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ARCHITECT **DAVENPORT CAMPBELL**
LOCATION **SYDNEY | AUS**
PROJECT **IBM**



REINVENTING A CLASSIC

IBM'S CLASSIC CAMPUS HEADQUARTERS IN SYDNEY'S CUMBERLAND FOREST IS GIVEN A

NEW LEASE OF LIFE WITHOUT LOSING SIGHT OF ITS ORIGINAL IDENTITY



PREVIOUS The refurbished entry lobby
ABOVE The lobby with the restored water garden visible outside
OPPOSITE 'The Street' looking down past the central tealpoint

In 1984, IBM moved into its new South-East Asian headquarters in Sydney's outer suburban West Pennant Hills. Set in the lush surroundings of the Cumberland Forest, the campus complex was, at the time, the most innovative commercial building in Australia.

It remained so until another campus appeared on the scene – BVN's refurbished Campus MLC in North Sydney – in 2002. Arguably, the IBM campus – an actual campus consisting of a cluster of pavilions as distinct from MLC's more metaphorical, internal vertical campus – was still the more radical because it combined a sophisticated work environment – a flexible, modular, open-plan, non-hierarchical work environment with universal access to the forest views, winter gardens, raised floors, task lighting, etc. – with a visionary environmental agenda.

Brian Mazlin, then a partner in Devine Erby Mazlin, the architectural practice employed by IBM for the project, explains that this was to be IBM's computer centre for South-East Asia. This drove the decision to locate it in a greenfields site because there it would be less visible and enable IBM to fully control the security. Security and technical issues to do with the computer centre (controlling energy consumption and safeguarding against computer failure) were major considerations. But the remoteness of the site also meant that the building needed to be able to offer enhanced amenities in order to attract and retain staff.

Surprising as it may seem for the visitor to this beautiful site, Mazlin observes that "the actual look of

the building didn't come until late in the process... in other words, the function came before the form". One result of this process was to position the most secure areas at the centre of the complex, with lower-level security areas radiating out, culminating in the circulation spaces (known as 'The Street') and the cafeteria, with its floor-to-ceiling glazed walls, opening onto a landscaped water garden and recreational areas.

The need to prevent computer meltdown led the architects to analyse overall energy use and ultimately to a very sustainable solution. Rejecting the customary use of back-up diesel generators as expensive, inefficient and environmentally undesirable, they used an inexpensive system of refrigerated water, since overheating is the main cause of computers closing down. Chilled water was generated at night off-peak and then pumped through the system during the day.

Similarly, when it came to air-conditioning, the architects' research revealed that the site had a very stable temperature and humidity level all year round. For 80 per cent of the year, fresh air was ideal for circulation. So, they used a system of high volume fresh air. As Mazlin points out: "If you can put fresh air into a building, people feel a lot more comfortable at lower temperatures. So, it doesn't have to be as cold or as hot." All of this not only cut costs enormously, but also brought the plant and equipment to a smaller and more economical size. In addition to these initiatives, the building used motorised, computer-controlled external sunblinds and a computer-controlled internal lighting system to minimise energy use.

