

## Beginner's Guide to Healthy Buildings

The CitySwitch Green Office program approaches health and wellness in the office by looking at how the built elements of an office detract or contribute to human health, wellbeing, and productivity, and what we can do to thrive in our offices.

Staff costs, including salaries and benefits, can account for up to 85 to 90 per cent of a company's total expenditure.<sup>1</sup> When it comes to staff attraction and retention, research indicates tenants are placing thermal comfort and indoor air quality second only to public transport proximity in their top workspace priorities.<sup>2</sup>

An overwhelming body of evidence published over the past decade draws a clear link between best practice indoor environments and the savings that can be gained from healthy, happy and productive staff.

### Quick Guide

For an optimum workplace environment:

#### Mind

- Aesthetics – visually appealing environments have a positive effect on productivity
- Connect to nature with indoor plants or by installing a green wall
- Gauge employee satisfaction by performing an [occupancy survey](#)

#### Body

- Office layout – positioning of healthy snacks vs unhealthy, water vs sugary beverages
- Provide opportunities to move – stand-to-sit desks, appealing staircases with signage, lunchtime walking paths, discounts on gym access
- Promote active transport – install bike racks, access to shower facilities and lockers

#### Culture

- Equal access for all to healthy workspaces
- Look at how wellness is communicated throughout the organisation (e.g. employee handbooks and external marketing)
- Clarify expectation around sickness and leave

#### Workplace

- Indoor air quality – including ventilation effectiveness, and levels of pollutants (VOCs)
- Utilise biophilic principles – we have a need to connect to nature

<sup>1</sup> City of Melbourne report Zero Net Emissions by 2020: A Roadmap to a Carbon Neutral City

<sup>2</sup> Colliers International Research, Australia/New Zealand. (2012). Colliers international office tenant survey. Retrieved from website: [http://www.colliersvideo.com.au/eMag/Office\\_Tenant\\_Survey\\_2012/](http://www.colliersvideo.com.au/eMag/Office_Tenant_Survey_2012/)



- Thermal comfort – Temperature, humidity, air-flow
- Lighting – Maximise daylight, whilst minimising glare and heat
- Acoustics – Minimise external noise as well as the noise levels within the office space
- Office layout – Arrangements of walls, partitions, furniture and equipment in relation to fixed elements
- Ergonomics – An assessment should take place per employee at their workstation

## Resources

Darren Bilsborough, author of [Don't worry about the rent](#) has produced a [tool](#) to help you determine how healthy your office is. This blog post also explains how your [choice of office](#) can impact on your profitability.

- [Healthy Building Overview](#) - CitySwitch Website
- [NABERS Indoor Environment \(IE\) Assessment](#)
- [10 Steps to Improve Staff Engagement and Health](#) - CitySwitch website
- [Video: Interface, Google and biophilic design](#)
- [Green Star buildings](#) - Green Building Council Australia
- [Explainer: Green star and NABERS Ratings](#) - CitySwitch website
- [Tenant's Guide to Green Leases](#) - Department of the Environment and Energy

## Case studies

[Fifth Estate ebook: Healthy Offices](#)

[Department for Environment and Water and Schiavello - Office Relocation case study](#)

