

Few can match the impact on the Perth skyline of architects Cameron Chisholm Nicol. They have, after all, been working on it since 1884, laying the foundation of architectural modernism in the fifties, and leading the way in contemporary design with projects like the spectacular Perth Arena.

While proud of such a rich history, MD Dominic Snellgrove has his sights set firmly on the future, both in terms of form and company vision.

Cameron Chisholm Nicol is a multi-disciplinary design company providing architecture, interior design and urban design services across a broad range of project sectors for local, national and international clients.

"A fervent belief in design and its capacity to improve our built environment and our lives is what ultimately drives us and our culture," explains Dominic.

The successful application of these philosophies is confirmed by repeated industry recognition. The last eight years in particular have garnered awards across apartment, office and sustainable design sectors culminating in the Australian Institute of Architects Sir Zelman Cowen Award for Public Architecture for the Perth Arena in 2013.

Yet for all its creativity and singularity, the business drivers Dominic talks about - passion, people and integrity - would resonate with most dynamic enterprises.

"We have a passion for design at all stages of the project cycle from concept to detail design to delivery," says Dominic. "While our internal mentoring scheme seeks to provide support and learning to all our people, giving them informal and formal access to more experienced mentors within the practice."

Providing the right culture and environment is critical in attracting and retaining the right people. And giving them the best projects and the best workplace in which to practise their passion helps create the hothouse environment that fires creative output.

"When we looked for a new office space in the Perth CBD we selected a building and space that would best reflect our culture and our collaborative work ethic. The project involved the adaptive reuse of a 1920s heritage building, restoring the building to full use and activating upper floors that had been vacant for many years. Our workplace fit out is a demonstration of our commitment to sustainable design and includes mixed mode natural ventilation and low energy lighting with movement and day light sensors. The fit out went on to win an Australian Institute of Architects Sustainability Award and was one of the first fit out projects in WA to achieve a Green Building Council of Australia Green Star Interiors Award," says Dominic proudly.

Gender diversity and promoting women has also been a major focus. Senior female appointments in the last 12 months include Associate Director and Board positions, and the firm has ongoing involvement with the Property Council of Australia Women in Mentoring Program.

"Female architects and designers provide exceptional value to our culture, workplace and design services across all stages of the design process and we need to attract them," says Dominic who acknowledges a clear disconnect between the number of female graduates entering the workforce and those going on to senior positions.

"I have a 17-year-old daughter who will be leaving school at the end of this year," he adds. "I don't want her to embark on a career characterised by the current statistics and workplace culture that we see across a broad range of industries."

A CEO Institute member since 2014, Dominic values the time it lets him spend on the business instead of in the business, and finds the diverse backgrounds of his fellow members a valuable source of fresh insights and perspectives. He strongly supports the emphasis on continuous learning on both personal and organisational fronts.

"A recent example of this includes an opportunity for one of our young female architects to participate in a partnership between The CEO Institute and the Leeuwin Ocean Adventure Foundation. This month she will participate in a week-long voyage which provides great personal development opportunities for young staff who show genuine professional capabilities." - Dominic Snellgrove, Cameron Chisholm Nicol



Perth Arena - Western Australia