

# GET WELL SOON

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## Is this members-only architecturally designed sanctuary, with health cafe, podcast studio, herbal medicine dispensary and state-of-the-art fitness studios, the workplace of the future?

Working nine to five, what a way to make a living. Barely getting by, it's all taking and no giving." The anthem Dolly Parton released 42 years ago remains as catchy and unfortunately, relatable, for many in the workforce today.

According to a 2020 survey by Asana, Australians have one of the highest rates of burnout of any country, with up to four in five Aussies suffering.

As three letters, WFH, ingrained themselves within our lexicon in recent years, the boundaries between work and home increasingly crumbled. Kids became colleagues, pyjamas doubled as office attire and work hours could stretch into bedtime.

Despite working as hard as ever, the sentiment of some remains that we should be working harder.

Kim Kardashian recently advised women in business to get off their behind and work because it seems like nobody wants to work these days.

Influencer and PrettyLittleThing creative director Molly-Mae Hague reminded listeners on the Diary of a CEO podcast that we all have the same 24 hours in the day as Beyonce so people can "literally go in any direction".

It's no surprise that the tug of war between balance and burnout really is enough to drive you crazy if you let it.

However, in 2022, a new wave of workers aren't letting it.

Not only are they taking agency over their own wellbeing, companies are creating structures promoting a culture that encourages wellness in the workplace.

This isn't just offering a free yoga class weekly or a day off on your birthday. These are evidence-based strategies that put the mental health and wellbeing of employees above all else.

A Perth-based business that encapsulates this growing trend is Vitality House. Due to open in early April, it's a members-only co-working and wellness hub. Its main aim is to bring work and life into balance.

"I'm sure we weren't or aren't the only ones who

couldn't see themselves working within a corporate structure or working in a cubicle," co-founder Amy Coleman says.

"Even the strict hours, nine to five, it never sat right. It (Vitality House) slowly started to come to life and made me think there could be a different structure that could work and something that catered for work and life as one.

"If you do, you're not just going to work because you have to but you love what you do and you're passionate about it, there is less separation between going to work and coming home and doing what you like.

"So there was room to create something where you could do all of it together and find the people who feel the same way."

STM had an exclusive first-look inside and we'd never have guessed the multi-level West Leederville building was a former office space with low ceilings and tired carpet.

With the help of award-winning architects Iredale Pedersen Hook, interior designers State 28 and McCorkell Constructions, the \$3 million fit-out and build, plus costs of state-of-the-art wellness and gym equipment, is unlike anything Perth has seen before.

"Vitality House is designed as a sequence of spaces that are both intimate and communal, places to gather and collaborate and places to focus on one's personal mental and physical wellbeing," architect Adrian Iredale says.

On the upper level sits a stylish open area dedicated to communal working. There is a cafe with a nutritious all-day menu that includes smoothies and tonics.

Private booths are available, as is a boardroom, plus small spaces for phone calls. There is also a podcast-recording studio and a sweeping balcony area, allowing plenty of natural light inside.

The lower floor is a wellness wonderland, packed with high-tech equipment, treatments and calming courtyard that will wash away the stress of any passive-aggressive email. There are treatment rooms and access to a naturopath or masseuse, »

as well as a herbal medicine apothecary.

Members will have access to three infrared saunas, a steam shower and ice baths.

The three studio spaces on the lower level are each dedicated to a different movement, the first a room for Pilates and yoga with infrared heating panels for a sweat-induced workout. Functional fitness is the name of the game in the second with free weights and cable machines.

The third cardio fitness room contains innovative Technogym treadmills, bikes and rowers with on-demand and live content.

It's the kind of space Kardashian would use between running her own empire, no doubt with the help of a nanny or 10.

The women behind the sanctuary are friends and business partners Coleman, 27, and Remmy Roberts, 30.

Despite having different backgrounds – Coleman's in marketing and psychology and Roberts in fitness, health science, nutrition and Western herbal medicine – they immediately clicked after meeting at work in 2017.

"A big part of working at that creative agency together is that all of the clients were small business clients, so we were seeing all of these people who were going out and starting their own business . . . we came to realise you can start your own business," Coleman says.

"Through that, we also learnt the things that you need to do to start; registering a business name, creating a website, all of the little simple things that gave us a lot of ability to know we could do those steps in order to start our own business."

This knowledge first influenced the forming of their individual ventures – Coleman in freelance marketing and Roberts' yoga and mindfulness studio.

Yet Coleman knew the business her gut was telling her to open should be more aligned with her passions.

It was on a trip to the US with her parents in 2019 that Vitality House was conceived, within New York's Meatpacking District at the renowned Soho House.

"Everyone was having coffee and breakfast in the bar area, but naturally people were on their laptops working in



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**”**

Remmy Roberts and Amy Coleman, co-founders of Vitality House in West Leederville.

the space that wasn't co-working or anything," she says.

