ThinkPlace

2019
UN GLOBAL COMPACT
COMMUNICATION ON PROGRESS REPORT

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Message of Support

This is our second yearly Communication On Progress Report, issued as part of our responsibilities as a signatory to the United Nations Global Compact.

While we are required to communicate our progress as part of being a signatory to this important set of principles we do so with much gladness and enthusiasm.

Adopting the Sustainable Development Goals as our 'North star' has been a hugely-transformative decision for ThinkPlace. As we have gone about enacting this transformation, the Global Compact has been our way of codifying that commitment. It allows us to set out our intentions for all to see and calls on us to explain how we have acted upon them. It gives us the opportunity to outline how instrumental the adoption of the goals has been in driving and shaping our development as a company.

During the past 2 years, ThinkPlace has increasingly hardwired the Sustainable Development Goals into everything we do. Whether it is our work around the globe creating positive change for governments, companies and NGOs or

the internal processes and decisions that govern how we function as a company, we place the SDGs at the centre.

The past 12 months have seen us further entrench this relationship as we have used the goals to redefine our entire organisational structure. With new roles and accountabilities in place and another 12 months of culture and leadership behind us it is gratifying to see the ongoing impact that adopting the goals has made on our business.

We have seen our impact multiply across areas like global nutrition, disease prevention, family violence and renewable energy as our designers across the globe take on challenges for clients such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Johns Hopkins University. These projects involve working with communities and partners to create interventions that will save or improve the lives of millions.

Committing to the goals has also helped our company grow. In the past 12 months we have won major awards in Germany, Africa, Australia and the United States. We have been named Social Changemaker Of The Year at Australia's peak business awards. We've opened a new studio in the United States, taken on projects in more than 30 countries around the world and

seen our social media profile skyrocket as interest grows in what we are doing.

There is no doubt that these 17 goals have transformed our company. They have given laser-like focus to our already-strong determination that we will collectively and collaboratively work to create a better world.

They have created a shared purpose that motivates our staff, our leaders and our partners. And they give us a standard that we can both aspire to and track our progress against.

With that spirit in mind, I invite you to read this report as we proudly communicate to the world our progress on advancing the 17 SDGs.

Sincerely,

John Body,
Founding Partner

The 17 SDGs have given us laser-like focus to our already strong determination to create a better world

Human Rights

Principle 1:

Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights

What we believe

At ThinkPlace, we design for a better world. Our focus is on working alongside communities and partners to creatively tackle the world's most complex challenges. We do this based on the principles of co-design and the belief that those closest to the problem have expertise, insights and experience that are critical in tackling it.

At the core of this philosophy is **respect for others** and an authentic desire to include and benefit from **diverse voices and perspectives**. There is also a strong commitment to the role of institutions in codifying, preserving and pursuing an international human rights agenda.

ThinkPlace is committed to ensuring everything we do is aligned to the **United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. Because of the nature of our work, we have an unwavering commitment to the **Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** and the **Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.**

How we show it

Whether it's a strategy, policy, programme, service or a digital product, our designs improve things for the individuals, communities and societies who will experience them. We do not create situations of harm for individuals, communities and societies. We always strive to move the needle on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, in both developed and developing countries.

• We put in place the policies, training and principles our people need to live our shared ethics

• Our **Engagement Risk Matrix,** published on our internal communications channel, asks staff about to conduct fieldwork to consider the vulnerability of the people with whom they engage, the sensitivity of the topics of engagement and whether the engagement might impinge negatively on the rights of the subject. This enables higher risk engagements to be considered by our Executive and Board before a decision is made whether to proceed.

• We provide team members with training to ensure that human rights are protected and upheld throughout our interactions with people through our learning module **Ethics in the Human Research Process**.

• To ensure its alignment with the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**, (and Australian law) ThinkPlace has developed a policy document: **ThinkPlace's Protecting Children Policy.**

• To ensure its compliance with the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,** ThinkPlace has sought out best practice globally to guide the work of its team members. We use *Ethical Guidance for Research with People with Disabilities***,** published by the National Disability Authority of Ireland.

Human Rights

Principle 2:

Businesses should make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses

What we believe

At ThinkPlace, we design for better futures. We have chosen to formalise this guiding principle by adopting the dual frameworks of the United Nations Global Compact and the Goals for Sustainable Development.

Within this framework of rules and principles we recognise that the *UN Charter of Human Rights* is a foundational document It is core to the mission of the United Nations and it is similarly central to the ThinkPlace mission.

We work for change at a systems level in countries all over the world. This means we have vast capacity to make an impact on the lives of those who are vulnerable or exploited. We strive to make this impact a positive one.

Few things could be more important to our company than ensuring we are not complicit in any human rights abuses. We take care to ensure that our commitment to human rights is not an abstraction, it is a change we seek to make in the world. It is also important to us that we are transparent in our actions, opening ourselves for appropriate outside scrutiny to ensure our everyday actions match our declared ideals and standards.

We are meticulous about monitoring our own impact in these areas but also careful to ensure the partners and clients we engage with have similarly high standards. Through our work we strive to build up civic institutions in the developing world and to create stronger circumstances in which human rights can flourish. Our work is, by nature, collaborative. This means we have an extra responsibility to ensure we do not unwittingly abet human rights violations by our partners.

How we show it

Any potentially problematic project that ThinkPlace takes on must first undergo a formal ethics screening process, overseen by our **Chief Ethicist.** This is a detailed audit that examines whether a project is likely to cause harm but also examines whether any of the partners involved in the work are engaged in behaviour that contravenes our commitment to protecting human rights and other ethical mainstays.

• An Ethics statement is prominently displayed on our global website and makes clear the principles we expect to uphold.
https://www.thinkplaceglobal.com/company/ethics

• The *ThinkPlace Code of Conduct* details what is expected from each ThinkPlace employee or contractor. It is compulsory reading for all staff and an expectation that it be upheld is stipulated in all employment contracts. The code is prominently published on our internal communications channel.

Induction manuals for new staff also make clear that all projects must avoid negative impact in a range of areas, including human rights.

New staff undergo comprehensive ethics training. This is scenario-based and aims to present staff with the kind of dilemmas or challenges they may face in the field. Some of these scenarios relate to identifying, avoiding and reporting situations where human rights are being violated.

The Chief Ethicist is constantly available as a resource/adviser to assist staff with ethical questions that arise.

