



28 trading days to Christmas

With Christmas around the corner, the pressure was on to ensure the major refurbishment to David Jones' Melbourne city store would be ready in time to delight eager shoppers.

The refurbishment called for significant expansion to the iconic department store to provide a more spacious and appealing retail space. The construction called for seven suspended levels and associated staircases, a reconfiguring of existing space, extensive demolition and associated reinforcement of existing columns.

All major structural work was to take place in a super-tight time frame, minimising disruption to shoppers, lost trading for the client and ensuring maximum time for following trades to get the complex site working and fitted out in keeping with David Jones' premier status.

If that wasn't challenge enough, the site was notoriously difficult, with minimal access provided only by narrow Little Bourke Street – a thoroughway heavily populated by pedestrians and traffic during business hours, which meant plenty of night work and significant craneage were the order of the day.

Precast Manufacturer
Hollow Core Concrete

Architect and Project Superintendent
Parker Design
Henant Group

Engineer
Robert Bird Group

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To meet the challenge, flexibility and open minds were called for.

Project manager John Hagopian, from builder Walton Construction, recognised early that planning would be key – and that extensive use of precast elements offered a highly workable solution, including for the staircases, columns and, perhaps most significantly, in use of hollowcore planks for flooring. So Peter Healy, from Hollow Core Concrete was called in.

“Although there was some initial concern about using hollowcore planks due to perceived craneage issues, assessment of the practicalities soon proved the opposite point,” says John Hagopian. “In reality, the hollowcore solution only required materials to be brought in, not taken out, which was a massive saving – especially given the site limitations. In fact use of precast on this job offered significant benefits all round.” Peter Healy explains further, “Using precast and hollowcore planks completely eliminated the need for formwork and A-frames, and there was no need for back propping. Once the floor planks were in and screeded, roughing in took place within three days, instead of waiting 14 days for curing, as you do for conventional concrete,” he says.

Precast again came to the rescue with heavily reinforced columns to take the loads. Once again, speedy and effective results were achieved, allowing the rest of the project to forge ahead on time.

The end result? A new shoppers’ paradise open and ready for business four weeks before Christmas.