



## GOOD WORK

Improving tenant experience

NATIONAL OFFICE BUILDING SURVEY 2023



# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Our Approach</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Good Work Strategy</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Findings</b>	<b>7</b>
Big City, Less Friends	8
It's Lonely at the Start	9
Seeking Connection	10
Connecting Spaces	12
“Surprise and Delight” and Volunteering Opportunities to Increase Positivity	14



# Executive Summary

**Good Work aims to increase social connection and improve the wellbeing of employees working in various businesses in office buildings across Australia.**

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the Good Work tenant feedback and engagement project delivered in the first half of 2023 by the Little BIG Foundation on behalf of the building owners.

Part one of this report aggregates the general findings from all building across Australia that participated in the Good Work survey. This highlights the importance of social connection in the workplace, especially for combating loneliness, which was found to be prevalent among Australian workers in the surveyed buildings.

The findings reveal:

- Sydney's business districts have higher levels of loneliness than national averages.
- those aged 26-34, those in their first year of employment at a new organisation, and those identifying as female experienced the greatest levels of loneliness.
- tenants seek communal spaces in which to meet, 'third spaces' which allow them to come together.
- more than one third of respondents felt other people in their building did not contribute to the sense of community, despite this, they sought greater connection from others and indicated that they would participate in events and building-wide community building activities.
- the importance of addressing building maintenance concerns and service issues cannot be underestimated to ensure authenticity and tenant satisfaction of the Good Work program.

Following this research, a bespoke tenant engagement plan has been provided to each community. This involves events and initiatives in the key priority areas indicated in the Good Work Strategy; social onboarding, social facilitation, surprise and delight initiatives, mental health support, education and skill development, feedback mechanisms, and tenant-led initiatives. The suite of programs recommended focuses on addressing the maximum priority areas. Additionally, building specific feedback has been provided to all relevant parties and we have done and will continue to advocate for the building improvements suggested by tenants.

We sincerely hope the community amongst this building will take the opportunity to get to know one another better and building creation workplace connections over the coming year.





# OUR APPROACH



## Objectives

**The Little BIG Foundation has invited the community within each building to provide their input for a tenant community building program.**

Good Work's approach has included extensive consultation with tenants and suppliers to understand the individual expectations, needs and interests for each community. Qualitative and quantitative interactions have uncovered tenants' experiences with loneliness, their appetite for building community and insights into their areas of interest.

## Process

The program has been designed to not only collect data, but also create positive experiences for building tenants to help improve wellbeing.

**TABLE 1: THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS**

STAGE 1: DEVELOP	STAGE 2: ENGAGE	STAGE 3: RECOMMEND
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Project planning and approach refinement</li><li>• Building site-tours</li><li>• Local community partnership identification</li><li>• Survey and focus group planning &amp; design</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Building and facility manager interviews</li><li>• Property manager interviews</li><li>• Focus groups with tenants</li><li>• Face-to-face or video interviews with tenants</li><li>• Impromptu lobby conversations</li><li>• Events and networking opportunities to build engagement</li><li>• Building wide survey distribution and marketing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prepare a plan of actions for each building recommending a bespoke set of activities based on the available budgets</li></ul>

## Timeframe

Interviews were conducted in April and May 2023, the survey was open for responses during May 2023 and the report finalised in July 2023.

## Response Rates

**TABLE 2: SURVEY AND INTERVIEW PARTICIPATION RATES**

	SURVEY SUBMISSIONS	INTERVIEWS / FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS	ESTIMATED BUILDING POPULATION	SURVEY RESPONSE RATE
NATIONAL TOTAL	277	56	860	32%



## Good Work Strategy

The Good Work Strategy has seven key areas of focus for the design of a successful tenant engagement. This will be done through a series of tactical responses or individual activities under the following strategic areas.







# FINDINGS



# Big City, Less Friends

## Sydney is the loneliest place to work.

The buildings are experiencing comparable rates of loneliness to the national averages with the notable exceptions of the buildings located in Sydney.

TABLE 3: LONELINESS EXPERIENCED IN SURVEYED BUILDINGS

Respondents felt lonely on one or more days in the last week.

NATIONAL COMPARISON	GOOD WORK AVERAGE
36% <sup>1</sup>	30%

Limitations of this comparison:

- The national level of loneliness has presumably reduced since the data above was published. Sydney's lockdown ended in October 2021; the national data is from January 20

Despite the personal nature of questions around loneliness in a work context, respondents from all buildings provided high rates of completion of the question. 92% of people answered the question in the good Work survey. This represents a much higher rate of respondents who feel comfortable disclosing an answer regarding their loneliness than the national average of 62%<sup>2</sup>.

TABLE 4: COMPLETION RATE TO QUESTIONS ON LONELINESS

Completion of the question "How many days in the last week did you feel lonely?"

