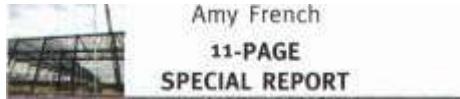




# Space race drives office redesigns, fit-outs



KEEN demand for commercial space in central Perth is driving a surge in office redesign and fit-out work, attracting new players to the Western Australian market and creating opportunities for established firms.

Newly appointed ISIS WA general manager Nichola Hodge said the design and construction company was finishing off fit-outs on new offices for consulting firms Wood & Grieve and Arup after both firms vacated offices on Adelaide Terrace for major tenant Fortescue Metals Group.

Ms Hodge said the company had also been involved in projects where it had refurbished smaller office spaces.

She said that, as the larger resources companies had been trying to grab any available spaces in the city, the size of its projects had become a lot smaller.

ISIS was working on projects as small as 200 square metres to 300sqm, in contrast to the usual 2,000sqm to 3,000sqm.

Valmont, which opened a Perth office last year, has also benefited from the success of the mining industry.

Valmont director Sergio Pires said Perth was the logical choice for his company to open its second office after Sydney because the mining sector had kept the WA economy comparatively buoyant during a tough economic time throughout the country.

"In the past eight months we've completed around 3,000sqm of work for BHP Billiton and are about to embark on the design of a training centre for their employees, which can hold up to 250 people," Mr Pires said.

Valmont also completed refurbishments on Calibre Global's new office at 150 St Georges Terrace earlier this year, covering 7,500sqm.

The work involved consolidating three offices and creating offices surrounded by workstations. The company now takes up nine floors on one of the building's towers.

Valmont's other clients have included iiNet, URS and Rio Tinto.

Kim Thornton-Smith, a partner at international interior design company Geyer, said the company had been fairly fortunate with a portfolio that included several new, larger projects.

These include the City Square building, which will house BHP Billiton, and

Westralia Plaza at 167 St Georges Terrace.

However, Mr Thornton-Smith said he expected the type of work Geyer was doing would change next year.

"I imagine next year we'll get a lot more involved in refurbishments of older buildings," he said.

"I think there will be pressure on older buildings to upgrade themselves to attract clients. I think that's definitely going to be a growth area."

Kath Kusinski, director of interior design company MKDC, said larger numbers of workers meant that more dense working spaces were becoming the trend. This meant workstations were the best solution for clients who wanted about 10sqm of office space per person compared with the benchmark of 15sqm, she said.

MKDC is working on refurbishments in the QV1 Building for three clients and won an award of merit from the Design Institute of Australia for its work on the Downer EDI Engineering office in Canning Vale.

"We are certainly doing refurbishments of existing premises and re-looking at space to enable people to work better and get more people in," Ms Kusinski said.

MKDC completed renovations on its office at 803 Wellington Street last year, which included creating a studio in the old garage of the building.



**WHITE LIGHT:** A newly renovated office at MKDC.



**CLEAN LINES:** Design specialist MKDC has refurbished its office at 803 Wellington Street.