

SA's own green building code ready to be launched

The Green Building Council of South Africa is well advanced with the development of a green building rating system for SA.

The process involves a technical working group of local experts, an international project manager and local consultants, who are customising the Australian Green Star rating system for South African use.

Bruce Kerswill, executive chairman of the council, says producing a rating tool is one of the council's main priorities as it sets the standards for green building and provides clear guidelines on what constitutes a "green building".

"After a process of consultation and workshops, the (council) agreed to base the SA tool on the internationally-respected Australian Green Star rating system, and to customise it for SA. This is an urgent issue as many corporates are moving ahead with green building and have been looking at a variety of different tools," says Kerswill.

"The process involves examining every credit of Green Star and assessing its relevance to SA, revising where necessary and introducing local SA measurements and benchmarks.

"Michelle Malanca, of Sustainability Consultants, has been appointed as project manager, and international engineering consultancy, Arup, as technical consultants to do the groundwork. The project held its first meeting in March and is scheduled to have the first tool ready in pilot form in July."

Council chief executive Nicola Douglas said: "The technical working group consists of a voluntary panel of over 20



SARAH-JANE BOSCH

leading local experts, with expertise in the different areas of the rating tool (water, energy, materials, emissions, and so on).

"The panel will discuss proposals made by Arup, provide input and additional expertise, and agree the final credits and benchmarks.

"Michelle Malanca is based in San Francisco but was previously the director of Green Star for the Australian Green Building Council (GBCA)."

There she was responsible for the development of two rating tools (retail and multi-unit residential) and she oversaw the customising of the Green Star rating system for New Zealand, said Douglas.

Arup was appointed following a proposal-call process involving multidisciplinary firms with green building experience and international networks.

"Green Star consists of eight environmental categories as well as an innovation category," says Malanca. "These are: management, indoor environment quality, energy, transport, water, materials, land use and ecology, and emissions.

"In each category there are credits attainable and each credit has a certain number of points allocated to it. In addition, a level of importance weighting is attributed to each category.

"When a building is assessed it is awarded points for the credits it complies with, and these are added to produce a score out of 100. Best Practice

is 45 to 59 points; 60 to 74 points will be 'South African Excellence' and 75 points or more will be regarded as 'World Leadership'.

"Buildings achieving a rating of four stars or more will receive a Green Star certificate," says Malanca.

According to Malanca, the customisation of Green Star involves looking at the current situation in South Africa, local environmental priorities, local building codes and regulations, and local standards and measurements. It also involves establishing best Practice that is specific to SA.

"Although there are many similarities, the SA context is different to Australia ... things such as public transport will need to be addressed differently, and different ecosystems need to be correctly considered.

"The biggest challenge is walking a fine line between setting standards that comply with international best practice and move the South African industry forward, but having respect for local circumstances and not making it impossible to achieve ratings.

"However, all that aside, I am very happy to be involved ... and, having seen how green building has transformed the market in Australia and the USA, I am very excited to think the same will happen here."

Kerswill says the council has been through a very busy time since its inception a year ago and has received phenomenal support from the industry.

"With the cohesive efforts of the Technical Working Group, Michelle Malanca and Arup, we are confident that we will have a world-class pilot version of Green Star SA ready for launch next month."