Verosol

Verosol blinds helping patient recovery at STARS

Located in Brisbane, Herston Surgical Treatment and Rehabilitation Service (STARS) provides a range of specialist surgical and complex rehabilitation services, delivered in a patient-centric model of care.

Overall, the facility includes 184 beds, as well as several operating theatres, endoscopy procedure rooms, and consultation spaces. Operated by Metro North Hospital and Health Service, it is the first stage of the larger $1.1 billion Herston Quarter redevelopment. When complete, in addition to STARS, the precinct will include a mix of multi-connected healthcare, educational, housing, retail, recreational and community spaces.

Opened to patients in February 2021, STARS is the first of a series of new buildings that will stand around the site's core, which includes several heritage buildings. The architectural lead (of both STARS and the overall redevelopment) is global firm Hassell. As a priority, the architects resolved to revive these existing buildings and facilitate better access to them.

As such, STARS – and the area on which its stands – has been designed as transitional space that welcomes visitors and facilitates their movement into the precinct. For example, they have designed a series of levels that guide those arriving from Herston Train Station, which stands level with STARS, up to the precinct's core on higher ground.

Similarly, throughout the new building (and its exterior) there are references to the heritage buildings, and more broadly to the landscape.

STARS is a new type of health facility in which the focus is on patient recovery and natural light is welcome. Installed throughout the building, Verosol blinds are helping ensure this light is controlled and comfort is maximised.

A connected healing environment

This outward focus and connection to landscape aligns with another key design consideration. STARS represents a new type of medical facility; one in which sterility (at least in terms of atmosphere) is abandoned in favour of light and brightness. Considering that many patients at the facility face long periods of recovery, the focus throughout is on positivity, well-being, and uninterrupted care.

Maintaining an outward connection is one thing, but such a reliance on natural light would not have been possible without the judicious use of window coverings. While the benefits to patients of the design strategy are clear, they can quickly turn into negatives when it starts to get too hot or glare becomes an issue.

To ensure this wasn't the case, the architects specified blinds from high-end supplier Verosol. Specifically, they chose 205 SilverScreen Performance bronze and 737 Veropaque manual chain operated roller blinds.

A blockout material, constructed from a fine 2x1 weave and featuring a colour coated backing for a uniform look from inside and out, the 737 Veropaque material ensures complete privacy; while the 205 SilverScreen Performance in colour bronze belongs to a range of metallised fabrics that have been shown to regulate lighting and improve thermal efficiency more effectively than any alternative materials.

Combined in dual-bracket blinds, whereby one or other of the fabrics can be lowered to suit prevailing conditions – or alternatively both can be raised – these products have proven a perfect fit for STARS. They provide patients with privacy and light control and, considering their simple chain operation mechanisms, with the means to adjust them.

Unrivalled thermal efficiency

While a priority, patient comfort was not the only issue that the architects had to address. As is the case with all work undertaken by Hassell, sustainability was another key consideration. In this sense, Verosol blinds also excelled. As mentioned, the SilverScreen fabric, which is exclusive to Verosol, is unrivalled when it comes to thermal efficiency.

A report provided by Verosol prior to specification reinforced this point and made it clear to Hassell that these blinds were the right choice. Considering Brisbane's sub-tropical climate, it found that the main consideration at STARS was heat transmission (and g value) rather than heat loss (and u value).

According to the report, the installation of the blinds would result in significant g value improvement, from 35% if the blinds hadn't been installed to 18% with the blinds. This equates to energy savings of up to 270 MWh per annum and cost savings of $22,371.00 per annum.

To date, these figures have proven accurate. Now fully operational, STARS represents the future of healthcare, particularly for patients who have undergone surgery and are facing long periods of recovery. It is a facility in which patient-centric care sits comfortably alongside energy efficiency and sustainable design.

Verosol would like to thank Hassell for the opportunity to become involved in this significant project which, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, was completed successfully and as planned. The company looks forward to continuing its association with the firm into the future.