

Beyond the Desk.

Exploring the Future of Workspaces

The Long-Term Value of Office Furniture in a Commercial Fit Out

In commercial office fit outs, furniture is often one of the last elements to be finalised, and all too frequently, one of the first areas reduced when budgets come under pressure. While this approach may achieve short-term savings, Australian research consistently demonstrates that deprioritising furniture decisions can significantly undermine long-term workplace performance, employee wellbeing and asset value.

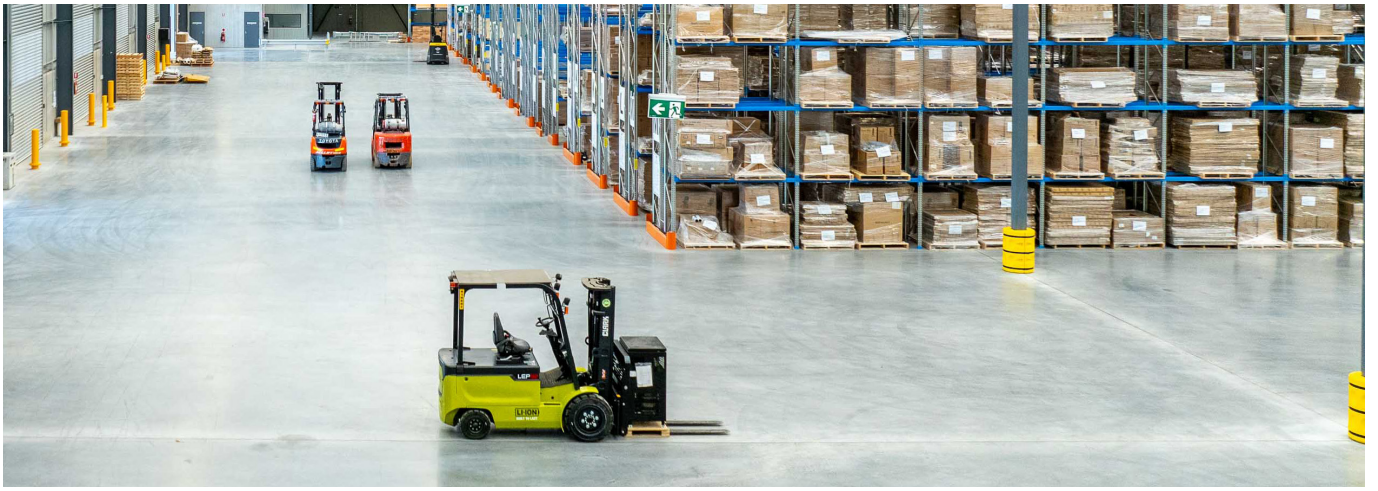
Furniture is one of the most heavily used components of any workplace. Unlike architectural finishes or feature elements, desks, chairs and collaborative settings shape the daily experience of employees and continue to influence performance long after the fit out is complete. When furniture procurement is removed late in the design process or treated purely as a cost to be minimised, organisations risk creating environments that look compelling at handover but fail to support people over time.

Ergonomics is one of the clearest examples of this long-term impact. Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs) remain Australia's leading cause of serious workplace injury, accounting for the majority of workers' compensation claims. Deloitte Access Economics estimates the total economic cost of musculoskeletal disorders in Australia exceeds \$55 billion annually when healthcare, lost productivity and absenteeism are considered. Investment in ergonomic, adjustable furniture directly addresses these risks, delivering long-term benefits that far outweigh initial procurement costs.

Functionality is another critical consideration best addressed at project inception. Australian work health and safety regulators consistently emphasise that workstation design and furniture selection should be integrated early into office planning, not retrofitted after construction decisions are locked in (WorkSafe Victoria, 2024). Furniture must support a diverse workforce, evolving work patterns and future flexibility. Modular and reconfigurable furniture systems allow organisations to adapt layouts without costly refurbishments, supporting organisational agility and extending the life of the fit out.

Durability is equally important and often misunderstood. High-quality commercial furniture is designed to withstand years of intensive use. While premium furniture may carry a higher upfront cost, it typically delivers greater value over its lifecycle. Inferior alternatives may require replacement within a few years, turning an apparent saving into a recurring expense. Long-term durability also supports sustainability goals by reducing waste and extending product life, aligning with growing expectations around responsible workplace design.

Early and integrated furniture procurement enables better financial and environmental outcomes. With fit out costs varying from \$1,000 - \$3,000psqm, depending on the complexity of the fit-out and furniture chosen, decisions around materials, procurement volumes and lead times are more effective when aligned with the overall project strategy. These principles reflect a broader shift in Australia toward long-term value creation rather than short-term cost cutting.



Ultimately, office furniture is one of the few elements of a fit out that continues to deliver value every single day. When organisations view furniture as a strategic asset rather than a discretionary cost, the workplace becomes more than a designed space, it becomes a tool that supports people, culture and long-term business performance. Thoughtful investment at the outset ensures that long after the dust has settled and the design has been admired, the workplace continues to work.