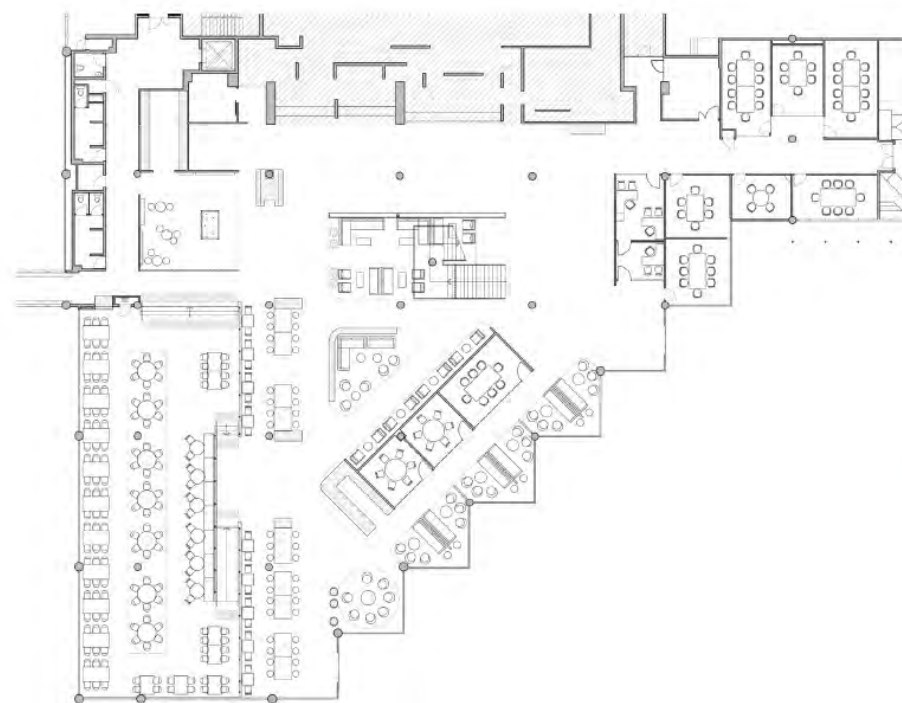
Recently, Davenport Campbell was retained to 'reinvigorate' the campus – IBM sold the building during a worldwide re-structure and is now the tenant – which had remained largely untouched since built. "IBM's Cumberland Forest HQ was Australia's original campus development," says Davenport Campbell's Peter Wager. "It also embraced many environmental design principles that are only now becoming commonplace in campus projects. To maintain their commitment to environmental design principles and to attract the next generation of IT worker they knew they had to act."

The building is actually seven interconnected pavilions. The core consists of two pavilions in an L-shape, linked by the reception area. The two pavilions comprise public and shared spaces (including cafeteria),



Davenport Campbell was retained to 'reinvigorate' the campus

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along with the computer centre, administration and major meeting rooms. The five three-or-four-storey satellite pavilions are the work areas and are linked to the central complex by elevated, glazed walkways.

Davenport Campbell's brief focused on public and shared spaces - reception, the main corridors ('The Street'), client meeting facilities, the cafeteria, toilet upgrades and just four of the 18 work floors. They could have imposed their own 'contemporary' vision on the building. That they didn't is a credit not only to their design sensibility, but also to an approach which might be termed inside-out - namely, clarifying the existing identity of the building and then articulating it to serve a contemporary function. "What we've done for IBM," says Wager, "is to drop away many of the 70s-style utilitarian aspects of the Town Centre, such as the canteen, and introduced more socially engaging elements to help activate the space."

They were certainly helped with this agenda by the fact that the existing character and function of the building was so well resolved. So, in a sense, we can say that the building is now even more itself than it was before the upgrade.

The reception, for example, has been opened up to take full advantage of the water garden outside and the through-views to the rear garden courtyards. There is a new reception desk, new speed stile security gates, new timber ceiling and wall panels, informal meeting areas separated by timber-framed glass panels, and internal planting has been removed to create casual seating. The result is an elegant, expansive, light-filled space connected to the lush garden exteriors, which now serves as reception, visitor waiting, and informal meeting area.

Its function as an entry to 'The Street' has also been enhanced, bringing a greater sense of connection and

flow. 'The Street' itself is a double-height corridor with floor-to-ceiling glazing looking onto the garden courtyards formed by the satellite pods. The upper level is set back like a mezzanine, thus drawing in an abundance of natural light and neutralising any sense of enclosure.

Davenport Campbell has also recognised that there was unexplored potential here for a break-out space and informal meeting and work areas to take advantage of the garden outlook. So, they activated the corridors and created a mix of spaces along 'The Street' in Building B (left from reception), continuing the idea of timber-framed glass panels to break up the spaces. A break-out teapoint has been inserted halfway down 'The Street' which extends out onto a new timber deck with benches and chairs.