NATIONAL COMPARISON	GOOD WORK AVERAGE
62%	92%

Finally, most respondents who said they *were lonely* found out about the Good Work program via our marketing emails. Respondents who indicated they *were not* lonely found out about the survey from a colleague.

<sup>1</sup> Biddle, N., Edwards, B., Gray, M., Rehill, P. 2022, "Wellbeing outcomes in Australia as lockdowns ease and cases increase – August 2022" Australian National University, Canberra, 2022  
<sup>2</sup> Australia is afraid to admit it's lonely, Nature ^ Good Purpose, 2023



## It's Lonely at the Start

### New, female and younger employees experience the greatest levels of loneliness.

Respondents who had been with their organisation for less than a year were 20% more likely to have felt lonely than those who had been with the organisation for 10+ years. Additionally, the highest rate of lonely staff was from the 26 - 34-year-old age bracket at 33% and those identifying as female at 62%.

Christian Stenta, Manager of Social Change at Australian Red Cross explains that "starting a new job is an example of a life transition, and so we can anticipate an experience of loneliness, especially during the first two weeks. It's because we don't know a lot of people, we're establishing our networks, and developing a sense of who we are in relation to the others around us."

The frequency at which people change organisations is increasing with the Australian Bureau of Statistics identifying 1.3 million people (or 10% of employed people) changed jobs in 2022, the highest annual job mobility rate since 2012<sup>3</sup>. This presents a key focus area for the Good Work program in office buildings as individuals join their organisation and a new building community.

The research also revealed that a relatively small amount of attention is paid to onboarding new employees from a social connection perspective.

The table below shows that, historically, loneliness reduces the longer an employee works for an organisation until 10+ years, when loneliness marginally increases.

**TABLE 5: LONELINESS COMPARED TO THE NUMBER OF YEARS WITH CURRENT EMPLOYER**

TIME IN ORGANISATION	DAYS OF THE WEEK									RATHER NOT SAY	TOTAL	%
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7				
0 - 1 years	35	15	6	5	2	1	0	2	8		74	41%
1 - 2 years	38	8	5	6	1	1	0	2	6		67	34%
2 - 5 years	32	9	2	2	0	2	0	1	3		51	31%
5 - 9 years	24	2	1	2	1	0	0	0	3		33	18%
10+ years	24	1	4	1	0	1	0	0	2		33	21%
TOTAL	153	35	18	16	4	5	0	5	22		258	

<sup>3</sup>Job Mobility, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022



## Seeking Connection

### Tenants indicated they would embrace opportunities for connection.

Interviews, focus groups, informal discussions and survey responses consistently demonstrated a strong appetite for increased social connection.

Managers interviewed were motivated to entice people back into the office for work. They could recognise the benefits of social connection for the staff, but they were concerned about the push back if they were to mandate how many days staff needed to work from the office. There was an understanding of the need to offer suitable levels of social interaction to warrant their staff's commute and reduced time with family and / or friends, however some organisations reported they were unsure what they could offer to motivate staff to return to the office.

Human's are wired to connect with others and so it is of little surprise that social interaction is the key motivator for people to work from an office. In Microsoft's recent Work Trend Index Report, 84%<sup>4</sup> of employees stated they would be motivated to return to the office by the promise of socialising with co-workers, while 85% also reported that they would be motivated by rebuilding team bonds. Employees also report that they would go to the office more frequently if they knew their direct team members would be there (73%) or if their work friends were there (74%). This finding is substantiated in the Good Work survey.

**81%**

of respondents were unsatisfied with the sense of community within their building.

**96%**

of respondents showed an appetite for in person events and activities.

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<sup>4</sup> Work Trend Index Special Report: Hybrid Work Is Just Work. Are We Doing It Wrong? 2022 (Sept)



*"(It) would be good to see more inter-office events around the building."*

*"Please do something ... because right now there is nothing."*

*"Everyone seems friendly (in the building). We have clients in the building too so already know some. I would like to like to know more about the other businesses".*

However, there was not unanimous support for creating a community within the building with a small number of comments indicating apathy, or a lack of time to participate.

*I don't see a strong need to foster a sense of community in the building. My feelings of loneliness are not incurred by the office - those are due to more personal issues".*

*"I don't have any time while at work to participate in any activities."*

In addition to work relationships, it was identified that there are secondary relationships that are also important to the tenants of these buildings; those of the service workers supporting the businesses around their organisations. This insight was particularly observed in the buildings with the lowest levels of loneliness. These include café workers, cleaning staff, facility managers and all other parties who make up the whole experience of what it's like to be in the building.

*"The [cleaner] is also a really nice guy, always works around us to a high level without being asked and friendly when we talk to him".*

*"[Building Manager] is always very responsive and helpful with any issues".*



## Connecting Spaces

**Tenants seek a place to be together – physical environments to meet and connect outside of their office but still onsite.**

Across all the assets it was clear that there was a desire for communal “third spaces” for people to meet or have a break from their work, outside of their office space but remaining onsite. Multiple respondents stated they would like access to an area with fresh air, natural light, lounge furniture or hospitality offerings.