Wherever possible in our supply chain, we use local suppliers with whom we can maintain a personal relationship and values alignment. All suppliers we use must comply with the *Australian Fair Work Act* and with *anti-slavery policies*.

Q & A

Dr Ben Evans
Chief Ethics and Risk Officer

The role of Chief Ethics and Risk Officer is crucial to ThinkPlace's adherence to the principles of the Global Compact. We sat down Dr Ben Evans to find out more about with what this role entails...

TP: You are the new Chief Ethics and Risk Officer, having taken over that role from Darren Menachemson during recent months. What does that title mean at ThinkPlace and how does it relate to the SDG's and the Global Compact?

BE: The goals and the compact are absolutely central. Many companies around the world have become increasingly interested in how they might ensure that they are acting ethically. At ThinkPLace we have long held a determination to be ethical actors and to make positive change. But the SDGs have given a new focus to that.

Q & A

Dr Ben Evans
Chief Ethics and Risk Officer

TP: Has adopting them made us a more ethical company?

BE: Rushworth Kidder famously said that ethics is mostly not about making decisions between right and wrong; more often it's about choosing between two courses of action that might both appear right. The SDGs help with that; they help us decide between which right to choose. They give us a framework that helps us decide where to put our energy, our resources and our focus

TP: What other impact has it had?

BE: When clients walk into our studios the first thing they often see is the SDGs. We have the 17 goals stuck prominently on the studio walls.

People are often surprised, even amazed, to see the SDGs on the wall. They ask us: "You're not a UN agency. Not an aid agency... why do you have those there?"

And that provides a brilliant opportunity for us to tell the story of what those 17 goals mean to us as a company. We can explain not just why we've adopted the goals as our 'North star' but how we use them to guide our work all over the world every day. And, more often than not, it's a conversation they are really hungry to have.

TP: How do we use the SDGs in a practical sense?

BE: When we are looking at whether to take on a new client or a new piece of work they give us a clear sense of purpose and a checklist for action.

- Does this work 'move the needle' on at least one of the SDGs?
- Does it make enough of a difference? Are we being ambitious and bold enough?
- Might this project negatively impact one of the SDGs in some way?

If we can't satisfy ourselves with the right answers to these questions then we won't carry out the work. What we say no to is every bit as important as the projects we do take on.

TP: Why do we need the SDGs to act ethically?

BE: For us, it's good to sign up to a set of external principles that we can judge our behaviour and our work against. It means we are part of something larger than ourselves. Something global. Something powerful.

Q & A

Dr Ben Evans
Chief Ethics and Risk Officer

We can have confidence that this is something meaningful that has been set up as a response to the most important challenges facing our planet.

TP: How do individual ThinkPlace staff use the SDGs?

BE: From day one as a ThinkPlacer, the SDGs are front and centre. They are part of the induction process for new staff, they are a focus at team meetings, at company-wide events like our Christmas Party or strategy day.

Our staff each wear ThinkPlace hoodies with the SDGs emblazoned on the back. We have witnessed first-hand the pride that signing up to the goals and the compact has had on our people.

By and large, I think most people want to make ethical choices. They want to feel that they are part of something bigger than themselves. The goals give each of us some structure and some accountability to measure our intent to do good against. Will our intent actually make positive impact in the right areas?

We firmly believe that there is power in holding yourself accountable to a set of standards that you haven't created yourself.

TP: The SDGs are areas that require action now but goals like 'No Poverty' and 'End Hunger' are also long term objectives. Does that make them harder to pursue?

BE: Recently we've been thinking and talking as a company about what we can put in place now to ensure ThinkPlace is still going strong 100 years from now. To do this well we need to be appropriately ambitious for ourselves and for the positive impact we can make.

Looking to the limitless scope of the SDGs definitely helps us to think long term.

And that's a really good thing.
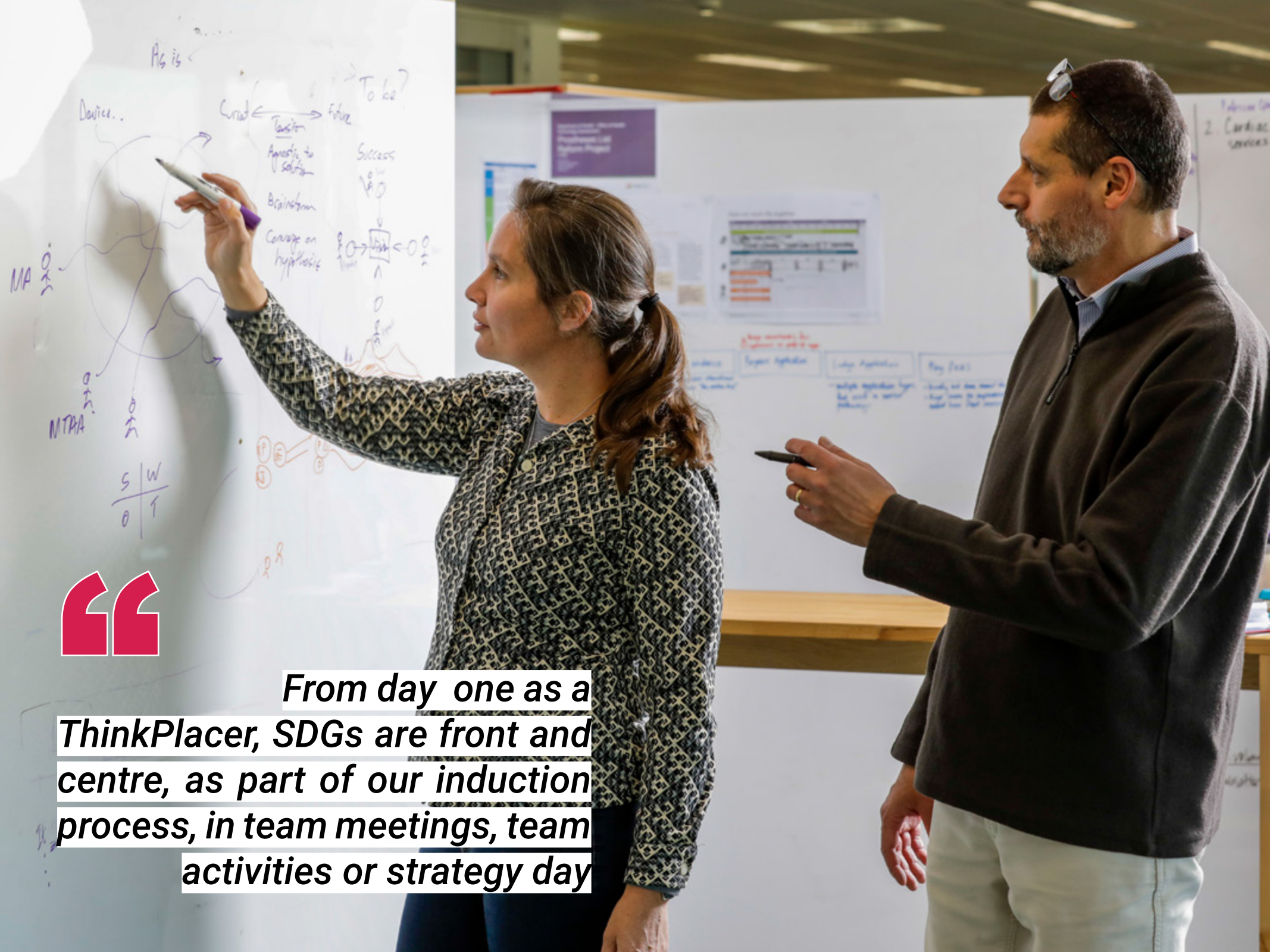
> *From day one as a ThinkPlacer, SDGs are front and centre, as part of our induction process, in team meetings, team activities or strategy day*

