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SUSTAINABLE TILES – A SPECIFIERS' GUIDE

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1) What are the key factors to consider when seeking sustainable materials?

The materials, the manufacturing process and associated waste, the recyclability of products, and embodied carbon.

2) Can specifiers assess the sustainability of products based on their ingredients? From that perspective, what are the benefits of porcelain tiles compared to natural stone?

The materials used to manufacture porcelain tiles – such as clay, feldspar and quartz – are abundant and unlikely to be depleted. As such, porcelain tiles are a good alternative to natural stone.

3) What tile manufacturing methods can help minimize environmental impact?

Suitable measures include waste and water recycling, minimization of atmospheric emissions, and the employment of carbon offsets.

4) How can technology help improve the sustainability of tile manufacturing?

Automation improves efficiency and cuts carbon emissions associated with manufacturing; AI warehousing optimizes land utilisation and therefore minimizes footprints of facilities; the use of digital print technology makes porcelain tiles a viable alternative to natural stone.

5) Beyond manufacturing, what other players and life cycle stages are relevant when assessing the sustainability of tiles?

Life cycle assessment starts with the mining of raw materials, through to manufacturing and installation methods, to recycling of products that are no longer needed. Responsibility lies with those involved at all stages.

6) What are the key Environmental Certifications that specifiers should look out for?

Two of the best recognized are the EU's Ecolabel certification and Green Squared certification from the US. In Australia, GECA and GreenTag both meet the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) requirements.

AACA Competency Codes: 1. Design: Project Briefing 1.2, 1.4, 1.5 / 3. Design: Conceptual Design 3.3, 3.4, 3.7 /

4. Design: Schematic Design 4.2, 4.4, 4.6