

Letter to the editor >>

I enjoyed reading the articles in the Nov/Dec (2004) issue of Building Australia about the Year of the Built Environment and agreed with Warren Kerr and Chris Johnson that YBE had been a valuable opportunity to showcase good design and increase community awareness. I was particularly taken by Chris Johnson's comments that "The widely acclaimed 'Design for All' theme of YBE was the big winner. This theme was about ensuring the whole community was the recipient of design quality". I didn't manage to get to see the Houses of the Future exhibition at the Opera House but couldn't help notice that the photographs you featured in the magazine showed that these houses of the future had steps going up into them.

Obviously the 'whole community' referred to didn't include people with disabilities!

What a shame those responsible for the design of those houses didn't understand the theme of YBE.

Michael Small
Dulwich Hill, NSW



From top:
Caroline Pidcock, chair of ASBEC and president of the NSW Chapter, RAlA; CRC for Construction Innovation chair, John McCarthy

ASBEC – building pathways for sustainability >>

By **Dr Keith Hampson** CEO for the Cooperative Research Centre for Construction Innovation



With close to 30 members now on board, the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council (ASBEC) is gaining the support and impetus required to be the 'next big thing' in the development of a united industry agenda on sustainability. Its strength derives from its evolving role as the peak consultative council on sustainability in the built environment.

The Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Construction Innovation was a founding member of the council and is proud to have played a key role in bringing together

organisations that have traditionally had a somewhat disjointed approach to sustainability issues. The CRC is a national research, development and implementation centre focussed on the needs of the property, design, construction and facility management sectors. We envisage an ongoing lead role in ASBEC through our Sustainable Built Assets program director, Dr Peter Newton. Dr Newton is also science director of CSIRO Manufacturing and Infrastructure Technologies.

In February 2005, *Construction Innovation* chair John McCarthy will hand over the reins of ASBEC to architect Caroline Pidcock. Caroline has her own consulting practice, is an adjunct professor at the University of New South Wales and currently president of the NSW Chapter, Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA).

As chair of ASBEC, Caroline's vision is for council members to jointly work to determine a framework that will enable Australians to develop an

exemplary sustainable future. Caroline said that: "We must set targets that stretch us and determine pathways that will enable us to achieve them. We must think creatively about the opportunities we can realise and how we can do this. The future must be sustainable and we have to quickly redirect our actions to improve what we do and the outcomes we produce."

ASBEC will next meet in February 2005 and report on the four action areas identified at their September 2004 workshop. The Steering Committee formed as part of the new ASBEC governance structure will oversee projects aligned to these areas:

1. refocusing the building and planning regulations on creating and maintaining minimum sustainability standards;
2. increasing the uptake of leading sustainable practices;
3. building the business case for developing and operating sustainable facilities;
4. communicating and educating the public and practitioners about the benefits and practices of sustainability.

Quantifying the business case for sustainability is an area that Peter Szental sees as requiring significant attention. Peter is director of the Australian Business Council for Sustainable Energy and member of the ASBEC Steering Committee. According to Szental: "Attaching dollar values to energy savings is relatively straightforward, but measuring factors like improved amenity or productivity can be challenging. For sustainability to stack up in a business sense we need to be able to measure the full range of benefits it offers. ASBEC has identified the need for projects that will look at quantifying these benefits and help shift the industry from a *least-first-cost* to a *whole-of-life* approach to sustainability".

Graeme Taylor, executive director of ASBEC welcomes as new members persons representing organisations committed to a sustainable built environment in Australia. Each member organisation is entitled to send one representative to ASBEC meetings. **BA**
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