*“A particular floor for workers to enjoy personal space for break and coffee or lunch.”*

*“Inclusivity/diversity & accessibility (spaces)... Indigenous language/place names on signs, communal outdoor area, quiet rooms”.*

*“Ideally in a familiar communal area which doesn’t exactly exist?”*

*“A communal outdoor area within the building would be perfect to catch some fresh air without travelling too far given out location.”*

*“A rooftop area”.*

While at work, individuals can benefit from short breaks to disrupt the mind and develop a new perspective. These spaces are also useful for people wanting to have informal conversations with colleagues or clients or to take personal calls away from their desk.

**“Communal/breakout spaces on vacant floors would be a great use of spare space”**

Survey Respondent.



# Address the Daily Pain Points

**High-value, low-effort building maintenance opportunities were identified and should be prioritised to ensure authenticity of community building initiatives.**

Despite an aggregated building facility satisfaction rate of 50%, the tenants provided a substantial amount of feedback about the building’s functionality and services. During both surveys and interviews, respondents stated that they were excited about community building opportunities but that buildings should also address their daily frustrations such as fixing soap dispensers and improving cleaning standards. Without also acknowledging, addressing, and communicating the responses to these issues, any Good Work programs will be received as disingenuous.

TABLE 6: SATISFACTION WITH BUILDING FACILITIES

Aggregated response to the question: “How do you feel about the building facilities?”

	DISSATISFIED	NEUTRAL	SATISFIED
BUILDING FACILITIES	28%	22%	50%

When asked for feedback about the landlord, property managers and/or cleaners, there was a strong sense that tenants felt neutral due to limited interactions from which to make a judgement. This presents a unique opportunity for key people in the property team to increase their profile through participating in Good Work activities.

- “Appreciate the landlord is interested in tenant feedback and ways to improve!”
- “Haven’t dealt with the landlord or property managers to comment. The building always feels clean and well looked after.”
- “I don’t really deal with the property managers so hard to comment.”

TABLE 7: SATISFACTION WITH THE PROPERTY TEAM

Aggregated responses to the question: “How do you feel about the job the landlord, property managers and cleaners are doing?”

	DISSATISFIED	NEUTRAL	SATISFIED
LANDLORDS	10%	54%	37%
PROPERTY MANAGERS	16%	46%	38%
BUILDING CLEANERS	27%	29%	44%



## “Surprise and Delight” and Volunteering Opportunities to Increase Positivity

**Tenants understanding of connection methods need to be challenged. Creating moments of surprise and delight will drive positive emotions and create talkability.**

When asked what types of events and activities respondents would like programmed into their buildings, respondents suggested things that they had experienced previously including, networking events, freebies, and the replacement of existing café tenants. However, when considering how to increase connection, community and wellbeing, there are a wealth of other ideas that weren't raised (possibly because people don't equate them with workplace wellbeing) nor was there acknowledgement that everyone has a role to play in a positive community.

**TABLE 8: EVENTS PREFERENCES**

Responses to the question 'What types of events, activities and / or facilities would you like to see added to your building?'

FOOD AND DRINK	HEALTH AND FITNESS	SELF CARE AND WELLNESS	BUSINESS AND NETWORKING
69%	43%	38%	37%

Research shows that experiences which induce positive emotions such as talkability and curiosity provide an opportunity to have a beneficial effect on mindset at an organisational and community level. This benefit extends beyond the momentary positive emotions and one individual's experience can reverberate through other organisational members and across interpersonal transactions with customers<sup>5</sup>. Tactics which 'surprise & delight' rather than passively serves to event preferences may fuel optimal organisational functioning, helping organisations to thrive and prosper.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, evidence suggests that giving support through volunteering is a particularly beneficial form of social connection.<sup>7</sup> However, more than one-third (35%) of respondents disagreed that 'other tenants in my building help to foster a positive sense of community' and 48% felt neutral towards this statement. This may indicate that there is no expectation or opportunity to contribute towards a positive building community.

**TABLE 9: PERCEPTION OF 'OTHER'S' CONTRIBUTION TO COMMUNITY**

Responses to the question "Other people in my building help to foster a sense of community".


	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE
GOOD WORK AVERAGE	17%	48%	35%

<sup>5</sup> Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 218-226.

<sup>6</sup> Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 218-226.

<sup>7</sup> 4 Neal Krause, A. Regula Herzog, and Elizabeth Baker, "Providing Support to Others and Well-Being in Later Life," *Journal of Gerontology* 47, no. 5 (1992): 300-311, doi:10.1093/geronj/47.5.P300; Post 2011, 819





**"I really liked the day where free fortune cookies were handed out in the lobby. Please keep doing that."**

Survey Respondent, Sydney







