

Progress

# 2004 – A year to build on

AFTER INITIATION by the Western Australian Government and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, the Federal Government has positively embraced the labelling of 2004 as the Year of the Built Environment, rolling the concept out as a national, collaborative celebration by government, industry, environmental and community groups to raise awareness about the crucial effect of the built environment on our lives.

While the Year (or YBE) will duly address the significance of heritage and community dynamics, timely attention will be focused on the emerging principles of sustainability as a definition is sought of how we want our built areas to function in future. Construction industry practices, new technology, science, and the urban interface with ecosystems are interconnected, and are being highlighted.

Launching the Year in Perth, Western Australia's Patron, Governor Lieutenant General John Sanderson AC, said 'I put it



individual states and communities have been asked to nominate their own projects and encourage community leadership.

Government agencies, professional bodies and associations, together with corporations involved in issues concerning the built environment have expressed a

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CSIRO Social and Economic Integration/Kaylene Biggs

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'The Year of the Built Environment gives us all as Western Australians – and indeed the nation – the opportunity to look at this fundamental aspect of our lives and assess how it affects our contemporary wellbeing and the legacy it leaves for others. Guiding and preserving the quality of our built environment must be just as important to our existence as the protection of our natural environment.'

Across 2004, a National Steering Committee<sup>1</sup> will oversee a program of major Australia-wide events, while

desire for the themes of YBE 2004 to be portrayed by real examples – working demonstrations. As such, 'Exemplars' will be a program running throughout the year, which will recognise and award achievements across seven thematic areas:

- Towards sustainable communities;
- Healthy environments;
- Excellence in building;
- Our built heritage;
- Imagining the future;
- Building regional communities; and
- Design for all.

Federally, the government has committed significant funds to various projects, including a significant amount to built heritage through the *Distinctively Australian* programme. A *Sustainable Cities*

initiative includes a range of programs to improve air and fuel quality, water efficiency, ozone protection, environmental education and sustainable use of resources. This complements the focus on more environmentally and energy efficient housing through the Energy Labelling and Minimum Energy Performance Standards program. *Cool Communities*, similarly, is linking the Australian Greenhouse Office with non-government organisations to encourage communities to take up better domestic practice. Activities include household energy audits, appliance retrofits, green purchasing programs and local transport initiatives.

At the national launch of YBE 2004, held in Australia's first 5-star rated green building, 30 The Bond, in Sydney, Patron-in-chief and Governor-General Major General Michael Jeffery said 'I believe this can be a watershed year that will provide impetus for positive built environment outcomes to flow on to the community for years to come.' Encouragingly, things seem to be pointing in that direction.

**More information**  
[http://www.builtenvironment2004.org.au/ybe/about\\_ybe](http://www.builtenvironment2004.org.au/ybe/about_ybe)

<sup>1</sup> Comprising officials from the Australian Department of the Environment and Heritage, the Western Australian Department of Housing and Works and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.