Our Work

In many facets of our work we are demonstrating commitment to advancing human rights across the globe.

We are strongly committed to advancing the public discussion around digital ethics and creating better human-centred leadership in the Australian public sector – vital to sustaining human rights in the face of a digital world.

Futurist Gerd Leonard has exhorted digital leaders to 'be on team human, not just team future'. We are strong and persuasive advocates for this approach, through thought leadership (writing, thinking and running events) and through running education short courses such as The Ethics of Digital Transformation, which aim to build these capabilities within the public sector.

In Africa, we are engaged with multiple projects advancing access to quality healthcare, including women's health and reproductive health. In Australia we are at the forefront of efforts to tackle family violence, promoting fundamental human rights of safety and security for women and children.

Another area in which we are deeply engaged with advancing human dignity and human rights is through our work around the globe with First Nations peoples.

Our approach to First Nations peoples is based upon a bedrock commitment to self-determination as the desired state. We believe this is the future for First Nations people and that human-centred design can be a powerful tool to achieve this.

We are working with the **Commonwealth Department of Health**, Health Incentives Scheme actively co-designing with First Nations communities to ensure needs of Health's indigenous clients are well met

In Victoria, ThinkPlace has co-designed and led a process to rename places to their Indigenous names – re-establishing connection for indigenous communities, educating all Australian about Indigenous connection to land, Indigenous history and culture.

Black Mountain School

ThinkPlace often runs events, workshops and strategy sessions for clients and others. Each year we host thousands of people in our studios, creating an ongoing need for hospitality and catering services.

To meet this need we provide casual employment opportunities, paying award wages under the Australian Fair Work Act, to young people with intellectual disabilities through Black Mountain School in Canberra.

Black Mountain School is a centre of excellence in the field of special education. It is a specialist secondary school (years 7 - 12) for students with an intellectual disability. It provides a functional curriculum to support students to reach their maximum potential and independence.

The right to fair pay and the opportunity for appropriate and rewarding employment are important goals for many people living with intellectual disabilities. We are proud to play a small part in helping to advance these fundamental human rights within our community.

Through ThinkPlace Education we have developed Co-design Training for Aboriginal Leaders. As a company we are thrilled to be helping develop the Indigenous leaders who will design the future of First Nations Australians.

As design lead for the Holistic Healing for Indigenous Communities project in Victoria we are working to co-design with Indigenous communities an appropriate, community-centred way to secure holistic therapeutic healing services to help Indigenous community members to recover from domestic violence.

All of these projects, along with ThinkPlace work with native peoples in the United States, New Zealand and many African nations underscores the commitment of our designers to upholding the human rights of indigenous peoples and advancing a human rights agenda in general.

Labour

Principle 3:

Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining

What we believe

Ours is a workplace unlike other workplaces and has a structure unlike other workplace structures. The fundamental principle that organises and binds us together at ThinkPlace is collaboration.

Central to this is the idea that every staff member – senior or junior – is a trusted collaborator. There is no top-down approach to industrial relations. Together we co-design the policies, values and structure that govern each of us as ThinkPlace employees.

Our structure is purpose-designed to avoid the kind of adversarial relations that can form between employer and worker, or between teams or colleagues, in more conventional structures. To do this we have eschewed the idea of a traditional workplace hierarchy. Instead we favour networks of criss-crossing influence and collaboration. Teams form and re-form according to project needs. Senior and junior colleagues learn from each other.

Employees at ThinkPlace do not work for a boss. Instead, our "unboss" system allows each worker to select their unboss from a hat. These roles are-re-allocated every 12 months, forging new relationships and possibilities. The unboss is responsible for helping the employee navigate a world in which he or she has more than the usual degree of agency.

Each ThinkPlacer is empowered to shape their own future direction, to map their own career journey. But they will do so in a way that is supported and that provides them the skills to succeed

How we show it

Our pay structure is completely transparent. Everybody knows what level each of their colleagues is at and each level has a clear salary point. These salaries were arrived at by a consultative process, featuring involvement from staff at different levels.

Progression through the levels is predictable, and is mostly based on experience and a nurturing idea of performance. We want our people to improve, grow and progress. Criteria are clearly spelled out and those who do progress are celebrated.

Studio Leads have been included in the progression decision process to better inform their support and guidance of team members through this period, and provide additional context to inform the Board's decisions.

Studio teams have been established to foster meaningful exchanges between all level of staff on a daily basis.

Our People team is a point of contact for all staff wishing to have a say on how our studios and business operate

Our Workforce Experience Manager works directly with the Partners to align their vision and identified business requirements with behaviours amongst the team while also feeding employee experiences back to the Leadership cohort to help inform business strategy and support open workplace culture.

We develop career pathways ("flight plans") for every ThinkPlace role. This enables team members to fully understand progression opportunities, providing a flexible structure to guide their growth as a ThinkPlace team member.

