



iPrecast takes flight in Australia's latest action sport

Penrith, in Sydney's outer west, is fast becoming the adventure capital of New South Wales. The Penrith Panthers Complex – now dubbed the Panthers World of Entertainment - has an exciting new attraction, and precast has played a big part. A new \$8 million indoor skydiving facility adds to the already buzzing atmosphere, with Cables Wake Park, the Whitewater Stadium and Sydney International Regatta Centre nearby.

INCREDIBLE ADRENALIN RUSH IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

iFly Downunder is the Australian franchisee of a world-wide network stretching from Arizona to Abu Dhabi, offering indoor skydiving in a state-of-the-art, ultra-safe environment. The facility at Penrith is Australia's first centre, where the flying skills of expert skydivers can be mastered whilst suspended in a vertical glass tunnel about four metres across, supported only on a cushion of air created by a 250 km/h updraft. Each experience lasts about 50 seconds and is the equivalent to freefalling from about 14,000 feet or just over four kilometres.

PRECAST MORE COST EFFECTIVE THAN STEEL

Based on American experience, the building design was originally proposed in steel with metal linings. Glen Balneaves of Raybal

Precaster

Austral Precast

Builder

Raybal Constructions

Client

Indoor Skydive Australia Group

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Constructions recommended using precast concrete panels as a more efficient alternative for the major structural elements. "I thought it would be a cost-effective to go that way," he says, adding that this has now been adopted in the US

PANEL DESIGN ENHANCES VERTICALITY

National Precast member Austral Precast manufactured and installed precast panels for the project. Most of these were used in the giant return air towers on the building's boundaries, and in the lift shaft located near the centre. Precast panels also infill the rear of the building, with the balance of cladding in lightweight construction. 119 panels covering just under 2000 square metres, in thicknesses varying from 125 mm to 270 mm, were manufactured with a class two finish and were painted on site.

The designers chose to have architectural features scribed into these outer precast panels, which were painted in blue and overstruck by an orange stripe. As well as breaking up the large surface area of the building's sides, this simple graphic effect further emphasises the centre's verticality and imparts a distinctive visual branding.

For a relatively small building, the engineering and construction were quite complex, with cantilevered panels featuring in the outer elevations of both return air towers.

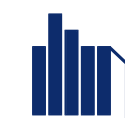
THE SERIOUS SIDE

As well as being an entertainment hub, the centre also has serious applications helping skydivers train for formation jumps. It can accommodate up to 10 participants at a time and closed sessions are run for military personnel.

Austral Precast General Manager Andrew Nearhos is proud to be a part that Austral has been part of such an exciting new development. "Having been involved with the project, we are now all keen to experience the exhilaration ourselves. It looks amazing and they say it's addictive," he said.

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