

BOOSTING WORKPLACE WELLNESS AND PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH
SMART SPECIFICATION OF WATER
FILTRATION SYSTEMS



INTRODUCTION

The growing global concern for wellness and the emergence of a more health-conscious culture is reaching into every facet of life, including the workplace. In a report commissioned by Medibank, the Allen Consulting Group found that 57% of Australian employees consider a company's focus on health and wellbeing 'very' or 'somewhat important.'¹ In addition, 85% of survey respondents believed that it was important for employers to offer workplace health and wellness programs or otherwise invest in employee health and wellbeing.

The increasing demand for health and wellbeing in the workplace can be partly attributed to longer working hours, greater awareness of health risks in the workplace, and understanding of the potential impact of an unhealthy workplace on employee productivity and satisfaction. On average, Australians spend approximately 1600 hours at work each year.² According to Australia's Healthiest Workplace Survey 2018 conducted by AIA Australia, absenteeism and presenteeism

resulted in approximately 52 days of lost productivity per employee per year.³

As the global shift towards promoting and investing in employee health and wellbeing gains momentum, architects and specifiers must carefully consider the impact of such trends on workplace design and the need to implement workplace features that positively impact employee wellbeing. The challenge comes from balancing these demands with other project requirements such as budget, time and space constraints.

In this whitepaper, we examine a key feature through which designers can incorporate wellness considerations into workplace design while also delivering speed and cost efficiency: filtered boiling and chilled water systems. As discussed in detail below, smart specification of filtered boiling and chilled water systems can result in elevated health, satisfaction and productivity outcomes for employees in Australian workplaces.



EMPLOYEE WELLNESS: A HEALTH AND ECONOMIC INVESTMENT

Incorporating wellness features in workplace design has proven to be an investment in employee health as well as productivity. As noted above, absenteeism and presenteeism contribute to a significant amount of lost productivity in Australian workplaces every year. Conversely, a study by Comcare showed that the healthiest employees in a workplace are almost three times more effective than the least healthy, while healthy employees generally have reduced rates of absenteeism.⁴ In other words, healthy employees are more likely to be present in the office and more likely to produce higher quality work at greater efficiency.

By investing in health and wellbeing measures, an organisation can also improve staff retention and talent attraction. Research by the Centre for Health Service Development indicated that wellbeing measures correlate to higher staff retention rates.⁵ Furthermore, recruitment firm Robert Walters noted in their *The Value of Promoting Health and Wellbeing* whitepaper that the vast majority of professionals surveyed noted that it was 'important' that potential employers offered workplace wellness programs.⁶ Beyond improving productivity, effective wellbeing measures can also positively impact organisations by reducing the financial cost of rehiring and training staff and ensuring organisations remain competitive in an increasingly challenging talent market.



THE ROLE OF EFFICIENT FILTERED BOILING AND CHILLED WATER SYSTEMS

While designers will need to consider the size, configuration and nature of a workplace when implementing wellness features, efficient filtered boiling and chilled water systems are a common, essential requirement for employees in all fields and locations. Easy access to water is crucial for hydration, a key consideration in any effective workplace health and wellbeing strategy. This provides designers and specifiers with a valuable opportunity to identify smart, innovative hydration solutions that enable elevated health and wellbeing outcomes in the workplace.

Keeping Employees Hydrated

As water is an essential nutrient for human health, easy access to drinking water must be included in any effective workplace wellness program. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that, on average, Australians drink 1.2L of water each day.⁷ This figure is well below the recommended amounts specified by most major health organisations, which is 2.5L for males and 2L for females.⁸ With Australians consuming less than ideal amounts of water each day, office workers risk potential health effects, such as dehydration, than can impact their performance at work.

Inefficient access to hydration, combined with environmental factors like warm temperatures and poor air conditioning, can result in dehydration. In turn, dehydration can result in impaired physiological responses and performance.⁹ In the workplace context, Business Insider Australia reported that as little as 1% dehydration can negatively impact mood, attention, memory and motor coordination, all of which are important to performance in the workplace.¹⁰ Increased fatigue and decreased levels of alertness have also been reported.¹¹ Studies have also found that severe dehydration can lead to poor cognitive brain function (such as reduced short term memory and ability to process information).¹² Chronic dehydration can also result in long term health issues,¹³ which can lead to increased levels of absenteeism. Safety risks are particularly protracted in the case of already at-risk employees, in whom further reductions in concentration, motor function, and reaction time may lead to an accident where machinery or other equipment is used.