Below the entry level in Building A, there has been a major makeover of the cafeteria, summed up by its new name, Town Centre. Previously this was an under-utilised space, used mainly during the lunch break. With the theme 'Experience the Forest', this area has



The building is now even more itself than it was before the upgrade

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TOP LEFT Level 2 'Town Centre' plan
 ABOVE The 'Town Centre'
 RIGHT 'The Street' with its partitioned informal meeting areas
 FAR RIGHT The 'Town Centre' with views to the garden and work pavilions



IBM

ARCHITECT Davenport Campbell
PROJECT TEAM Peter Wager (Project Director), Patrick Carson (Project Coordinator), Suzana Keca (Senior Designer), Jane Alexander (Senior Designer), Samantha Cusack (Designer), Damian Prattr (Project Designer), Peter Trehana (Designer/Support)
BUILDERS ISIS Group Australia (Toilet and Meeting Room upgrade, Town Centre Levels 2 and 3), MPA Construction Group (Corridor Activation)
SERVICES Norman Disney Young

TIME TO COMPLETE 1 year
TOTAL FLOOR AREA 16,000m²

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FURNITURE In Reception, 'Miles' side sled chairs from Schamburg+Alvisse, 'Bob',

'Open Up Black 3D', and Eames segmented base chairs, and 'Ribbon' tables from Living Edge, 'Charlie' lounge from Jardan, storage units from CSM, and anti-theft support from DPG-Formfittings. In Corridor Activation, Walter Knoll 'Flow' chairs and Eames Eiffel base plastic armchairs from Living Edge, 'Slim Relax Mode' lounge, 'Piano' tables, benches and café tables, 'Subo' ottomans and 'Block' tables from Interstudio, 'Leaf' sled stackable chairs and 'Catifa 46' barstools from Stylecraft, and 'Flynn' stools, coffee tables and large tables from Jardan. In Town Centre, 'Cuban' chairs from Jardan, 'Duna' low chairs from Stylecraft, 'Ottomania' ottomans, 'Amelia' chairs, 'Bekko' bar stools, 'Slim Relax Mode' lounge, 'Couch' chairs, and 'Elari', 'Spinal', 'Drum', and 'Different Drum' coffee tables from Interstudio, '3D', 'Tess' and 'Viento' dining chairs and 'Luff' table from Chairbiz, custom dining tables from Watts Commercial

Furniture, and pot plants from Rentokil Tropical Plants (now trading as Ambius).

LIGHTING Lighting design by NDYLIGHT. In Corridor Activation, Moooi 'Molram' pendant from Space Furniture. In Town Centre, pendants from JSB Lighting, Interstudio and Light Culture.

FINISHES In Reception, feature wall from Alternative Surfaces, and entry door and wall cladding from Alucobond Architectural. In Town Centre, existing concrete polished by Concrete Artisans, carpet tiles from InterfaceFLOR, and solid hardwood flooring from Nash Timbers. Feature wall tiles from Academy Tiles. Wallpaper from Signature Prints, and Cole and Son wallpaper from Radford Furnishings. Ceiling system from Fricker Ceiling Systems. Generally throughout, carpets and feature rugs from Whitecliffe Imports.

Timber decking and solid hardwood base to glass and timber screens from Nash Timbers. Timber veneers and laminates from Laminex. Paint from Dulux and Bristol Bulletin Board from Forbo. Benchtops from Smartstone. Leather upholstery from Pelle Leathers. Fabric upholstery from Kvadrat Maharam, Woven Image, Signature Prints and Materialised.

FIXED & FITTED In Corridor Activation, Fisher & Paykel dishwasher and bar fridge, Clark sink, and Caroma sink mixer. In Town Centre, Franke sink and tap, and joinery handles from Barben Industries. In Bathrooms throughout, basins, mixers, toilet suites and urinals from Caroma, sanitary accessories from RBA Group, toilet partitions and coat hooks from Maxton Fox, door handles from Assa Abloy, door stops from Kaba Australia, and toilet signage from S2k Identity Systems.

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