Labour

Principle 4:

Businesses should support the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour

What we believe

Forced and compulsory labour are unacceptable anywhere in the world and contravene the most fundamental of human rights. ThinkPlace is determined to play its part in eradicating these horrendous practices.

Given the nature of our work takes us to many developing nations, we are particularly aware of the risks and dangers associated with forced and compulsory labour.

Such unethical labour practices often harm the most vulnerable in the societies where they occur. Beyond that, they also deprive developing nations and societies of the opportunity to ethically increase skills and human resources, and to educate children who in later life will form the capable, ethically-developed labour markets of tomorrow.

These challenges are central to the ThinkPlace sense of purpose. Across, Asia, Africa and the Pacific we are engaged every day on projects that work to build and strengthen capabilities and equitable opportunities in developing nations and emerging labour markets.

We treat our staff fairly, striving to be an employer of first choice in a competitive labour market. We make them collaborators in a shared enterprise and we take a fully transparent approach to their responsibilities and conditions. We seek to hire and retain the very best people. They deserve the best treatment.

Under the ThinkPlace Global Network our offshore studios – though operating as separate business entities – are bound to adhere to the same ethical framework as our Australian business.

This ensures that the high standards we set at home travel with us when we embark on work in other nations, where workers are potentially more vulnerable to exploitation.

How we show it

The *ThinkPlace Ethics Screening Policy* examines potentially-sensitive projects and partners for any transgressions of this nature before project contracts are signed. Significant doubts or questions around forced labour or unfair labour practices would be sufficient cause to void a project under this policy.

ThinkPlace Australia's role in the ThinkPlace Global Network means studios in other nations must share the same level of commitment to responsible and ethical industrial relations as our Australian business.

Under the *ThinkPlace Code of Conduct*, employees are duty-bound to report back to their manager if they have witnessed what they believe to be forced or compulsory labour as part of a project they are working on.

ThinkPlace Australia employment contracts are written in accordance with Australian Labour laws and are written in plain English.

ThinkPlace continues to adhere to the Australian National Employment Standards outlined in the *Fair Work Act 2009* in all of our employment agreements.

We are working with external providers to develop a training package and support service to build our team's capability in engaging cohorts who have experienced trauma, while also enabling them to protect themselves and each other from vicarious trauma. Part of this will be providing and encouraging engagement with professional supervision services to ensure our team always feels capable and supported in any context.

We maintain a completely flexible and trust-based time in lieu process that allows our team members to self-manage their work life balance around project requirements. It has been a People Team focus to proactively follow up and encourage this behaviour amongst the team, and we are working through a "traffic light / flagging" system of efficiently identifying team members who may require assistance.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1 NO POVERTY	
2 ZERO HUNGER	
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	
4 QUALITY EDUCATION	
5 GENDER EQUALITY	
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	
13 CLIMATE ACTION	
14 LIFE BELOW WATER	
15 LIFE ON LAND	
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Making Global Impact

In the past year, our designers have worked in more than 30 countries, moving the needle on the SDGs and creating positive impact across the globe. Here are just a few of them...

Zero Hunger
Mozambique: Partnering with *Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition* to improve adolescent nutrition

Zero Hunger
Africa, India, Nepal, USA, Indonesia & Others: Partnering with leading philanthropic organisations to tackle undernutrition

Good Health & Wellbeing
South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Uganda: Market entry research for a new HIV-preventative product for women

Good Health & Wellbeing
New Zealand: Co-designing a smoking cessation program for Māori women

Quality Education
Del Norte, California: Improving childhood literacy outcomes

Gender Equality
Ethiopia: With *Marie Stopes*, designing interventions to reduce supplier barriers for abortion care services and family planning

Clean Water & Sanitation
Jamaica: With *Breakthrough ACTION* we are working to co-design social and behavior change to reduce spread of Zika virus

Affordable & Clean Energy
Melbourne: Working with *Australian Renewable Energy Agency* on A-LAB, shaping the future of the renewable energy industry

Decent Work & Economic Growth
Canberra: Designing an employment services system that better serves the needs of jobseekers and employers

Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure
Singapore: Working with *Singapore Government* on a series of projects to build the digital ecosystem and other future industries

Inductry, Innovation & infrastructure
New Zealand: Collaborating with *Accredited Employer Programme* to encourage business investment in workplace safety

Sustainable Cities & Communities
Myanmar: Building human-centred design capacity to improve disaster resilience in Myanmar

Responsible Consumption & Production
Sydney: Co-designing a 20-year waste and recycling strategy for the *NSW Environment Protection Authority*

Climate Action
New Zealand: Working with the *Ministry of Environment* - Joining of Planetary Boundaries Framework and maturanga

Life on Land
Australia: Co-designing more sustainable models for planted forest investment for landowners, capital investors and others

Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions
Singapore: Improving the *Family Justice Court* experience for vulnerable users

Partnership for the Goals
Senegal: Nio Far Dakar global convening, to build a community for more intentional and appropriate use of design in global health

ThinkPlace Studios

Our studios are spread across five countries: Australia (Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne), Singapore, Kenya, New Zealand (Auckland, Wellington) and the United States of America (Sacremento, Washington D.C.)

SDGs at ThinkPlace

Adopting the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals as our guiding purpose has absolutely transformed ThinkPlace and the work we do. But we wanted to go further.

We wanted to know: How might we more consciously connect the SDGs with our everyday practice as designers, as changemakers and as employees of the company called ThinkPlace.

That's why we decided to hardwire the SDGs into our company's organisational structure.

We are making it clear: Commitment to these goals is not an abstraction, to be kept separate from the everyday operations of our people. It is at the core of what we do.

ThinkPlace has created four new positions, filling each of them with a member of our leadership group. The four 'sector leads' each have responsibility for a number of connected SDGs.

Q & A

Natalie Coyles
Sector Lead, Vibrant Communities

We sat down with Vibrant Communities Lead Natalie Coyles to find out more:

TP: What does it mean to be an SDG Sector Lead?

NC: It's about being really intentional. This is an emerging approach and its one that -- as far as we're aware – nobody else has tried. For us it is about connecting with emerging markets and existing clients, looking for opportunities where we can have greater impact in line with our support for the SDG mandate.

