

How excellence meets efficiency at Civic Quarter 1



Amalgamated Property Group's approach at Civic Quarter 1 in Canberra shows how dedication to detail can deliver a sustainability star.

“Robust auditing is the secret to a high performing building. We’re committed to commissioning and tuning, guided by the NABERS Commitment Agreement process, because we’ve found it delivers far more than it costs.”

– Greg Lemin, Project Manager,
Amalgamated Property Group

Civic Quarter 1, in a prime position along Canberra’s 68 Northbourne Avenue, is a model of flexible working and wellness. With smart systems that support energy efficiency and occupant comfort, part of CQ1’s pitch to prospective tenants is “an intelligent building that works as hard as you do”.

That hard work of CQ1’s intelligent systems is backed by Amalgamated Property Group’s dedicated in-house team. They are focused on commissioning, tuning, monitoring, and data analytics to ensure that CQ1’s green design lives up to its potential in operations.

“We’ve found a focus on ‘nuts and bolts’ building operation can make a big difference to a building’s efficiency and the experience of the people within it,” says Greg Lemin, Amalgamated’s Project Manager.

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FAST FACTS

Ahead of the curve

Opening in 2019, CQ1 offers 16,000 sqm of NLA across 13 storeys, with flexible workspaces, a state-of-the-art business centre and end-of-trip facilities.

5.5 Star NABERS Energy target

Building owner Amalgamated Property Group signed a NABERS Commitment Agreement in May 2015 for a 5 Star NABERS Energy (Base Building) target rating; this was exceeded in November 2022, when CQ1 achieved a 5.5 star rating.

CQ1's future looks green

CQ1 boasts a swag of other sustainability ratings, including a 4 Star Green Star Design and As Built rating from the Green Building Council of Australia and Canberra's first Silver level WELL Core and Shell certification from the International WELL Building Institute.

Green from the ground up

CQ1's tenants, including Datacom, Downer Professional Services, Westpac and St George, Colliers and Indesco, were attracted to its spacious floorplates, light-filled floors and sustainability credentials.

“Because a NABERS rating is based on actual building performance, our team undertook extensive modelling, testing and tuning to demonstrate that CQ1 is as green as the design promised.”

– Greg Lemin, Project Manager,
Amalgamated Property Group

The NABERS commitment started many years before the first tenant walked through the door, with an agreement to achieve a 5 Star NABERS rating inked in 2015.

“During the design phase, we asked our NABERS consultant to mark up the areas within the rating boundary and those excluded,” Greg says. “This simple set of plans was incredibly useful in clarifying and guiding the design decisions. It’s amazing how a first pass at metering arrangements then changes when you remind everyone to look at the NABERS rated areas on the drawings.”



NABERS Commitment Agreements: A critical success factor

A Commitment Agreement is a contract signed by a developer or owner that outlines an intention to design, construct and commission a building to achieve a specific NABERS Energy rating. [Research from the GBCA](#) has found that a NABERS Commitment Agreement is “a critical success factor in translating design intentions into real-world outcomes”.

[Find out more about NABERS Commitment Agreements](#)



Precision pays off

Devotion to the detail of energy efficiency is one secret ingredient. Another is Amalgamated’s in-house property management team, led by Head of Facility Management Brendan Jones. “Our buildings are long-term assets, so their ongoing performance is front-and-centre in our thinking,” Brendan says.

“Systems installed to support a high performing building aren’t just set and forget. They take a lot of work to monitor and maintain in the background and this only really pays off if we all share a sense of pride in CQ1.”

Once CQ1 was operational, Amalgamated could begin collecting data to verify its NABERS rating. The commissioning and tuning process – which hit some inevitable Covid-19 speed bumps – was completed in July 2022.

But the process unearthed some of the biggest efficiency opportunities to enhance the occupant experience and deliver a higher-than-expected NABERS rating.

“I can’t overstate the importance of commissioning and tuning,” Greg Lemin says. Air tightness testing, for instance, discovered unsealed service risers into plantrooms and open penetrations between external awnings and internal ceiling spaces. Addressing these helped with the half star NABERS uplift.

Testing of metering systems revealed other hidden problems. “We found meters installed in the wrong locations and labelled incorrectly. This was only picked up as part of the independent commissioning and tuning process,” Brendan adds.

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Putting in the hard work early creates an engagement platform for tenants who care about sustainability as much as Amalgamated does.

Light on the hill

During CQ1's first year of operation, Amalgamated held monthly building tuning and monitoring meetings, with the NABERS rating a 'light on the hill'. These meetings included the builder, commissioning agent, NABERS consultant, mechanical services and building management systems contractors, as well as key members of Amalgamated's team.

"We did this every month until we achieved the first NABERS rating. We still meet quarterly, but our NABERS consultant undertakes monthly checks to monitor actual energy consumption against our targets," Brendan says.

Putting in the hard work early creates an engagement platform for tenants who care about sustainability as much as Amalgamated does.

"We have established a rigorous and robust process - including detailed fitout guidelines - so tenants understand how the building works and that their choices don't compromise the NABERS rating."

- Brendan Jones, Head of Facility Management,
Amalgamated Property Group

Flagship forward

Amalgamated team has applied the lessons learnt - including commissioning and tuning from "Day One" - at CQ1 to Civic Quarter 2 next door, and the pair of properties have garnered several national awards for quality and innovation. Work is now underway on Amalgamated's new "flagship" ANZAC Park East, which is targeting 5.5 star NABERS and 5 Star Green Star.

"A 5.5 star NABERS Energy rating is our minimum now," Greg reflects.

"We have confidence in our ability to deliver a high performing building at ANZAC Park East. We critically analyse and critique the design inputs into the NABERS modelling so that we have confidence that the estimated target values are 'realistic', as opposed to being a guesstimate with a conservative safety margin also being added.

"This keeps the design as efficient as possible to achieve the targeted NABERS Energy rating. We know that a rigorous commissioning and testing process will give the building every chance of then being able to perform as efficiently as the design and modelling anticipated."