

STATEWIDE: THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Sydney architect, Immediate Past President of the NSW Chapter and ASBEC Chair Caroline Pidcock has been selected as one of environmentalist Al Gore's 84 Australian "climate change ambassadors". She talks about her "green" journey.

When I started my own architectural practice, a friend persuaded me to undertake a small business course. This included writing a business plan and answering questions such as, what is your unique selling point?, and, why is anyone going to go to you rather than the architect down the road? This was an epiphany for me. I realised that I could no longer blame anyone else for not attracting the sorts of clients and projects that I wanted. The answer to these questions would be pivotal to the direction I would take and the sort of architecture I would pursue.

The answer was not easily found. I thought, read, and looked for months before finding Robert and Brenda Vale's book *Green Architecture*. I suddenly realised this direction provided great scope for my creative and scientific skills and was morally and ethically important. I did not realise then how important this would become and how urgently we must now address the issues surrounding sus-

tainable design. The building sector is responsible for a significant amount of all greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions – some say from 30-50 per cent if you count the construction and operation of all buildings – making it an issue that we cannot ignore.

I was recently privileged to be selected as part of Al Gore's Climate Project – Australia, being carried out in conjunction with the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF). This initiative is designed to develop an extensive and diverse community of people from across Australia who will learn about climate change and help effect positive change by sharing this information and broadening awareness.

All "ambassadors" attended a two-and-a-half day training session on Al Gore's slide show, which formed the basis for the successful documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, the science that supports this and ways in which we can all help. Al Gore was

ably assisted by Australia's pre-eminent scientists Professors Ian Lowe and Graeme Pearman. The slide show has been adapted to include additional Australian information on climate science, impacts and solutions.

As an "ambassador", I am now expected to go out and give at least 10 presentations over the next year. In addition, Marie Geissler and I have seen the opportunity to set up a group that will host workshops to support the lectures. It will help draw together the disparate skills, talents, knowledge and enthusiasm of people brought together by the lectures. The aim will be to create inspired work plans for implementing practical actions at personal, local, state and federal levels to ameliorate climate change.

Al Gore is among those who feel Australia is close to changing its stance to climate change – closer than America – and that our actions will force America into action. It's up to us all to participate.

WHAT IS THE RAI A DOING?

As an influential member of the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council (ASBEC), the RAI A is participating in and assisting in funding a sub-committee for climate change. The group is undertaking a project to establish baseline emissions data for the built environment, to assess the impacts of a 60 per cent cut in emissions from 1990 levels by 2050, and to establish an interim 2020 target. The Centre for International Economics will be commissioned to undertake this modelling work and policy options on climate change and the built environment. The sub-committee is currently looking for additional partners to help fund the whole project.

What can you do at home and at the office?

- Reduce your energy consumption through better-designed building
- Use energy-efficient appliances and reduce your stand-by power usage
- Replace your light globes with energy-efficient fluorescents
- Install a solar hot water service or other five-star, energy-efficient hot water service
- Buy accredited green power
- Install water tanks
- Choose to walk, cycle or take public transport more often
- Consume less
- Grow food and eat it at home
- Offset your travel emissions (cars + planes – see below)
- Give climate-neutral gift certificates (Climate Friendly – see below)

Websites:

Places to calculate your emissions:

www.aconline.org.au/custom_greenhome/calculator.asp?section_id=86

www.epa.vic.gov.au/ecologicalfootprint/calculators/default.asp

What does carbon offset mean?

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon_offset

Places to offset carbon emissions:

www.climatefriendly.com

www.greenfleet.com.au

www.carbonneutral.com.au