

'Experimental' Brisbane office tower

PROJECT |  Jude Ellison  31 Oct 2022



Timber Tower by Kirk

Image: Scott Burrows



Kirk has created an “experimental” office tower in Brisbane that thoughtfully navigates a complex brief, a challenging site and a tight timeframe by utilizing locally grown and manufactured CLT.

In 2018, munitions company Nioa reached out to Kirk with a request for a new office to accommodate its growing workforce. The company, which had secured a multi-million dollar Australian Defence Force contract in late 2017, was undergoing a period of significant expansion for which it needed more offices at its Brisbane location – and fast.



The tight timeline was only one of the complexities of this project. Its small site is constrained by high winds, height restrictions, noise from nearby Brisbane Airport and what Kirk described as “highly corrosive air”. Further, these challenges had to be met for a client and at a location relevant to national security.

Kirk responded to this complex brief by thinking of the project as a prototype that adopted a set of building systems: a timber structure, a glazed facade and a zinc skin. To create visual definition and interest, the raw timber throughout the interior would be treated with some clear and some dark finishes.



The result is the Timber Tower, which delivers five storeys of permanent office space and accommodates up to 100 additional staff. A new boardroom quietly integrates meeting technologies into a pared-back, column-free design that juxtaposes natural and industrial elements; generous windows bring in ample natural light that emphasizes the graining and natural colour of the exposed pine. A glazed staff courtyard furthers this bringing-in of natural surrounds and unites the otherwise separate components that comprise the precinct.

This resolution was achieved at speed: the structure was erected in a month, and the rest of the building, including an integrated fitout, was completed in seven. Elements were fabricated offsite in advance and delivered only as needed, minimizing onsite waste and streamlining the build process. And should future expansion require the structure to be relocated, it can be – including its dry-jointed cladding and glazing systems.



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Neither rapidity nor flexibility appear to have interfered with quality. For its work on Nioa Timber Tower, Kirk received the Beatrice Hutton Award for Commercial Architecture at the 2022 Queensland Architecture Awards and was shortlisted for its 2022 National Architecture Awards. The state jury citation praised not only the building itself, but also the practice's methodical and environmentally considered approach to it.

"This project presents an alternative model for constricted program delivery, and as a whole offers a strong presence and unique structure that is nestled within a highly restricted and complex environment," the jury said.

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