It helps us be confident about where our strengths lie. Where is the body of knowledge and expertise that we bring that goes broader than any individual single project? It's about the connections between the work we've done, the things we believe and the skills our people have. That's what will allow us to genuinely add enduring value where others might just offer a service.

TP: You are the Lead for Vibrant Communities. What does that cover?

NC: Vibrant Communities is a sector that covers five SDGs: No Poverty, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Reduced Inequalities and Sustainable Cities and Communities.

These goals intersect to tell a story and lay out a need. It's about empowering communities to be capable and engaged in tackling their own challenges.

To have a sense of unity and support for each other and to be cognisant about how some of the challenges they face intersect with each other.

TP: Why are we doing this?

NC: We've been committed to the SDGs as a totality for some time. This takes our commitment to the next level. By being overtly cognisant of the UN position on these huge challenges we are always positioning our work to not just meet the needs of our client (which is crucial, obviously) but to connect our work to an important global conversation. It helps reduce silos by showing the connectedness between different parts of our work. It allows us to move beyond being simply task-oriented to purpose-driven.

> We know that inclusive co-design is not only possible, it is vital for getting good outcomes

Q & A

Natalie Coyles
Sector Lead, Vibrant Communities

TP: How does it impact on the clients we work with?

NC: It will help us be more proactive, guiding us to ask: Where can we make impact? Where can we seek out new partnerships? And it also helps us to spread the ideas behind the SDGs throughout our network of clients and allies. By and large people are really enthusiastic to find out more about how their individual project might be contributing to something as grand as the SDGs.

TP: What skills and background do you bring to this?

NC: I've worked as an architect, worked in government…. I've been on both sides of the kind of changes that are often imposed on communities. Community groups are often volunteer based. That means it falls on those who have available time to contribute most. Will they always have the skills or experience to do that in the most

effective way? Often not. But we know that we are absolutely committed to designing change with the people who will experience it.

That opens up scope for capacity building. For example, how might we be able to build the capacity for communities to seek out and interpret data to underpin changes that are needed?

I've seen first-hand the frustration that can happen when people realise they don't have the tools required to design their way out of a situation. We can help with that.

TP: So inclusiveness is a big part of this, then?

NC: Absolutely. We practise co-design and we take it really seriously. There's a strong equality and accessibility mandate to get to what we would characterise as a vibrant community. The vibrancy comes form a depth of diversity, a shared ownership, an ability to participate meaningfully.

We often find that some groups, for example LGBTIQ+ people or people living with disability have their voices left out of projects because it is considered too difficult to co-design with them. We work really hard to avoid that because we know that inclusive co-design is not only possible, it is vital for getting good outcomes.

Labour

Principle 5:

Businesses should uphold the effective abolition of child labour

What we believe

At ThinkPlace we understand that any real and lasting change in the world begins with the potential of young people. They are our most critical future resource and protecting them and their interests is our most serious collective responsibility.

We trust in the talents of coming generations to help create a better world than the one they currently inhabit and we are actively involved in projects to catalyse this process. We also know that in order to grow into being engaged, productive citizens, children must be given the freedom to be educated, to lead healthy lives and to participate in their community in ways that are constructive and age-appropriate.

Child labour disrupts and destroys this natural, healthy development process and we utterly oppose it having any place in our world.

As an employer, as a purchaser and as a maker of global partnerships we take responsibility for ensuring we are not engaged, consciously or inadvertently, in any exploitation of minors.

The transnational nature of our work means that staff are routinely operating in countries where there may not be strong institutional safeguards to protect children or where normative practices differ from those in place at home.

We take our positioning in these locations extremely seriously and believe that we can be a force for positive change.

How we show it

ThinkPlace has clear and non-negotiable policies and principles in place around the protection of children. Many of these involve or are inclusive of child labour and exploitation.

As an organisation that carries out extensive fieldwork across Africa, Asia, South America and beyond, we take care to ensure that our methods and our very presence do not cause harm. As an organisation dedicated to co-design we also believe that hearing and including the voice of children in the design of systems that they will be a part of is important.

Our protection of Children policy – **Protecting Children at ThinkPlace** is published on our internal communications channel. All staff are required to be familiar with it.

Material on how to identify and report child exploitation is included in the induction process for all staff.

Our research policy for staff in the field, **Conducting Safe, Ethical Research**, is published on our internal communications channel. All staff conducting research in the field are required to read it.

ThinkPlace also has a research manual, which provides detailed instructions on our fieldwork method and deals with issues of child exploitation and how to identify and avoid them.

The ThinkPlace approach to conducting research with people in vulnerable situations is another document we have created that gives guidance to staff in this area.

Labour

Principle 6:

Businesses should uphold the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation

What we believe

ThinkPlace takes a strong position on ensuring our workplace is free from discrimination.
We have a longstanding policy of balancing our workforce to ensure men and women are evenly represented.

We embrace diversity, inclusion and gender equality. Our *ThinkPlace Diversity Strategy* recognises the need for cultural diversity, inclusion and gender equality to be a considered part of our decision making. Discrimination can take place across a variety of areas, including gender, age, sexual orientation, religious or cultural affiliation and others.

We take great care to ensure not only that we do not discriminate against people along these lines but that our workplace attracts and holds a diverse collection of people, backgrounds , cultures and ideas.

We also uphold and prosecute these values through our client work. For example, ThinkPlace is proud to be a design partner with the National Disability Insurance Agency. This important agency is introducing the 'generational reform' that is the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The scheme enables many Australians living with a disability to play a greater and more fulfilling role in the national workforce. ThinkPlace is helping the NDIA to ensure that the scheme is inclusive for groups including LGBTIQ+, Indigenous and other communities who are in danger of marginalization.

How we show it

ThinkPlace strives for a 50/50 gender balance at the leadership level of our business and across our business in general. We maintain a strong bias towards gender equity in all of our recruitment processes, especially the yearly graduate program from which our company is supplied with new talent. Where vacancies do occur and new hires are required, achieving gender balance is a point of focus throughout shortlisting and interview phases.

At least one third of our Australian team are of non-Anglo Saxon background, and our age profile is also incredibly varied, ranging from graduates in their early 20s to people in their late 60s.

This diverse group brings fresh and diverse perspectives to our client work and to our business decisions. It is an asset for a company based on collaboration.

Our business advisers including our board are also formed from a gender and culturally diverse group. This is a recent renewal for our company and we are already seeing benefits such as natural bias in our executive team being challenged, new ideas on the table, and progression in areas that will make our company better performing.

