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CASE STUDY



Fluid Collaboration at DWER's Joondalup headquarters
Perth, Australia

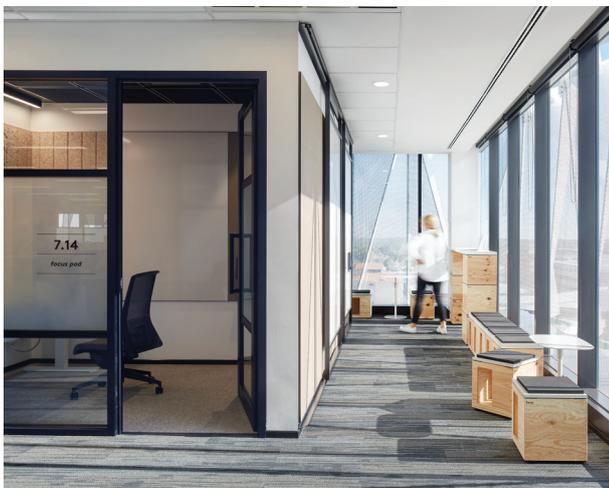
Home is where the heart is –

Completed in 2019, the new Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) takes up a sprawling commercial tenancy of six levels over 10,000 square metres in the lakeside urban centre of Joondalup, in Perth’s northern suburbs.

Collaborating closely with Perth-based interior design firm MKDC, Schiavello was engaged to bring quality workstation design solutions to the new DWER headquarters. The headquarters comprises a diverse ecosystem of meeting rooms, training suites and conventional workstations, complemented by designated zones for collaboration and social gatherings.

“We really valued the opportunity to work with the local Schiavello team,” says Alexis Kusinski, senior interior designer and project leader at MKDC. “They were on hand to assist with any questions and custom details we had.”

MKDC Design Consultants has a longstanding relationship with Schiavello, with a number of highly regarded commercial projects delivered in consultation with the WA team over some 20 years. This creative and professional partnership has led to a series of dynamic, responsive environments, with the new DWER offices being a proud addition to this portfolio.



Bene Pixel Seating

Different Pathways to Sustainability

In accordance with the WA state government’s standard of best practice sustainability, the project was benchmarked to achieve a 5 Star Greenstar interiors certification. To this end, all design decisions were made in consideration of minimum environmental impact and maximum performance in the long term. Beyond this design objective, on a more tangible level, it was important to department staff for their workplace to reflect their ethos.

“Considering the nature of the work that DWER are involved in, the sustainable aspect of the project was front of mind, and really directed our design,” says Alexis.

While sustainable thinking is no doubt the foundation of any effective design, the particular focus and transparency of the government brief pushed both MKDC and Schiavello to strategise multiple ways to provide an environmentally conscious interior.

“Given that the building itself has Greenstar credentials, everything had to be designed to those high standards - and we worked together toward that goal,” says Luke Bayley, business and relationship manager with Schiavello’s Perth team.



Bene Settle and Schiavello OTM Table

Planting Natural Talking Points

Since the new DWER premises represents the merging of three previously separate, fairly siloed governmental departments, its floor plan hinges on informal meeting spaces to encourage incidental and organic interaction. Though some layouts vary due to the inclusion of auxiliary amenities, such as wellbeing rooms and noise labs, the core facilities and configurations on each level remain much the same. Clear wayfinding facilitates an intuitively navigable workspace, fostering an innate sense of place. These are punctuated with biophilic design elements to establish an inviting atmosphere upon arrival.

On the ground floor, visitors are welcomed into an informal waiting area furnished by a raised Schiavello Drum bench table, centred around a planter box filled with greenery. In the main offices above, each workspace opens into a collaborative central zone featuring high-backed meeting booths. Here, pergola structures form a canopy over casual meeting tables, with convenient plug-in stations for people looking for a place to perch their laptop.

Toward the perimeter, smaller collaborative zones are defined by sliding whiteboards and the modular Bene Pixel boxes, a versatile unit which allow groups to freely configure seating to suit different needs. With a seated capacity of 400, the spacious breakout area and dedicated staff hub on level three opens out onto a balcony. Another custom Drum table of a lower height appears as a centrepiece in this industrial, rustic space, lush with thriving plants.



Schiavello Arch Workstation

“The staff hub is the only floor offering a direct connection to the outdoors, so we wanted to take advantage of that rare inside and outside opportunity,” says Alexis. “Our aim was for the interior to not only be green, in terms of being sustainably sourced, but we also wanted it to feel like a nature-driven environment.” The use of earthy neutral tones, timber and tactile surfaces throughout the new offices complement this intent.

Locally Designed Arch Workstations: A Homeground Advantage

The thoughtful response at DWER’s new headquarters prioritises local manufacture, using durable, natural and recycled materials where possible.

“Being able to specify Australian made and designed furniture certainly lowered the project’s overall carbon footprint,” says Alexis. “And the Schiavello team really helped us with that, especially when it came to creating the custom workstations, since those were ideas we hadn’t tested.”

Custom Arch workstations form a key part of the design, developed by the team at Schiavello through a rigorous process of prototyping. The result features bespoke hoop pine plywood panels replacing the standard MDF, locally produced soft wiring and worktops.

This purpose-built piece presented some technical challenges, with an earlier proposed board material found to emit strong unpleasant fumes that would not dissipate over time. The Schiavello team addressed

this concern by replacing the bulletin board with a linoleum surface.



Schiavello Arch Workstation

“It was extremely important to include as much Australian product as possible. Being a state government project, that element was essential for the client,” says Luke. “We worked hard, and managed to get the amount of imported content down to roughly 7%, which we consider to be a fantastic outcome for our local industry.”

The abundance of Australian content and product meant that Schiavello were also able to provide DWER with a generous warranty. This was crucial from both a practical and environmental perspective - since the department had signed a 10-year lease, they needed to be confident that the products they had invested in would last the lifespan of their tenancy.

“The MKDC team visited the project recently and saw that people at DWER are using the communal spaces, and working more closely together in teams,” says Luke. “That kind of feedback is really rewarding for us to hear.”



Schiavello Arch Workstation

Interior design by MKDC
Photography by Robert Frith and Boz Sayers

