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Tuesday
30 September 2008

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Device tracks project eco-impacts

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Monday, 29 September 2008

AN ENVIRONMENTAL impact calculator designed specifically for use in the building and construction industry has been launched by the Federal Government.

The system, called LCADesign, has been designed for use on commercial property sites. It enables building designers to optimise the eco-impact of a building as the design model evolves, rather than having to wait months for expert analysis.

The software package was launched by Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett at last week's SB (Sustainable Building) 08 Conference in Melbourne.

Garrett said LCADesign – an acronym for Life Cycle Assessment Design measures the environmental values and risks of materials in commercial buildings by working directly from the building designer's model, allowing architects and engineers to optimise the best environmental outcome in real time.

"There is growing momentum in the market for greener buildings, and this software will provide industry with the information necessary to design buildings that are more ecologically and economically sustainable," Garrett said.

The program was developed over the past six years by a team led by the Brisbane-based Cooperative Research Centre for Construction Innovation, working with the Queensland University of Technology, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Queensland Department of Public Works, CSIRO and other leading research and industry partners.

CRC for Construction Innovation chief executive Dr Keith Hampson said the LCADesign software enabled users to measure and compare changes to new and refurbished designs.

They could see in seconds the impact of design improvements across human health, ecosystem damages, resource depletion, carbon impacts and dollar cost, and users could select from any combination of more than 70 measures.

"The software's release comes just as the Construction Forecasting Council has announced that an estimated \$267 billion worth of non-residential stock is to be built over the next 10 years," Hampson said.

"As global pressure mounts for greener buildings, this eco-efficiency assessment tool provides industry with vital information so design can be more ecologically and economically sustainable."

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