We look across our business value chain and seek out partners who can assist us to meet our commitment to diversity and inclusion. For example, we have Indigenous and Aboriginal businesses supplying our catering and stationary. This is important to us because we believe in contributing to an economy that is diverse and inclusive.
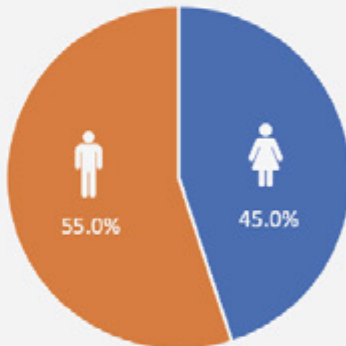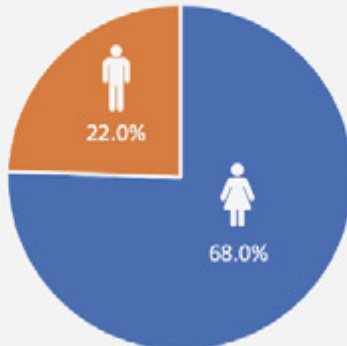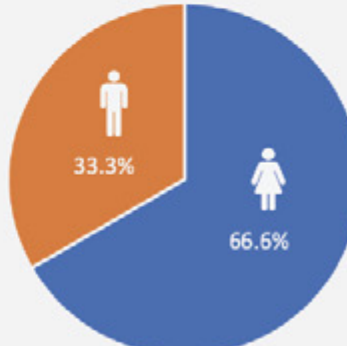
ThinkPlace staff gender ratio

57%

42%
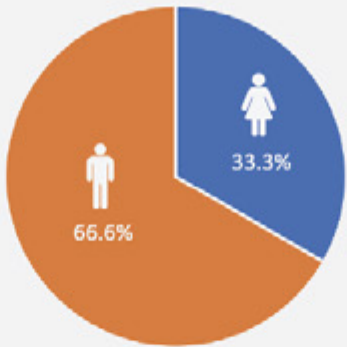
Partner Level
33.3%
66.6%
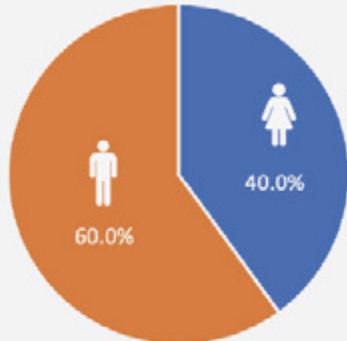
Principal/Senior Level
40.0%
60.0%

Operations/Support
55.0%
45.0%

Business/Graduate Level
22.0%
68.0%

Executive Level
33.3%
66.6%

Our Work

Gender equality is an increasingly important issue in Australian workplaces. Employers understand that reducing the gender gap will increase their organisation's performance. They are looking for advice and initiatives that will improve the composition of their workforce so all their employees can thrive.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency collects data about Australia's private sector workforce and provides advice, tools and education to employers. The Agency asked ThinkPlace to create a plan that will make their information more accessible for employers, increase its use and broaden its impact.

We began by speaking with Agency staff to find out how they managed and published their information. We then studied their website analytics to understand how the website was being used before asking the Agency's audiences and stakeholders about their needs.

We found that audiences and stakeholders used a wider range of the Agency's content than expected to learn and source inspiration for new initiatives. Working closely with staff, we helped the Agency translate the research insights into a vision for meeting these new and evolving needs for information. We then developed a digital roadmap that explained how to get there with clear and prioritised steps towards increasing the impact of the agency's content.

Staff responded to our workshops and focus groups throughout the project with positive energy and the digital roadmap was received enthusiastically by Executive, who are now working to implement the high priority recommendations.

With this plan in place, employers will be able to find the information they need to improve the gender balance in their workforce and the agency will be able to use its own resources to make greater impact.

Q & A

Cybelle Ledez
Sector Lead, Healthy Societies

Cybelle Ledez is a Senior Executive Designer at ThinkPlace and is the newly-appointed Sector Lead for Healthy Societies. She has more than 15 years' experience across senior roles in the Australian Public Service, including at Medicare and the Department of Human services.

What does it mean to be an SDG Sector Lead? We sat down to ask her...

TP: You are the new Healthy Societies Lead? What's that, then?

CL: It's an accountability that takes in multiple SDGs that are connected to each other and that have many intersecting connections to the work we do in the health sector and the ideas that drive and underpin that work.

Healthy Societies includes SDGs around Good Health and Wellbeing, Zero Hunger and Clean Water and Sanitation. These areas include some of the biggest challenges we face as societies both in the developed and the developing world.

TP: How does our work and expertise as a global design company sit with this sector?

CL: We are doing so much in this space. It has long been a huge focus for ThinkPlace.

In Australia, we have developed deep expertise in humanising change around digital health. We are deploying human-centred frameworks and methods to ensure that the digital transformation that is happening around healthcare results in ethical outcomes that are designed with meaningful participation from the people who will experience them.

We are working with Primary Health Networks to investigate how data can better inform decision making around mental health. We're helping shape a fairer system for prosthetic wearers, delivering a better system around cervical cancer screening and so many other high-impact projects.

Elsewhere, we are also carrying out world leading collaborations around public health and global nutrition across Africa, Asia and Central America, working with partners like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Johns Hopkins University.

"Our Sector Leads can play an important role by making sure they are on top of new developments around SDGs

Q & A

Cybelle Ledez
Sector Lead, Healthy Societies

Across multiple countries in Africa we are working to improve access to sexual and reproductive health services, including testing and preventative treatments for HIV. And there's so much more.

TP: Why have we created these SDG Sector Lead roles?

CL: They really help us keep the SDGs front and centre in a number of ways. They give focus to the goals and, while we all share responsibility for pursuing them, they allocate a further responsibility within the company for ensuring we focus on these areas. SDG Sector Leads look at the work we are doing and look for patterns. Are we focusing on the right things? Do we need to focus more on an area where we are not doing enough?

TP: So they are partly intelligence gatherers?

CL: Yes, both internally and externally. There is so much interesting work going on around the world relating to the SDGs. Our Sector Leads can play an important

role by making sure they are on top of new developments and innovative thinking around the goals and can feed this back to our broader staff.

