

Green Aussies can find pots of gold in China

By Karl Franzen

Australian sustainable construction know-how is hot property and the time is right to exploit this overseas, especially in the massive Chinese market.

Demand for green building technology is on the rise in China with the country expected to be home to half of the world's building construction between now and 2020.

To prevent construction-related energy consumption spiralling, Chinese authorities have embraced environmentally friendly building plans and policies.

Austrade manager for China, Peter Osborne, says this is creating opportunities for Australian businesses offering green building products or services.

"Not only has the Chinese Ministry of Construction instructed all Chinese cities to cut their building energy use in half by 2010 but there is also a plan to retrofit a quarter of existing public buildings to increase their energy efficiency in the same timeframe," says Mr Osborne.

"A wide range of Australian businesses have already achieved success in China.

"However, the enormity of China's ongoing demand for green building technology means there's potential for further Australian businesses to expand into China.

"Australia has the largest foreign government network in China through its 15 Austrade offices, giving Australian businesses an advantage."

Green Building Council of Australia chief



The six-Green Star rated Melbourne Convention Centre, which opens next year, is a prime example of Australia's highly sought-after sustainable construction.

executive Romilly Madew also believes opportunities in China and other countries are up for grabs.

"Australia has the opportunity to be a world leader in green building which will create excellent opportunities for Australia to export both talent and new technology," Ms Madew says.

China is forming its own green building council and is being supported by the World Green Building Council, of which Australia is a founding member.

Ms Madew says Australia is in a prime position to promote sustainability not only in China but also on an international level.

She says the GBCA's Green Star system is one of

the top three rating systems in the world and the speed and success which the Australia has taken to using such tools is proof of its capabilities.

"Australia already has a number of six-Green Star certified buildings, signifying World Leadership."

These buildings include the Melbourne Convention Centre – the first such centre to receive this rating.

Australian companies are getting heavily involved in not only the Chinese market but also the Arabian Gulf – the United Arab Emirates is a particular hot-spot for construction.

Master Builders Australia international division manager Keith Stubbs says both of these markets hold fantastic opportunities.

"Australia's competitive edge is in its building methods, which are very much sought after," Mr Stubbs says.

"Australian project management is very much sought after, we are innovative and have a reputation for bringing projects in on time and within budget."

Mr Stubbs says the chance of the Australian construction industry spreading itself too thinly is unlikely.

"Companies that are exporting to these markets understand they are in a long-term situation and prepare for this. They are likely to use Australian project management and local workers."

• Romilly Madew's monthly column is on page 19. ■

Construction growth encouraging

By Louise Burke

The construction industry picked up at the end of last year, particularly across commercial markets, according to a key index.

The housing market is also predicted to see modest growth, with hope of a sustained recovery later this year.

The construction industry expanded for a fourth consecutive month in December, with the Australian Industry Group – Housing Industry Association Performance of Construction Index rising six points to 59.2 and remaining above the key 50-points level separating expansion from contraction.

HIA chief economist Harley Dale says the improvement in the indicators for the residential sector provided an encouraging end-of-year update.

"As we move through 2008 we should see a modest pick-up in home building activity, although we remain of the view that any sustained recovery is unlikely to be forthcoming until the second half of the year."

AIG associate director of economics and research, Tony Pensabene, says the findings are encouraging, "given the broader level of growth we are now seeing across the industry".

"The non-residential markets, in particular, are providing a major

stimulus to activity, highlighting the considerable backlog of work in infrastructure projects and the continued strong investment in commercial property," Mr Pensabene says.

"The results also provide a positive first update on house building, signalling that the sluggishness of housing starts, as depicted in official data to September 2007, has been followed by expanding activity over the final months of last year.

"Also of significance is the increasing level of new business within the apartment sector, which is likely to translate to higher activity in 2008." ■



Future direction of strata office space

Capital Corp is shifting the way strata office space is built in Australia

AT A GLANCE

- ◆ Location: Baulkham Hills, Sydney
- ◆ Project: Nexus Norwest
- ◆ Developer: Capital Corp
- ◆ Architect: Leffler Simes
- ◆ Builder: Watpac NSW
- ◆ Built area: 9,500sqm
- ◆ Budget: \$40m
- ◆ Completion date: December 2007

Nexus Norwest is a prime example of a new generation of strata office buildings.

At Norwest Business Park in Baulkham Hills, north-western Sydney, Nexus comprises 9,500sqm over seven levels and is fitted out with an integrated managed network

and advanced Internet Protocol (IP) telephony system from Cisco.

This leading-edge technology, called Hottdesk, is being delivered through collaboration between Servcorp, a world leader in facilities and workspace management, Office2 and Cisco Connected Real Estate.

Capital Corp managing director Michael Upton says Nexus Norwest and what it offers to occupants is the future direction of strata office space in Australia.

"It's ideally suited to small to medium-sized businesses who want the advantages of modern technology without the worry of implementing or managing it," Mr Upton says.

The initial take-up of space in the building, which was completed in

December, has surpassed all market expectations.

It has been designed to enable tenants to quickly set up their own secure networks complete with telecommunications infrastructure and other IP-based services.

The occupants have the choice of outsourcing the entire provisioning of a managed data network or a solution designed specifically to meet their business needs.

In addition to gaining access to the latest voice, internet, data and video technology, occupants are able to use shared facilities such as meeting rooms, reception and secretarial support, which are available via Hottdesk.

By leveraging the shared facilities

'The initial take-up of space in the building has surpassed all market expectations'

available to them, occupants potentially benefit from a reduction in overheads.

Office2 CEO Marcus Moufarrige says the building is truly "plug and play".

"Not only have we dramatically reduced the telecommunication provisioning overhead that is normal, we have also reduced the cost per workstation for most small to medium-sized businesses," Mr Moufarrige says. ■



Proud to be associated with the Nexus Norwest developmet

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Respect for stakeholders' interests the key

The past two decades as an ASX-listed company has seen Watpac progress to the forefront of the Australian building and property development sectors.

Completing almost \$6b worth of projects and maintaining 12 years of continuous profit growth, Watpac persists in upholding its commitment to its clients, shareholders, employees and other stakeholders.

Strategic evolution over the years has resulted in the substantial growth of the company's divisions and the provision of truly exceptional outcomes.

Award-winning divisions – Construction Queensland, Construction New South Wales, Property and Refurbishments – have been instrumental in increasing Watpac's presence in government, regional and CBD sectors as well as markets such as industrial, sporting, entertainment, medical, residential, commercial and retail.

Watpac has no doubt that the success of these divisions has been a direct result of the dedication, skill and vision of its staff members.

Recently, through further

acquisition, the company has expanded operations into Victoria.

Respect for stakeholders' interests is paramount and is the key driving Watpac forward.

This includes the interests of shareholders, corporate partners, local community and environmental groups.

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