

## **Green Ratings System for Offices on the cards by October**

The Green Building Council of SA, which has attracted 20 paying members including several high-profile property players, will launch a pilot "green star" rating system for offices next month for public comment.

Executive chairman Bruce Kerswill says the rating system, based on the system used by the Green Building Council of Australia, will be implemented by October. The system will be used to rate buildings in various categories and award them stars according to how "green" a building is.

Kerswill says the rating system is aimed at the upper end of the market in the hope that these players will "pull the rest of the market" along with them. The council was established in September last year as a voluntary body to promote green building programmes, technologies, design practices and operations, and innovation in sustainable building practices.

The "green building" movement in SA has been given impetus by the electricity supply crisis, which has forced building owners to look at ways of conserving energy in building techniques.

Another factor influencing the growing trend is that large multinational tenants are starting to demand environmentally friendly buildings and are willing to pay a premium to lease them.

While the cost of developing a green building can be higher than a conventional building, the cost savings on electricity and water, for instance, can balance this out, says Kerswill.

He says that in Australia, one of the countries leading the green building initiative, they talk of greening initiatives as "future-proofing your building".

"Conventional buildings will become obsolete." The main reason for this is that green buildings, which often use fresh air and more natural light, are "healthier" and the companies that use them have reported significant increases in the productivity of their employees, says Kerswill.

At a conference in Australia in February, one of the speakers reported on the results of surveys showing a significant increase in factors such as creativity and productivity. In some cases productivity was 20% higher, compared with conventional buildings.

Kerswill says a "green building" is defined as energy- and resource-efficient, as well as environmentally responsible.

Some green building techniques include water recycling, solar heating for geysers, and more energy-efficient air-conditioning systems.

Kerswill says buildings have generally been built in ways that are "wasteful" of energy and there is a global trend towards developing new buildings that are energy-efficient and green.

To combat the effects of global warming, however, there would also have to be retrospective redevelopment of old buildings along "green" lines.

The green building initiative has been gathering momentum around the world for the past five years.

"The real driver internationally has been global warming. Global warming has enjoyed a large profile overseas, but not in SA yet. But it will in the future," says Kerswill.

He says the world is "facing a climate catastrophe due to greenhouse gases", and for some reason the property sector has so far "escaped notice" .

"The United Nations (UN) has now looked at it and has said that the building sector is the one sector that can have the biggest impact on reducing energy consumption," Kerswill says.

About 40% of the world's energy is consumed by buildings and a "green" building can reduce consumption by between 30% and 70%, he says.

The UN says the building sector is the sector where greenhouse gases can be reduced by the "greatest extent, most quickly and at least cost". "We plan to roll out pilot rating systems for retail and multiunit residential developments towards the middle of next year," says Kerswill.