

# Tenants love the sound of Piano's Aurora tower

**Tina Perinotto**

Architect Renzo Piano wanted Aurora Place in Sydney to "talk to the Opera House". The tower, with its graceful soaring structure, did.

Now, as winner of the coveted Property Council of Australia Rider Hunt Award, in the NSW category, ABN Amro Tower@Aurora Place can talk to the bankers as well.

The award is handed out not for style or architectural merit but for technical and financial qualities.

In both categories the developers and owners of the tower can claim they have been rewarded.

The president of the Property Council's NSW division, Rod

Leaver, blended the criteria when he said: "Aurora Place is a fantastic example of the maxim that good design pays handsome economic dividends."

The owner of the office tower, a fund managed by Colonial First State Property, which agreed to terms to buy the building in September 2000 at \$485 million, claimed the building was showing "double-digit" returns.

Fund manager Roger Parker said benefits were both "tangible and intangible".

Several leases, including those to Challenger International and smaller boutique offices on the upper levels, had broken the \$1,000 a

square metre barrier, albeit with incentives included.

But Mr Parker said tenants could see "value for money". The positioning of the building was paying dividends for tenants in terms of client recognition and in recruitment.

Keith Woodward, general manager, Aurora Place, for the East Asia Property Group, said tenants found some of the "Piano innovations quite inspiring".

In particular, they enjoyed the fresh air available through the wintergarden and the low-iron glass, which provided a clear, untainted view of outside colours.

A collaboration between Lend Lease, East Asia Property Group,

the Renzo Piano Building Workshop and Lend Lease Design Group, the tower achieved significant technological breakthroughs.

Bovis Lend Lease manager John Salier said construction of the building, which fanned at the top, was the "most challenging and rewarding" project he had worked on. "We were in a state of constant innovation," he told *The Australian Financial Review* when the building opened in November 2000.

After a controversial start that involved the demolition of the old State Office Block, the tower won kudos from the critics.

Peter Stronarch, managing director of architect Allen Jack +

Cottier, once said the appointment of an international architect for the job showed "cultural cringe of the worst kind".

He mellowed. Once built, the residential part of the complex was, he said, "an exquisite building" and the thin elevation of the office tower was "very handsome".

Graham Jahn, president of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, said it achieved the "sort of sophistication ... that transforms cities into real living places".

Criteria for the award included: owner and user satisfaction; industry and community satisfaction; efficiency of operation and maintenance; adaptability.