
— Exclusive

CBA's plan to lure Queensland's best techies

Tess Bennett *Technology reporter*



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Commonwealth Bank is hiring another 100 software developers and data scientists in Queensland to join at its newly opened Brisbane tech hub, which will house staff seeking sunnier lifestyles and be used to train recruits.

On Tuesday, the bank will unveil a new tech hub on Ann Street in Brisbane's CBD, as well as partnerships with University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology and TAFE Queensland.



TAFE Queensland's Jackie French with CBA technologies CIO Brendan Hopper and GM of HR Mariam Fox say the new hub will train future generations of tech professionals. **Paul Harris**

Brendan Hopper, the bank's chief information officer for technology, told *The Australian Financial Review* that CBA had expanded its Queensland-based tech team from near zero to around 50 people in the last two years.

“We’ve been stealthily hiring [in Queensland] and we’ve also had staff move to either Brisbane or the Sunshine Coast or Gold Coast, who are currently working from the hub,” Mr Hopper said.

Mr Hopper said workers are not required to be in the office a set number of days a week and visit the hub when they want to collaborate, for training or whiteboard sessions.

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“That flexibility of being in the office one or two days a week or one week a month lets them live further out from the centre of Brisbane,” he said. “We don’t believe that any job can be done entirely remotely. We don’t want anyone to never come to an office to not be connected to a team.”

The bank is hiring an additional 100 staff, roles, part of an ambitious target to recruit 1000 engineers [<https://www.afr.com/technology/cba-defies-skills-shortage-targets-1000-more-techies-20220408-p5ac3z>] this year, with a specific focus on software engineering and data science.

The new technology centre is the bank’s third hub, following locations in Melbourne’s CBD [<https://www.afr.com/technology/cba-set-to-add-400-new-tech-jobs-in-melbourne-20220728-p5b5dt>] and Adelaide’s Lot Fourteen precinct [<https://www.afr.com/property/commercial/cba-leads-the-way-in-adelaide-s-high-tech-hub-20220211-p59vpj>] opened earlier this year.

To complete its network of hubs, CBA is eyeing Perth for its next location and regional centres with a strong university presence, where hubs could be opened on or near campuses.

Mr Hopper said establishing a network of office locations for his tech team would help lure Aussies back home and attract overseas talent.

“We’ve seen that over the last 10 to 15 years a lot of tech talent that Australia has produced through our great university system has had to move to the US or to Europe in order to get the opportunities they want,” he said.

“We feel by offering a variety of different lifestyle experiences as part of a tech job, we’ll be able to better lure the right people back to Australia or to Australia.”

The bank has also been a beneficiary of the lay-offs in the technology sector, recruiting key talent from tech giants [<https://www.afr.com/technology/big-tech-talent-heads-for-cba-in-recruitment-drive-20220824-p5bcj2>].

Seeking stability

While the market for top talent is still highly competitive, Mr Hopper said there had been a shift towards jobseekers looking for stability.

“With the kind of cooling-off in the market, people are looking for stability. They want a job that’s not going to disappear,” he said.

“CBA is a very stable brand... we are seeing the ability to get some talent that we might not have been able to get a couple of years ago ... because of our stability.”

The network of technology bases also enables closer ties between the bank and the education sector, building up Australia’s pipeline of technology talent.

As part of the new partnerships, students at UQ, QUT and Queensland Tafe will have access to three placements at CBA including its graduate program, internships and part-time around their studies.

The CBA staff will also work with education providers for example, by advising on curriculum, giving career advice and possibly teaching classes as part of their job.

The partnership with CBA would offer graduates a pathway into technology careers, said Jackie French, director of the faculty of Creative Arts and Digital

Design, TAFE Queensland.

“As the state’s largest training provider, we’re delighted to partner with CBA to supply skilled and job-ready information technology, cybersecurity, website and software developer graduates for the placements this program will deliver.”



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