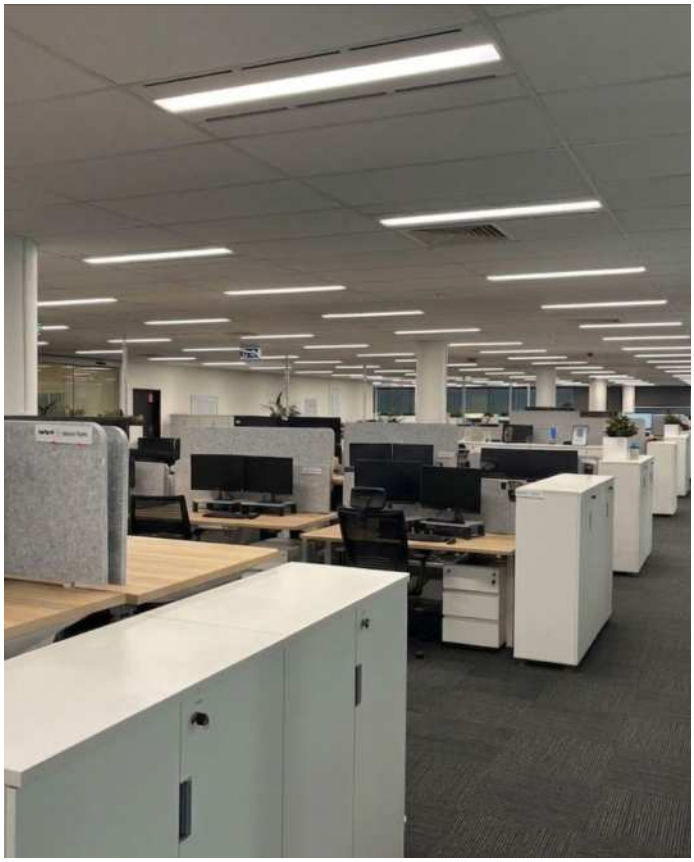
- Identify which teams must stay operational
- Agree after-hours access and shutdown windows
- Plan dust, noise, safety and temporary routes
- Sequence IT, furniture and staff relocation
- Allow time for defects and commissioning

CASE STUDY

KIA Australia | Sydney headquarters



BEFORE



AFTER

2,500 m²

142 staff

KIA’s Sydney headquarters required a major workstation upgrade while staff continued working. Progressive planned a staged changeover from fixed-height desks to electric sit-stand workstations, including integrated soft wiring. The sequence was designed around operational continuity, with weekend strip-out and weekday installation. The result demonstrates why a furniture programme needs to be coordinated with people, power, data and site access.

PROJECT LESSON A well-planned sequence can modernise a workplace while minimising disruption to staff.

CASE STUDY

ARB Australia | Kilsyth headquarters







2,000 m² workplace | 190+ staff

For ARB’s Kilsyth headquarters, Progressive delivered the furniture and workplace solutions package rather than the building construction. The scope supported executive offices, workstations, meeting and breakout areas, including a bespoke eight-metre boardroom table. Early coordination of dimensions, finishes, manufacture, transport and installation helped the furniture integrate with the broader workplace design.

PROJECT LESSON **Coordinate bespoke furniture early with access and finishes.**

CASE STUDY

Mode Logistics | Melbourne Airport







900 m² office | 120 staff

Mode Logistics required a functioning office within a much larger operating logistics facility. Progressive's turnkey workplace delivery incorporated planning, fitout coordination, height-adjustable workstations, soft wiring and installation. The programme needed to account for site access, industrial operations, furniture logistics and a practical handover to the client's team.

PROJECT LESSON **Align office delivery with the wider operating site.**

CASE STUDY

Glenelg Shire | Portland







2,500 m² workplace | 83 electric desks

The Glenelg Shire project involved a substantial regional workplace upgrade, including 83 electric height-adjustable desks and ergonomic task seating. The specification needed to balance comfort, everyday usability and consistent workstation performance. Delivery to Portland also highlights the importance of freight planning, access, installation sequencing and a reliable handover process.

PROJECT LESSON **Ergonomics and logistics belong in the same plan.**

Questions for your first meeting

- [ ] Project objectives and decision makers
- [ ] Current and forecast headcount
- [ ] Lease, landlord and building constraints
- [ ] Preferred completion and move dates
- [ ] Budget range and approval process
- [ ] Existing plans and building services
- [ ] Workstations, meeting and storage needs
- [ ] IT, AV, security and specialist equipment
- [ ] Occupied-site staging and staff moves
- [ ] Approvals, tender process and warranties



Bring drawings, photographs and an indicative budget to the first discussion. Even an incomplete brief is useful when assumptions are clearly recorded.

What a good quotation should show



A useful quotation does more than state a total. It tells you exactly what is included, what is assumed and where decisions are still outstanding. Ask tenderers to price the same scope and drawings, then compare the differences line by line.

SCOPE & SPECIFICATION

Materials, finishes, quantities, brands, performance requirements and what will be installed.

PROVISIONAL ALLOWANCES

Items not fully designed, such as services upgrades or specialist joinery, should be identified separately.

EXCLUSIONS & VARIATIONS

Confirm demolition, permits, data, furniture, after-hours work, make-good and variation approval rules.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

From first sketch to approved plan



A concept layout is the beginning, not the end, of the design process. The first plan should be tested against headcount, circulation, meeting-room use, services, storage and accessibility before detailed documentation begins.

1. TEST THE BRIEF

Review the proposed desk count, work settings and adjacencies with the people who will use the space.

2. CHECK THE BUILDING

Coordinate ceiling heights, structure, services, fire requirements, entrances and landlord conditions.

3. FREEZE KEY DECISIONS

Approve the plan, finishes, furniture specification and programme before procurement and site works.

PROCUREMENT

Long-lead decisions that matter



Not every product can be ordered after construction starts. Custom joinery, specialised workstations, acoustic products, seating fabrics and technology may have different lead times. A procurement schedule should identify approval dates, manufacturing windows, delivery constraints and installation dependencies.

STANDARD VS CUSTOM

Standard ranges may offer greater flexibility. Bespoke products need earlier design sign-off and site verification.

DELIVERY & ACCESS

Check loading docks, lifts, site protection, storage and restrictions on delivery times.

DEFECTS & WARRANTIES

Confirm product warranties, replacement parts, responsibility for defects and post-handover support.

Ten questions to ask your fitout partner

01 What is included in the price?and excluded?

02 Who is responsible for design coordination?

03 Which approvals are required, and who obtains them?

04 What assumptions could change the final price?

05 How will variations be documented and approved?

06 Which products have the longest lead times?

07 How will staff and operations be protected?

08 What are the milestones and client sign-off points?

09 How are defects and commissioning handled?

10 Who supports the workplace after handover?



A strong project partner should welcome these questions. Clear answers before contract award reduce misunderstandings once work is underway.



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READY TO PLAN YOUR NEXT WORKPLACE?

Progressive Corporate provides commercial office fitouts, workplace planning, refurbishments and project delivery. Contact us to discuss the requirements of your project.

(03) 7018 0761

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General planning guidance only. Scope, prices, timing and statutory obligations require project-specific assessment.