

Australian banks shine in sustainability listing

The 2007 Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) ratings announced recently in Zurich, Switzerland, included three Australian banks among the 25 banks globally that qualified for inclusion in the DJSI.

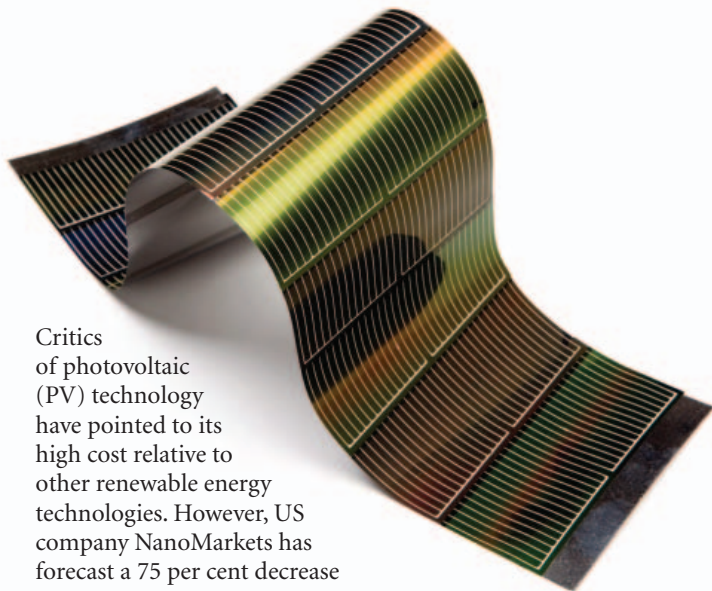
Westpac and ANZ both received the top sustainability rating score of 86 per cent for banks globally. NAB also made the list of 25.

Westpac Chief Executive, Dr David Morgan, said that this

was 'a significant achievement for Australian banks ... this performance by Westpac, ANZ and NAB should provide an incentive for other banks to lift the bar on sustainability.'

ANZ was named the global sector leader for 2007 in recognition of its achievements in sustainability, a position that was held for the past five years by Westpac. For more information, see www.sustainability-indexes.com

Thinner, clearer, cheaper solar panels



Critics of photovoltaic (PV) technology have pointed to its high cost relative to other renewable energy technologies. However, US company NanoMarkets has forecast a 75 per cent decrease in cost over the next decade due to developments in thin-film PV (TFPV) technology. TFPV technology promises flexible thin substrates that use little or no silicon; lightweight, standardised building products such as energy-producing tiles; solar-energy windows and skylights; and volume-

production printing technology that will bring massive cost savings, as PV functionality is embedded directly onto substrates. The main focus of TFPV development will be in increasing the currently low energy conversion efficiency relative to PV.

Recycled content still low in tissue paper products

Australians blow and wipe their way through over 195 000 tonnes of tissue and toilet paper a year, but only 3.1% of this is made from recycled paper, according to figures from the Australian Plantation Products and Paper Industry Council (A3P).

In its 'scoring of the tissue giants' in the European tissue market, the WWF reported that every day, about 270 000 trees are flushed down the drain or end up as garbage around the world.

Samantha Smith from Merino, the Australian manufacturer of SAFE recycled-paper tissue products, says that by using recycled content, environmentally aware tissue producers are reducing the demand for virgin pulp.

Merino was the first company in Australia to manufacture recycled paper tissue products and is a signatory to the National Packaging Covenant. Its Earthwise and SAFE products

are 100% recycled: 95–100% post-consumer clean office waste, and 5% pre-consumer waste (paper off-cuts and waste generated in the factory). Australian companies BC Tissue and Encore Tissue also manufacture recycled products.

Smith advises consumers to look at other environmental factors involved in the manufacture of tissue products, including the transport of raw material (trees or recycled paper), and water, energy and chemical use, including bleaching. Merino claims its location, close to recycled paper supplies, reduces transport costs.

Kimberly Clark, Australia's largest manufacturer of tissue products including Kleenex, says that it tried using recycled paper some years ago but, after weighing up the environmental factors including transport, found that it was more efficient to source pulp from renewable plantation waste close to its mill in South Australia.

Low-level ozone, plants and global warming

In a letter to the journal *Nature* in August, four UK scientists warned that an increase in near-surface ozone concentration from industrial sources is likely to markedly reduce plant productivity.

Plants and soil slow down global warming by storing about 25 per cent of human-related carbon dioxide emissions. But this effect could be undermined by increases in near-surface ozone. Unlike

high-altitude ozone, which blocks harmful ultraviolet rays, low-level ozone damages plants, reducing their capacity to take up carbon dioxide.

While many climate models include low-altitude ozone as a weak greenhouse gas, they do not take into account its effect on vegetation. The researchers concluded that this indirect effect could make a more significant contribution to global warming.