

BRISBANE  
AUSTRALIA

**Preface:** Situated on Australia’s east coast, Brisbane offers a manageable and inviting location for businesses while being well located for connect- ing with clients in Asia or the US.

**Population:** 2.2 million  
**Key trades:** energy and resource sectors  
**Time to register a business:** 1 hour  
**Annual hours of sunshine:** 2,900  
**International flights:** 24

**Quote:** *‘Being isolated, you get this petri dish effect where you’re naïve to what’s going on in the rest of the world’*

Brisbane is Australia’s third- most populous city – an upstart oasis in the midst of a conser- vative state. With Asia and LA just an overnight haul away, it’s in a prime position for growth. The city council has developed an economically focused digital strategy to shape Brisbane as a start-up hub along the lines of Boulder, Colorado. It sees strength in not being the pri- mary city but instead being of a manageable size and having a great quality of life.

Ben Johnston is the shaggy- haired co-founder and director of Brisbane design studio Josephmark. Since his firm broke onto the world stage with a design for a cult music website he has become accustomed to regular flights to Los Angeles for work. Yet as he wanders around the electricity substa- tion his company calls home, he insists his hometown’s remote location is a boon.

“Being isolated, you get this petri dish effect where you’re naïve to what’s going on in the rest of the world and you start

benchmarking things,” Johnston says. “It wasn’t until we started working with North American companies that we realised the expectations we set for ourselves are very high on a global level.”

Brisbane’s creative economy has also gained traction. Takeshi Takada and Colin Renshaw cofounded visual-effects studio Alt.vfx in 2011 and have received global attention for work with Qantas, Pepsi and Diageo. The Alt.vfx office is the kind of dream workspace that could only exist in a climate such as Brisbane’s: a sprawling warren sandwiched between two former church buildings with a meeting room that doubles as an atrium, an open- air kitchen and rooftop desks for when the office is packed.

Brisbane’s civic identity is also shaping a unique entre- preneurial culture. Whereas an exodus of twenty-somethings to Sydney and Melbourne was once inevitable, more and more Brisbanites are now staying at home in subtropical comfort. From bespoke menswear outlets such as Andrew Byrne’s The Cloakroom to bustling micro- developments such as Winn Lane, the city also has a new strut in retail. “Brisbane is a for- giving market and a great place to start a business,” says Byrne. “People are always interested in something that’s new. There isn’t a cut-throat edge.”

Jessica Huddart, Josephmark’s creative director, explains that the firm’s international trajec- tory will never see them leave Brisbane behind. It has invested in two small bars in the city and she organises collaborations between local creatives that exhibit at Brisbane’s Power- house Museum. “We’re a very community-minded company,” she says. — (M)



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- 01 Alt.vfx staff outside their office  
02 Workspace at Alt.vfx  
03 Clint Harvey shows off the letterpress machinery in the print-history department of Design College Australia



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- 04 View of Brisbane River from South Bank  
05 City Hall on King George Square



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- 06 Evan Shay, venue manager of Alfred & Constance  
07 Public seating at Brisbane Library