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CASE STUDY



A warm and welcoming approach: ESSSuper
Melbourne, Australia

Putting members first

ESSSuper is one of Australia's largest super funds, serving over 132,000 Victorian emergency services – including police, firefighters and ambulance drivers – as well as government employees. As a public sector fund, ESSSuper has the country's second-biggest payroll, providing over 56,000 people with a retirement pension.

Designing an empowered and contemporary space for members and employees was at the forefront of design considerations for a refurbishment of the organisation's Melbourne office.

"The ESSSuper brief stipulated they wanted to provide a space that was welcoming and warm for members," says Emma Loo of PTID, the interior designer behind the project. "They also wanted to ensure their staff was provided with a much more contemporary, collaborative and active space."

Situated across three levels in the Melbourne CBD, the refurbished ESSSuper office embodies the brand's colours, with a neutral palette of soft navy blue and pale purples, as well as natural light timbers.



Aire Fold Tables are able to neatly fold vertically and wheel away when not in use, creating a fully flexible boardroom.

Power up with Aire Fold

Upon exiting the lift at Level 16, clients and visitors are greeted by a welcoming reception area. Further to this area is a seminar room, interview rooms and a boardroom. Schiavello Aire Fold tables, designed for complete flexibility and agility, reside in these spaces. Thanks to its fold and lock mechanism, Aire's tabletop is able to neatly fold vertically, allowing the table to promote flexibility in the workspace and be stored away. Aire also provides ESSSuper employees with easy to use power capabilities via an inconspicuous In-Desk Box built into the tabletop. With a hinged lid, these boxes have the option to power up staff with USB ports, power plugs, Ethernet plugs and more



Collaboration is at the heart of the fitout, with breakout spaces and areas for brainstorming scattered around the office.

An inviting workspace featuring Krossi

In moving from the old fitout to the new, ESSSuper employees were also transitioning from individual offices to a more agile working environment, including the use of kanban.

"To make kanban more practical in the new fitout, we created collaborate spaces with more walls for employees to be able to work with," Loo says. "We took out all the built environment around the core and exposed that as a feature. The core walls then became writable space."

"We also tried to soften the base building itself, as it's a very harsh, square floorplate. We introduced curved edges through the collaboration spaces and the general built environment. All the Krossi Workstations are splayed around in an arch shape, rather than being in lineal rows," Loo says. In addition to this, Schiavello 120° Krossi Workstations are positioned in clusters of three to create soft, circular desking solutions for the member service centre.

Meanwhile, System 45 panels are attached to each desk for privacy and personalisation of space. "I think coming from a big L-shaped desk in the previous fitout, privacy was a big worry for the staff, so the panels helped with both privacy and acoustics," Loo says.

Karo and Tom balance the palette

Breakout spaces and agile collaborative spaces are perhaps what contribute most to the inviting floorplate. Dominated by soft furnishings and curvaceous shapes, the agile collaborative spaces feature in every neighbourhood and include dramatic, curved banquette seating alongside flexible furniture including Tom Stools, Karo Ottomans and collaboration tables.

Karo brings punctuation to the open plan space and allows ESSSuper staff to work in an agile nature due to its ability to be carried and used anywhere with ease as a seat, a table or simply as a decorative element. Each ottoman is upholstered in Cascade or Shadow coloured fabric from the Schiavello ColourLab palette, complementing and pairing effortlessly with the gentle palette of the interior.

Also punctuating the space are Tom Stools, which combine the linear and circular motifs throughout the fitout together in one design. Fun and youthful, Tom is the result of a series of model experiments that play with the merging of cones and cylinders. The result is a simple, pure, invertible form where the two shapes intersect. The polyethylene body of the stool also adds a variance of texture to the heavily fabric space, creating balance as well as practical seating solutions. "The spatial layout of the furniture within this collaborative zone worked really well," says Loo.

A 10-year working relationship

After working on ESS' previous fitout project, Schiavello already held a strong working relationship with the firm, and following a competitive tender for the Melbourne office, ESS confidently chose Schiavello. "Schiavello helped ESSSuper to come in on budget. Although the employees were moving from offices, they still wanted to be able to create spaces that were very much their own, so the way the desking system is set up – where it can be a pod of six or a standalone desk – helps with that," explains Loo. "The Schiavello workstation team was really helpful throughout the entire process. And the feedback has been really positive; the CEO is very, very happy."

ESSSuper CEO Mark Puli says, "Our remodelled office continues to deliver on its original brief to provide more contemporary, engaging and collaborative space for our members, as well as our employees." "The furniture and the way we use these spaces gives us greater flexibility in how we work to support our members, so we're very happy with the outcome."



Curved edges, such as those in this custom table by Schiavello, soften the workspace's aesthetic.

Interior design by PTID
Photography by Jack Lovel