

# WORKPLACES OF THE FUTURE AND THE POSITIVE BUILT WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT – INTERNATIONAL TOWERS SYDNEY

Michael Manikas  
Australia

## ABSTRACT

The traditional office workplace is ever changing. We have moved on from the traditional offices and high workstations to more of an open plan office layout with very few or no enclosed offices.

The next phase of this was the introduction of hot-desking or activity-based working. Then came along disrupters in the market such as WeWork, JustCo etc that provide shared hotdesking solutions.

At Barangaroo in Sydney Australia the International Towers have developed a new hybrid version of shared office space focused on community.

The focus of the entire International Towers development has been around creating a community and the benefits of this type of community focus is highlighted in the White Paper that was produced in relation to “Positive Psychology of Buildings and Workplace Community: Delineating the Benefits of the Positive Built Workplace Environment”

In this White Paper a comprehensive review of the existing literature and policies as well as in-depth interviews of 16 stakeholders across Tower Two and Tower Three at International Towers were carried out. This produced over 16 hours of interviews and over 450 pages of transcripts.

The aim of this study was to develop a positive psychology of workplace buildings and community and introduce the concept of the Positive Built Workplace Environment (PBWE).

The data indicates that a PBWE does have a significant impact on those who work there, and when positive values are espoused and enacted by the building management and design team, this approach sets a strong foundation for a positive and inclusive culture.

International Towers Development was commenced in 2013 and completed in mid 2016. The office development component comprises 283,900m<sup>2</sup> of office space over three towers. The towers are known as International Towers 1, 2 and 3 and were designed by Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners and developed by Lendlease Australia. This study will focus on Tower 2 and 3 which is owned by a separate entity to Tower 1 and has a different Fund Manager and building management team.

Anthony (2018) introduced the concept of the Positive Built Workplace Environment. This concept explores the link between the positive physical workplace environment and how they can influence the most important psychological factors including ‘positivity, competence, autonomy and relatedness’ which in turn creates a workplace environment with sustainable high performance returns.

There are two key components to the PBWE, being the physical and psychological factors. The physical factors includes sustainable design techniques coupled with a building management team that promotes the ideas of inclusivity, wellness and a sense of community. The psychological factors relate to high levels of autonomy, competence and relatedness at work in employees.

It has been proven that a workplace that has a great physical workplace environment can have increases in organisational productivity by 19%, increased individual performance on cognitive tasks by over 61% and reduced respiratory complaints and headaches by 30% as well as helping people sleep better.

The results from the consultation of the building occupants at International Towers revealed five key categories.

1. The impact of the International Towers physical environment on performance, engagement and gratitude
2. The role of values-based leadership in extending the utility of activity based working
3. Expressions of purpose, pride and wellbeing
4. Issues in making a transition to a new way of working
5. How spatial change (i.e. moving to the International Towers buildings) can be a powerful facilitator of corporate cultural change.

The data indicates that the PBWE does have a significant impact on those who work at International Towers. When positive values are espoused and enacted upon by the building management and design team, their approach sets a strong foundation for a positive and inclusive culture.

#### **KEYWORDS**

activity-based working, community, psychology, sustainability, workplace