They can also look for emerging issues and trends that sit within their area. For example, obesity is a significant issue in some of the countries where we work and there are many ongoing and emerging discussions around how we might tackle it.

TP: Your accountability is Healthy Societies. What does that mean to you? What is a healthy society?

CL: I think there's a big change underway at the moment from conceiving of health issues through a crisis model to moving towards something that is much more focused on prevention and resilience.

Traditionally, communities and governments have been focused on responding to health problems as they emerge. They've funnelled resources into treating symptoms and dealing with the end result of processes and trends that lead to negative outcomes.

Moving towards healthier societies involves focusing on the health system as a complex system. What are the factors that contribute to a positive health outcome? Equally, we ask what are the entrenched behaviours, systemic inequalities or cultural assumptions that can sometimes intersect, to create the kinds of outcomes we are working to prevent.

Environment

Principle 7:

Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges

What we believe

A precautionary approach is about undertaking measures to prevent environmental harm when there is uncertainty about the hazard or risk posed by certain activities. For ThinkPlace, the nature of our business means we rarely directly face environmental challenges that require risk management in the face of uncertainty. Primarily, our environmental responsibility occurs within a context of greater evidence and certainty about possible harm and environmental sustainability.

We identified in 2018 that our application of the precautionary principle could be improved by re-assessing our main suppliers and understanding the transparency of their supply chain with a view to environmental responsibility, low carbon and sustainable practices. We have been pleased to discover that, for the most part, our longstanding relationships with local suppliers have provided partners with a strong track-record when it comes to environmental stewardship.

How we show it

ThinkPlace has a strong environmental policy in place. All staff are expected to be aware of it and to comply with it. While the majority of our work does not pose a risk of environmental harm, our staff are aware and do raise concern if there are potential issues when undertaking their work.

ThinkPlace has a policy of preferring suppliers who have a strong record on sustainability and environmental practices.

While some of our business activities are known to have an environmental impact (e.g. flight/transportation, printing) there may be others we are unaware of. As such we are in the process of exploring how best to conduct and environmental audit. From this we will be able to identify some key areas to focus our strategic actions to improve the environmental sustainability of the business.

Our Work

Through our work within the environment sector we have helped identify new ways of working that are more sustainable or that specifically mitigate environmental damage. We work with clients to help them focus investment in more sustainable practices and support messaging to shift people's behaviours to reduce ongoing environmental harm that often results from actions that deliver short-term gain, but that are unsustainable practices in the longer-term.

We have recently led a project to examine how the workshops and other sessions that form much of our business as usual can be refigured to depend less on physical travel and instead deploy emerging digital technologies, lessening the resources that we deploy on travel.

Environment

Principle 8:

Businesses should undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility

What we believe

Our commitment to helping create a better world is inextricably linked to a belief that it is our role and duty to promote greater environmental responsibility. Part of our mission statement at ThinkPlace is to work towards a world made up of vibrant communities and sustainable environments. We achieve this through the work we do with our clients and our own internal practices.

As a co-design consultancy we are passionate about empowering people to be environmentally conscious and responsible. ThinkPlace plays a leading role in advocating for greater environmental outcomes, helping to shape policy in this area and co-designing projects that accelerate the transition to a more sustainable future.

We evoke these same values in our workplace every day through the way we work, the products we consume and via the systems we have in place for reducing, reusing, recycling or conserving resources.

How we show it

ThinkPlace operates three studios within Australia (Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne). As our business grows we continuously reflect on and review our practices to ensure we are minimising our footprint.

In the past 12 months, we have increased our efforts to operate more sustainably in the following ways:

- Purchasing from local suppliers
- Using supplies that have minimal packaging or the ability to be recycled
- Using suppliers who have active and ongoing sustainable use policies
- Expanding our recycling facilities across all studios to include soft plastics and organic waste
- Introducing 'urban composting' facilities in our Melbourne studio
- Providing reusable coffee 'keep-cups' and water bottles for staff
- Providing waxed-cloth food covers to remove need for cling-film plastics
- Installing white board walls around our studios in order to minimise paper use
- Reducing paper use through reusable 'wipeable' post-it notes
- Encouraging the use of bicycles or public transport to get to/from work
- Our Melbourne studio has a public transport first policy: for all short trips within the area, public transport or walking is to be used instead of taxis or Uber.
- Where possible, we re-purpose, sell or giveaway unwanted office furniture or equipment
- Selecting building materials that are sustainable and have low environmental impact

Reduce.Reuse. Recycle

Our largest studio is in Canberra. We are members of the ACT Government's ACTSmart business recycling program, and currently manage all our office waste responsibly: sorting into organic, recyclable and landfill items. As members of this program, our staff were asked to undertake a brief online training module explaining how recycling in the ACT works, and what individuals can do to operate more sustainably. We continue to positively reinforce this message by reminding staff about what is/isn't recyclable.

ThinkPlace recycles up to 7,500 coffee pods each year. Our studios also feature a collection point for used batteries and staff members are part of a local composting collective that picks up buckets of compost that people bring to the office from home.

How we show it

In addition to recycling and minimising waste production in our studios, we have a range of policies in place that aim to reduce our businesses impact on the environment and promote sustainability.

1. Our gamification staff rewards system, ThinkTopia, provides points for a number of different sustainable activities such as: reducing water consumption, using alternative transport modes, donating to sustainable charities, and holding knowledge sessions about sustainability related topics.

2. For our 2018 End of Financial Year Team Day we held a tree planting activity with Greening Australia, visiting a local farm to plant Drooping Sheoaks, which are the food source of the Glossy Black Cockatoo, a species at risk of becoming extinct in the ACT.

3. We are aware that the largest environmental impact caused by our business is the air travel undertaken as part of our client project work. Our use of air travel remains higher than we would like but has decreased proportionally as the size of our workforce has grown, allowing us to better resource projects from our local offices.

4. In the past 12 months we have introduced an offset policy for these flights. Each year we calculate the total number of airfares travelled by all Australian staff and determine a dollar value which we then donate to an appropriate charity.

5. In 2019 we will donate those funds to Greening Australia, a charity that works with thousands of landholders and partners to create Australia's biggest carbon sink and establish one million hectares of habitat across southern Australia.

