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## CBA unchains its staff in offices of the future

Carolyn Cummins  
September 22, 2011

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How it was ... the old building. Photo: Edwina Pickles

IT'S rare for a bank to say it's "unplugged", but for the 6200 staff at the Commonwealth Bank's new \$500 million digs at Darling Harbour, they are encouraged to be as unchained as possible.

Where banks and financial institutions were once the bastion of staid workplaces with pens chained to the desk and chatting was frowned upon, they are now leading the way with offices of the 22nd century.

GPT Group, Macquarie Bank and now the CBA, have all moved into new workplaces where having an assigned desk within a specific section has been replaced with hot desks and mobile lap tops. But the change comes with a clean environment dictat of no pictures of the family, pets or favourite footy team on the partitions.

Sitting on the site of the former Sega World, the complex is now known as Commonwealth Bank Place and comprises two eight-storey buildings. By the end of 2011 it will house more than 6200 staff across 56,000 square metres of flexible working space. Most of the staff have been relocated from the bank's city buildings at 48 and 52 Martin Place and 120 Pitt Street.

The campus-style development forms the final piece of the bank's Sydney metropolitan property strategy to create three state-of-the-art workplace precincts as "Centres of excellence" at Parramatta,



All mod cons ... the bank's new building at Darling Harbour. Photo: Danielle Smith

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Sydney Olympic Park and in the CBD.

Contained within the six-star green star building, there are specific meeting rooms as well as areas for staff to stand up to work and chat in sound-proof booths; and an array of traditional looking rows of desks and state-of-the-art wireless cafes.

Home zones are also available for staff who like to have something akin to a permanent desk.

At the start and end of the day every desk is cleared and all laptops, complete with blue tooth and phone headsets, are stored in personal lockers.

But in case customers were concerned it was more of a university campus than a serious bank, all of the employees' laptops are tracked via central satellite systems 24 hours a day.

The CBA's chief financial officer, David Craig, said the workplace had been designed under the banner of "activity-based working" where there is no shortage of colour and staff are encouraged to have fun.

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