

Development



Test-tube apartments: the exterior of Moull Murray Architects' Life.lab building.

A place where

A building in Docklands makes an ideal home for tech-savvy business people, writes Annie Reid

SOME say you shouldn't mix business with pleasure, but that's exactly what is happening at Docklands' Digital Harbour.

The ultra-modern Life.lab office building, by architects Moull Murray, has 16 office/apartments among its 91 strata-title offices.

The funky eight-level building is home to small, largely technology-based start-up companies who were attracted by the waterfront location and want to be part of a thriving business community in which larger corporate tenants mix and network easily with the new young blood.

Architect Andrew Murray says it's a different kind of office building.

"Because they are small offices, you get people who are on the edge of the CBD and who want to be mobile. It's inside and open, light is brought into the interior, you can live and work here, and it has parking," he says.

The home offices are stylish with a semi-industrial feel. They have one or two bedrooms and range from 40 to 120sq m. At the top is a two-level, 160sq m home office.

Each is characterised by a sliding glass screen that separates the office from the living quarters.

The home offices have CaesarStone benchtops, Smeg appliances, stainless-steel benchtops, ceramic tiling in bathrooms, Caroma tapware and polished-concrete floors. Natural light is abundant. Some have balconies, and there's a separate entrance and postal address for tax requirements.

Digital Harbour executive director David Napier threw his weight behind Life.lab in 2006 and bought one of the 80sq home offices off the plan.

After finding a tenant for he and his wife Gayle's apartment in Toorak, where they were living, they made a hurried effort to move in just before Christmas.

"We joked that we might be eating from boxes on Christmas Day, but it's terrific. We've been in and out and it's a great space," Napier says.

Their home office is on level five, and Napier slightly altered the kitchen by elevating the floor to take advantage of the views.

"It has a great connection to the waterfront and because we are on level five, we are still connected to the promenade, which is really engaging. We've always said we didn't want to live high up, and this is just high enough to give us views," he said.

Life.lab joins two other buildings as part of Digital Harbour: Port 1010 and the Innovation building, which house large businesses such as Telstra, Australian Customs, VicTrack and the Australian Film, Television and Radio School.

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