Our Work

In the past 12 months we have remade our organisational structure around the Sustainable Development Goals, installing four senior staff as "SDG Sector Leads" with responsibility for driving work around clusters of the goals that align with our capabilities, interests and business activities. One of these positions is the Lead for Sustainable Environments. This reflects the breadth and importance of our work in this area – collaborating across Australia and around the world with partners who share our vision for a sustainable environment and low carbon energy future.

ThinkPLace Australia projects include:

- Setting the strategic direction and a collaborative program of work to direct the future of renewable hydrogen energy in Australia.

- Collaboration with the environment sector to define a compelling vision for Australia's environment and heritage and come up with innovative ways to work towards that new future.

- Improving access and usability of land data for environmental policy development and help inform more effective use of government land.

- Transforming Australia towards a clean energy future by creating cross-sector partnerships and world first projects through ARENA A-Lab.

- Consumer-centred innovation across the energy sector, working with power generators and networks in Tasmania, South Australia and Queensland.

- Rethinking governance in the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to help make science and data more available to inform decision makers.

Environment

Principle 9:

Encourage the
development
and diffusion of
environmentally
friendly technologies

What we believe

ThinkPlace is a rapidly-growing company that is founded with a declared goal of designing for the public good. This sense of purpose is further demonstrated by the company's adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as our own organisational objectives.

We acknowledge the importance of limiting environmental impact for a company, like ours, that strives to be an ethical operator in a global marketplace.

Internally we constantly look for innovations that help improve our work processes, both to increase efficiency but address challenges or issues. One way we aim to reduce our own footprint is through our use of digital technology. A recent innovation we are trialling is the online whiteboard application Miro. This is helping us build our ability to collaborate more broadly with people online, but also reduces our paper usage as we can run workshops completely digitally.

ThinkPlace is predominantly a services provider. We work with clients to design innovative solutions to their complex problems. In this way we are well-placed to make an impact encouraging and facilitating the broader adoption of environmentally friendly technologies outside of our four walls. Our very existence is based on encouraging clients to act in ways that create public good.

How we show it

ThinkPlace has an Environmental Policy that specifies the nature and extent of our commitment to sustainability. All staff are expected to be familiar with it.

- Wherever possible, we use video conferencing to carry out meetings with staff and clients in other locations.

- We are starting to use more digital ethnography as part of our user research. And where we work internationally we aim to partner with local providers for research recruitment and undertaking ethnographic research, which reduces the need for our staff to travel.

- Our resourcing processes focus on assembling teams based around an objective assessment of core competencies, availability and location. This should result in a more efficient distribution of staff, further reducing the need for air travel.

- Our studios are not just workplaces for our people; they are venues that host more than 30,000 clients and visitors each year. Within this context there is significant scope to not only reduce impact but to demonstrate leadership. Our studios make use of recycled furniture, and our guests are served locally and sustainably sourced food. We provide water in recycled, glass receptacles and do not supply guests with single-use bottled water.

- As part of our report last year, ThinkPlace resolved to conduct an independent, external audit of our environmental footprint. We are currently in the process of finalising an environmental audit. This will help us to identify areas where we are performing in line with our values and aspirations, as well as areas where there is room for improvement.

Our Work

During the past 12 months, we have run several projects looking at designing and establishing community models for sustainable energy use. One example is looking at how people who want to live/work off the grid might organise a more distributed network to do so, leveraging on broader community action, which in turn creates a larger impact for sustainability.

Another example is in the innovative space of Hydrogen energy, where we have worked with the Hydrogen Taskforce informing their strategic planning for the future of this energy in Australia. When created sustainably hydrogen offers our county a fantastic 'clean' alternative to natural gas. Also, for the transport sector, which is one of the major sources of air pollution in Australia, hydrogen vehicles are a promising solution.

Our Work

Beyond the energy and environment sectors, we continue to work on digital transformation projects. This is a core part of our business. As such, we are committed to introducing innovations that vastly improve connectivity and communication within complex systems and organisations. This results in a diminished use of paper and other physical resources (as key processes are digitally transformed) and a corresponding diminished requirement for travel.

Anti-Corruption

Principle 10:

Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery

What we believe

ThinkPlace is vigilant about fighting and resisting corruption both at home in Australia and wherever we encounter it during our work around the globe.

We do this in two ways: Firstly, in our business we have a clear and strong position on corruption, extortion and bribery. Secondly, we work with agencies who fight corruption, extortion and bribery as part of their core business.

Our mission is to 'move the needle' on sustainable development Goals such as End Poverty and No Hunger. In the developing nations where we often work corruption is a parasite that depletes resources, multiplies inaction born of cynicism and acts as a handbrake on positive change. Wherever we find it we oppose it.

Our business processes and organisational culture are created and nurtured to be resilient to corruption. With a robust ThinkPlace Code of Conduct and Ethics protocol we provide our people with clear guidance on how to deal with corruption. Our organisational culture and the way we work together further strengthens this resilience.

How we show it

We have a robust ThinkPlace Code of Conduct and Ethics protocol that provide our people with clear guidance on how to deal with corruption.

- Mandatory staff training on our ethics protocol and code of conduct, with regular refresher training. This training is updated regularly to encompass emerging issues and trends.

- Strict policy on acceptance of gifts; upper limit of $50 on any gifts that can be accepted during work in the field. Gifts above this amount must be refused and the overture must be reported.

- Mandatory reporting for any staff who are approached or who witness corrupt activity.

- We practice daily touch-ins while on field work to ensure open channels for communication about any corruption, extortion, bribery.

- We practice project debriefs after field work to ensure our people have the opportunity to further discuss any events that were troubling, and to inform our own continuous improvement.

- Penalties for corrupt behaviour are termination of employment and the immediate involvement of appropriate law enforcement agencies.

Our Work

We work every day with leading justice and law enforcement agencies to strengthen their responses to complex problems, and to strengthen their capabilities in dealing with complexity.

This project work is often not publicised, and therefore difficult to report on, however it spans across service offerings such as strategic planning, innovation programs, public and private sector collaborations and capability programs. Our capability programs include an executive education program that builds digital transformation capability, which is an essential capability in this area.

ThinkPlace is committed to ensuring we do not inadvertently work with others who are engaged in corrupt behaviour. Our thorough and systematic ethics audit of every project includes examining partners and ensuring they meet our expectations as ethical operators.

2018
Telstra
Business
Awards

Australian Capital Territory
Social Change Maker
Winner

ThinkPlace