



# Melbourne aims for green precinct

**Robert Bevan**

An international panel of experts will gather in Melbourne next week to propose ways of creating a zero carbon emissions quarter for the city.

The EcoEdge 2 conference hosted by the City of Melbourne will bring together leaders in sustainability, architecture, engineering and planning for three days of discussions on green cities and a brainstorming design session to deliver hypothetical ideas for transforming four blocks of the central business district from Swanson Street down to the Yarra River.

City of Melbourne, housed in perhaps the country's greenest office building, CH2, has set targets for emissions in the city centre, including a 50 per cent reduction by 2010 and zero net emissions by 2020.

According to Melbourne's design and urban environment director, Rob Adams, the challenge was not simply ensuring that new areas of the city were sustainable but to retrofit existing areas at a scale larger than individual buildings. "What we



**The CH2 building has set zero net emissions by 2020.** Photo: JOHN WOULDSTRA

need is a piece of city that's about the future. We don't need a big building, we need a big idea. Our hope is that some of the ideas might get traction at all levels of government," he said.

Melbourne Lord Mayor John So said: "Central Melbourne acts as an example of how to transform a city into a dense, vibrant, urban centre that aims to be sustainable, on every measure. In fact, the agenda of liveability and sustainability are now the same agenda.

"If we can actually start looking at what we need to become sustainable, we'll find it's most of the things we've been talking about doing to become liveable."

Conference speakers will include architects from Europe, China and Australia; consultants such as Michaela Brüel from the European Green Cities Network; CSIRO senior scientist Xuemei Bai; and politician Enrique Penalosa, the former mayor of Bogota who

helped transform the Colombian capital.

Mr Adams stressed the benefits, not the penance, of creating sustainable cities.

"I feel very strongly that the next revolution – the environmental revolution – does not need to be a hairshirt existence," he said. "Sustainability and liveability go hand in hand.

"If you gave me a city to get to zero [emissions] I'd choose Barcelona. It is the most dense city in Europe with 200 people per hectare in the centre but 40 per cent is open space."

Case studies will look at Paris, Beirut, Rotterdam and Berlin as well as zero carbon emissions developments and cities by UK architect Foster and Partners, including the massive Khan Shatyry centre in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The conference organiser, RMIT's Esther Charlesworth, said the conference was "not just a bunch of designers having a monologue and showing pretty slides. It is the scientists, the politicians and the designers speaking to each other and a range of perspectives from across the globe."