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# Gyms offering 'sleep pods' for a quick nap during work hours

by **Theo Chapman**

For exhausted employees it's a dream come true: beds in the office. Not surprisingly it's the perks-rich tech industry that is leading the way. Google staff have been able to nap in pods since 2010.

But for CBD workers in Melbourne and Sydney, whose employers aren't so generous, there's an opportunity to pop into one of Virgin Active's gyms where members can book a 20-minute session in one of their sleep pods.

Businesses are just beginning to wake up to the demand for products and services that address what advocacy group, the Sleep Health Foundation, calls a sleepiness crisis.

A 2017 report commissioned by the not-for-profit group from Deloitte Access Economics concluded that 40 per cent of Australian adults were insufficiently rested, which was costing the country \$66.3 billion a year in lost productivity and health costs.

Around the world there are signs the sleep problems of Western nations are fertile territory for new businesses. [The Wall Street Journal reported](#) on resting lounges in the US, UK and Spain where guests can nap for 30, 60 or 90 minutes from \$US15 a session.

In Australia, corporate wellness expert SeventeenHundred added a sleep component to its corporate wellness program this year.

"There's more evidence linking the behavioural side with sleep, which has brought to the fore how important it is," said Aubrey Sonnenberg, chief executive of SeventeenHundred. "The really positive thing is when people become aware of how important and controllable and manageable it is, it's empowering."

Anton Brown, chief marketing officer of Virgin Active, says there will be two new CBD gyms in Sydney early next year, both of which will have sleep pods.

"There's a trend globally around the rest and recovery area and the sleep pod is one part of it," he said. "Exercise helps you sleep better so the two things combined are interesting."

Perth sleep expert and Sleep Health Foundation board member Professor David Hillman believes part of the solution to our collective sleep deprivation is to start educating people when they are very young.

He would like to see sleep programs in primary schools because people don't recognise how dangerous insufficient sleep can be, not just for their own health but for the wellbeing of those around them.

Sleepy people are more likely to make mistakes and have accidents, Professor Hillman said. They are also more likely to be grumpy at work. "'How did you sleep last night?' should be the first question the boss asks in the morning," he said.

"If you have poor sleep patterns as a young child, or you develop poor patterns, that's something you're gonna carry forward," he said.