"It was a hotel lobby type vibe, but it inspired me to think that a place like that would be really cool in Perth because I had experienced working from home, or not having an office or place to work."

The more Roberts heard about the idea over coffee catch-ups, the more she thought she'd love to be part of it and offer her own skills.

"It's a chance to intertwine traditional herbal medicine into a modern environment," she says. "I think people are still unsure, so displaying a dispensary in a modern workplace will probably be quite new to people."

Memberships are \$250 a week, and

their target market is . . . themselves.

"Right from the start, the co-working idea was because we wanted somewhere to work because we were bored and lonely working at home and thought we would love a place like this," Coleman says. "Each offering is something we could want to use."

Their breakdown of the price takes into consideration potential members already paying for several fitness memberships as well as enjoying a regular massage or sauna and, of course, co-working costs. The duo add it also eases the all too familiar guilt of not exercising one week but knowing you're still paying for it.

"The reality of being human and in touch with your body is that you're not going to feel like that same routine every day and every week," Coleman says.

IMAGES OF MINERAL RESOURCES HEADQUARTERS: NICHOLAS PUTRASIA

Clockwise from right: Vitality House, Mineral Resources' new headquarters, and the sauna inside Vitality House.

"What we tried to create at Vitality House is if a class isn't for you one week, go and have a sauna, have a steam shower or do a meditation class."

Vitality House isn't the only impressive space in Perth building a healthier future for the people inside in 2022.

Mineral Resources, a leading West Australian mining company, has invested in new headquarters that aim to be the gold standard of workplace wellness design.

Architect Davina Bester, of Milieu Creative, was tasked with creating a building which achieved WELL Platinum Rating. This rating is considered the premier standard for buildings that support and advance health and wellness; only 133 buildings in the world have it. While Bester has worked on projects that have sought the rating out, she's never worked on one that had achieved it.

"I've done a fair bit of workplace design over my time and what we've been asked to deliver is phenomenal," she says, adding that with this project they've had COVID-19 constraints working against them.

"Nothing has stopped or limited him (managing director Chris Ellison) wanting to give this building its own utopian, wellness experience."

As per the WELL building performance categories, not one aspect of the building goes without thought.

The lighting synchronises with the bodies' circadian rhythm to allow for warmer and more relaxing light in the morning and evenings and cooler, energising light during the work day.

An in-house restaurant, open for breakfast and lunch, offers a diverse menu with everything from grilled organic grass-fed scotch fillet and squid ink marinara linguine to lobster poke bowl. Every meal has no more than 25 per cent sugar, no trans fats and 75 per cent of the offerings are dine-in only to encourage workers not to eat at their desk.

There is a medical centre, a state-of-the-art gym with peloton bikes, personal trainers and instructed classes.

A community gallery sits on level 12, and plenty of Perth furniture designers,



including Jack Flanagan and Nathan Day, have created bespoke pieces.

"It's not just about sitting at your desk – though the desks are phenomenal as well – it's about mental health and wellbeing," Bester says of the design.

"For me, I think that wellness spaces are ones that make you feel calm and happy and they're almost timeless spaces. So the one thing that we were really mindful of creating was a synergy through the whole building that was more about textures and layers and things that wouldn't date."

Despite businesses re-imagining workplaces for the better, it may take time for workers to adapt to the newfound fluidity, psychologist Chris Harris says.

"For many people, they actually feel secure in routine and know very clearly where the parameters are," he says. "So being encouraged to explore something different can be challenging for a lot of people."

Harris, who has been with MRL for 20 months, expects some workers will embrace the benefits of the new building while others will wonder what was wrong with a 10-minute tea break and structure.

Encouragement has to come from the top, says Harris, whether that means using the gym at 10am or working from the cafe for a few hours.

"They lead by example, and this is going to mean part of the senior leadership group are also evolving; that they're able to show flexibility and demonstrate they're looking after themselves."

"Staff look to the people above them . . . So this transformation is about as a leadership group that we demonstrate that flexibility and utilise the building for what it has on offer."

Not every workplace aims to create a utopian state but luckily there are businesses popping up that specialise in integrated wellness within the one space.

Opening this month, Synkro is a wellness centre that has everything from sound healing and meditation to Pilates.

"Most people that have worked on one single part of the wellness equation have realised it hasn't given them happiness in all areas of their life," founder Andrew Ballantyne says. "Having mind, body and spirit in alignment will not just keep you healthy but more importantly, keep you calm and happy."

COVID-19 and happy are two words that are rarely seen in the same sentence, however for Coleman the silver lining of the pandemic is the opportunity for people to find work arrangements that enhance their lifestyle, rather than diminish it.

"The nature of work is changing, not just in Perth but globally, and we're excited to bring it to Perth first," she says.

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