

# Eco-friendly policies could entice workers back to the office

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Climate change took center stage at Australia's recent Federal election with many voters using their ballots to put the environment at the top of the political agenda.

While the benefits of [climate change](#) mitigation for the environment are clear, University of South Australia human resources expert Dr. Subha Parida says 'going green' could also bring workers back to the city—a challenge many employers face as COVID-19 pandemic restrictions ease.

Dr. Parida says [green buildings](#) with the right human resource policies in place could help employers support their employees in making a [safe return](#) to the office, while boosting workers' well-being and the business bottom line.

"Our research suggests green human resource management (HRM) that fosters eco-friendly or 'green' behaviors can lead to non-green workplace benefits, such as higher job satisfaction, stronger employee engagement and increased productivity," Dr. Parida says.

"Green buildings are certified to reduce the negative impact on the environment. By extending green policies beyond the building, we've found that workers will not only have a durable, liveable, and accessible workplace but a safe and healthy one as well.

"Occupants in green buildings have higher cognitive function scores, less sickness and higher sleep quality scores than workers in non-green buildings.

"With organizations struggling to get workers back into offices after working from home for so long, in what some are now calling 'The Great Resistance', offering a green workplace could be the incentive workers need to go back to the city.

"Organizations need to go beyond the trivial 'perks' like a free breakfast or [ice cream](#) to find a meaningful incentive that benefits everyone.

"Green workplaces are good for employees, good for business and good for our planet."

In Australia, 44 percent of CBD office space is Green Star certified by the Green Building Council of Australia. But Dr. Parida says green buildings won't be sustainable until human resource managers actively promote green behaviors.

"Our research found that many workers don't even realize they work in a green building, which means the buildings don't function as they're intended,' she says.

"You can make a perfect building using mathematics and [design principles](#), but the building won't work in real life unless the people using the space know its potential and can use it effectively.

"Lack of knowledge, lack of training and lack of support from leaders can significantly slow down a green building's performance.

"This is where green HRM comes in. It goes beyond simply reading the [building](#) instruction manual, by introducing policies that build greater awareness and practices in line with the needs of green buildings.

"Green HRM practices create a green corporate culture that motivates employees to be sustainable. While [environmental sustainability](#) is critical as we strive to reduce [carbon emissions](#) globally, employers who go green also create an attractive space that improves employees' health and well-being.

"Employees might stay longer, feel more productive and be healthier because of it."

Provided by University of South Australia

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