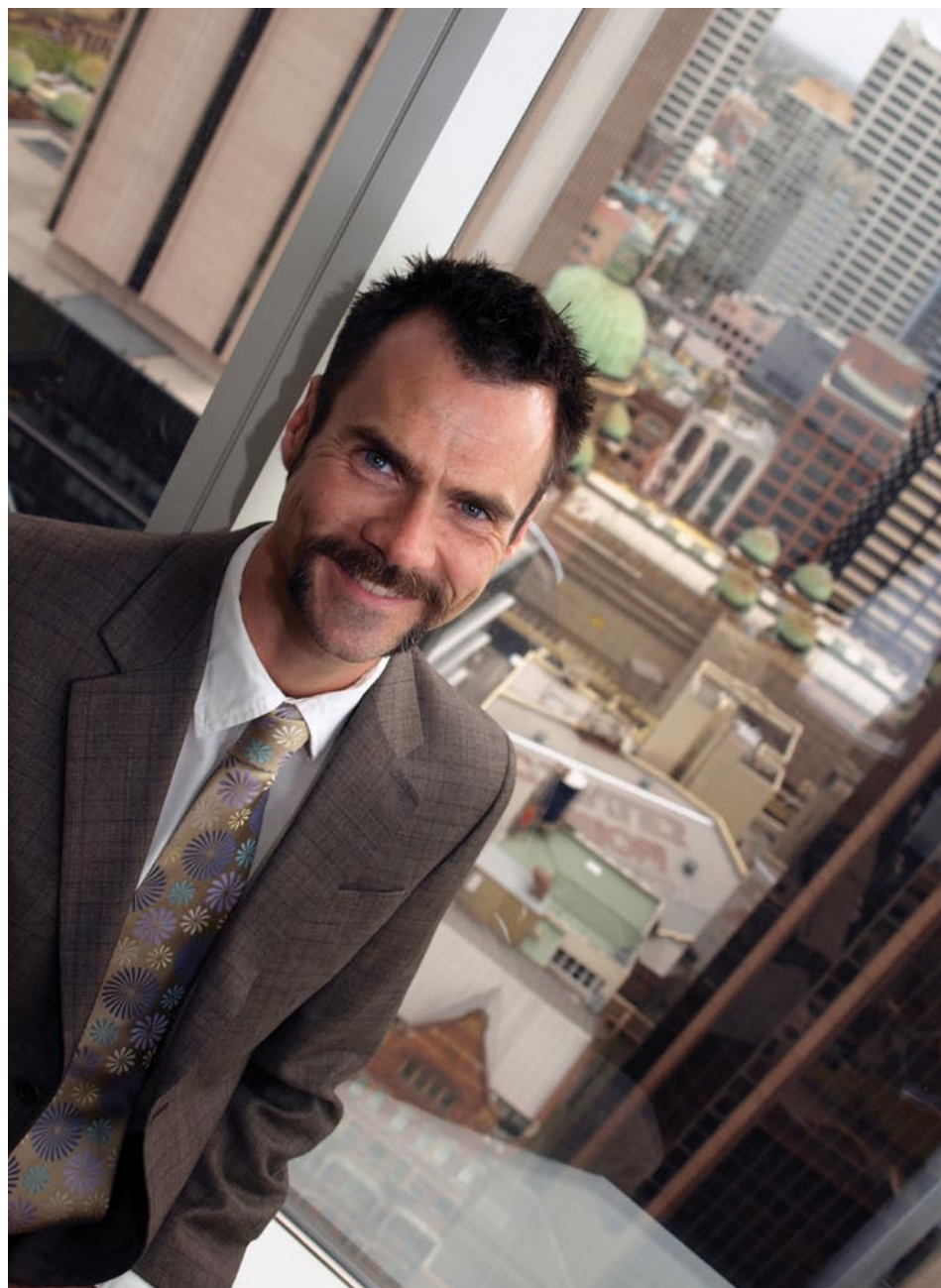


Tools for building greener schools

Robin Mellon says that going green benefits the users of a building



Left: Robin Mellon, Green Star Executive Director at the Green Building Council of Australia; above: green thinking has a positive effect at Bond University

New studies have found green buildings, whether schools, offices or retail centres, not only save money, resources and the environment, they also significantly benefit the users.

This is guiding the hand of Robin Mellon, Green Star Executive Director at the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA). Mr Mellon is encouraging schools to go green. He told *Education Today* a better indoor environment meant much more productive students and a

happier staff. He said that figures from green schools in the US showed reading retention rates were higher, examination results better and there were improved staff retention rates.

And while he accepts that most people would of course be happier in a brand new school, studies have shown increased productivity and reduced absenteeism continues over one year later.

“That has to be due to the benefits of the building itself,” Mr Mellon emphasised. “People are going to be more contented when there is

more daylight, fresh air, better air quality, and natural materials being used that don’t pollute the indoor environment.”

Yet, according to the GBCA, a recent economist’s report suggested Australian governments were spending about \$1000 less per student on school infrastructure than the US and the UK, although green initiatives have been incorporated into the recent stimulus package.

The GBCA’s Green Star rating tools have been in place for six years and key categories include management of site construction, energy and water consumption, waste management, transport to and from the building, quality of the indoor environment and how occupants interact with the building.

Emissions are also assessed, as are innovation, land use and ecology, building materials and recycling.

The Green Star Education rating tool has been developed over a number of years and was issued in draft form in late 2008. The project



has been gathering momentum since and an updated version of the education rating tool is available on the GBCA website for free download.

"The rating tools are in a simple to use Excel format and in the last six months alone there have been 64,000 downloads of our tools," Mr Mellon said. "Many of these people or organisations may never achieve Green Star certification and simply use the tool as guidelines, but more and more are now registered and we will be helping their projects through."


So far only three educational institutions have achieved a Green Star rating in Australia, while in the US where the tool has been available for longer, 1000 schools have met or are seeking green certification.

The Australian GreenStar certified projects are at the University of Melbourne, which received Five Star Green Star, Wangaratta High School in Victoria which received Five Star Green Star and Bond University on the Gold Coast, which achieved Six Star Green Star. Star ratings go from one to six and rate as Minimum, Average, Good, Best Practice, Australian Excellence and World Leadership, with only Four to Six Stars able to be certified.

Visit www.gbca.org.au for information on the Green Star rating tools




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