Against this backdrop, workplaces that are committed to delivering improved employee wellness outcomes must provide easy to use, accessible drinking provisions. Instant chilled and boiling filtered water systems provide an efficient solution, allowing employees to simply and conveniently access drinking water throughout the day and maintain healthy levels of hydration. When specifying water filtration systems, designers and specifiers should consider how easy the system is to use alongside its reliability and durability – among other factors – to ensure employees have continuous access to drinking water throughout the work day.

Provide Access to Clean Drinking Water

Not all water sources are created equal. Given the health benefits of clean drinking water, designers and specifiers can enhance employee wellness outcomes through specification of high

quality filtered water sources. Filtered water systems can remove sediments, chemicals, infections, minerals, and cysts sometimes found in tap water which would otherwise lead to health issues if consumed. In Australia, of common concern is “hard water” from taps, which contains calcium and magnesium salts.¹⁴ From an unfiltered water source, hard water has a metallic taste that may deter employees from consuming tap water on a regular basis.

Filtered water systems can also reduce rates of illness or other health complications caused by bacteria or pollutants that may be present in drinking water. For example, in July 2018 the Environmental Health Standing Committee of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee issued a warning regarding lead present in tap water.¹⁵ The presence of lead in drinking water increases the risk of lead poisoning.

Boosting Sustainability Credentials

Smart and efficient water system specification can boost not only employee wellbeing but also the planet’s health by addressing environmental and sustainability concerns. In a workplace context, using electric kettles to boil and then re-boil the same water has significant energy and financial costs.¹⁶ In addition, the use of plastic water bottles is a significant environmental issue due to their energy and resource intensive production and role as a major contributor to landfills and overall waste production.¹⁷ By eliminating the use for kettles and discouraging the consumption of bottled water, the provision of instant boiling and chilled filtered water systems in workplaces can help mitigate these environmental problems.

It has also been argued that buildings designed to promote sustainability can be part of a broader organisational strategy to improve employee productivity and satisfaction.¹⁸ Some evidence suggests that end users perceive sustainable buildings as ‘healthier’ and ‘more conducive to productivity.’¹⁹ The provision of instant boiling and chilled filtered water systems can also encourage employees to remain in the office rather than go outside to purchase beverages such as tea, coffee and bottled water. This can result in employees putting more of their time towards their work. Furthermore, functional, easy to use and convenient office facilities that help employees save time and money can contribute to improved levels of employee satisfaction.

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BILLI

Originating in Australia, Billi has been at the forefront of the instant filtered boiling and chilled water systems industry for nearly 30 years. Billi products are celebrated for their combination of functionality, performance and contemporary aesthetics. Proudly Australian-made and designed, Billi products have brought a unique concept of underbench instant filtered boiling, chilled and sparkling drinking water to many countries around the globe.

Billi products enable architects and specifiers to achieve elevated wellness outcomes in today's increasingly health-conscious workplaces. Manufactured to strict quality standards, Billi water systems come with an assurance of quality, innovation and sustainability. Incorporating cutting edge eco-technology features and modern designs, Billi delivers solutions that keep pace with the ever-changing needs of its users.

Billi instant filtered boiling and chilled water systems provide designers and specifiers with a way to meet the stringent sustainability requirements of the WELL Building Institute. The paramount global standard for assessing and recognising design features that support and enhance health and wellness. WELL is a valuable tool for improving overall occupant wellbeing and workplace quality.

Ensuring the highest level of drinking water available, Billi's filter range is tested in accordance to NSF standards, an internationally-recognised public health and safety organisation.

Billi Instant Filtered Water Systems

Designed for the needs of architects, designers and consumers, Billi's instant filtered water systems are sleek, sophisticated and minimalist in style, with an unprecedented range of design options that comply with all safety, access and mobility standards. Billi water systems offer premium filtration, easy installation and low power consumption.

Billi gives designers and specifiers a high level of design flexibility, with options to suit almost any application or installation context. Billi offers options for boiling, chilled, still and sparkling filtered water systems, alongside an extensive selection of tapware designs, finishes and accessories. Levered, touch and remote dispenser options are available, including slimline profiles. Finish options include classic chrome, modern matte black, matte white and more. Accessories to match dispenser options are also available, including risers and fonts.

Billi also provides eco-friendly and energy efficient water systems which offer energy-saving heating and cooling processes and time-switch modes to eliminate unnecessary power consumption. Eco, Quadra and Quadra Plus models are Global GreenTag Certified and meet green building design principles.

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