

# Dreams of better pay, great ideas and curious minds

## Keys to success

Architect Caroline Pidcock talks about professional challenges.

**Favourite learning experience**  
Meeting and being trained by Al Gore (with the other inaugural Australian trainees) in November 2006 was a real highlight. Al Gore is a remarkable and inspiring human being, who is genuinely interested in and knowledgeable about global warming and climate change. This is reflected in his ability to help move this issue from nowhere to the place it currently occupies on the world agenda. He clearly needs to learn about controlling his [previous] political minders, who made him appear wooden and uninteresting in his campaign for president of the USA. Taking on a full-time teaching position at Newcastle University taught me much more than I could ever have anticipated. Working out what I wanted to teach, how to do this in an interesting way and how to



**Caroline Pidcock**

assess whether this was achieved was the easy bit. Dealing with the issues arising from the daily lives of a range of students and their circumstances was far more educative.

**What makes a good graduate**  
A willingness to learn; an ability to understand what you don't know and when to ask questions; and a doggedness to find the right answer

and follow through. Of course, this all needs to be done with much greater skill than when I graduated, as it seems that many students today could run rings around me and the people I went through uni with!

**Key challenges for your profession**  
Providing creative leadership in developing sustainable solutions through collaborative working relationships. I think success in the future will be achieved by people who are creative in turning problems into opportunities and who can engage with diversely skilled groups to deliver well designed solutions. The other major challenge is to be paid appropriately for doing clever creative work.

**Opportunities in the profession**  
The whole field of sustainability is a wonderful opportunity which will benefit enormously from holistic thinkers such as architects. We should be ensuring we maintain a strong leadership position in this field and not let it disappear like

project management and contract administration. Information-rich computer modelling is developing into a great tool for designing, analysis and review. The tools that are becoming available are very sophisticated and exciting, but are just tools that need real skill and expertise to be used properly.

Many of the larger companies are turning their focus to the huge projects and opportunities in Asia and Dubai. The benefit of this for the smaller practices not interested in such work is that there are many more projects available here for us.

**Improving Australian education**  
We need to review how universities are funded so good teaching and the involvement of practitioners regain the importance and support they deserve. This will enable students to benefit more readily from the great intelligence and learning that comes from applying theory in the real world. We also need to work out how to assist funding of students so that instead of working multiple

part-time shifts in order to exist, they can spend more time in the corridors, cafes and bars where the real learning happens.

**What matters most**  
Finding enjoyment and happiness in your daily life. We should live for today as well as tomorrow.

**What cheeses me off**  
That our society seems to value bankers, lawyers and vacuous A-listers so much more than teachers and creative types.

■ *Caroline Pidcock is president of the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council; industry representative on the Australian Building Codes Board; member of the NSW Architects Registration Board; and adjunct professor at the Faculty of the Built Environment at UNSW. Caroline Pidcock Architects (CPA) is an architectural practice that excels in environmentally sustainable design.*