



# Green gurus on way

MELBOURNE is seeking inspiration from overseas green gurus to create a more sustainable city.

Among those lined up for advice are a South American mayor who waged a "war" on cars, a New York traffic commissioner who handed city streets to cyclists and cafes, and a German architect who helped set up a program paying families to install solar panels.

Melbourne City Council has flagged plans to cherry-pick the best international ideas for an environmentally friendly city, in a bid to replace Melbourne's "most liveable" title with "most sustainable".

More than 20 experts from around the world will speak at the EcoEDGE green planning conference next month, detailing sustainable city experiences from Paris and Amsterdam to Bangkok and Bogota.

But some international emission-cutters have attracted great controversy.

Former Bogota mayor Enrique Penalosa faced a petition to have him impeached when he started his campaign to get cars out of the Columbian city.

Serving from 1998 until 2001, he implemented a system to ban some of the city's cars during peak hour, with bans for certain licence plate numbers on particular days.

The city also doubled parking fees, and every Sunday closes some highways to cars, as well as operating an annual one-day ban on cars across

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the city. The concept won an international development award in 2000.

Other speakers for the February 14-16 conference include New York City Department of Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan, who replaced traffic lanes and car parks with sidewalk cafes and bike paths, and Dutch-based Danish green city campaigner Michaela Bruel, who will speak on creating "cycling cities".

Melbourne City Council has previously come under fire from the State Government for programs to promote cycling over car use, including a Car Free Day in the city, and giving a lane of St Kilda Rd traffic to "Copenhagen-style" bike lanes.

While Lord Mayor John So said Melbourne can learn a lot from the event, he said there were no plans "at this stage" to step up programs to discourage cars from the city.

But any big ideas from the conference for reducing congestion, as well as water-saving and carbon-cutting, may garner more State Government support this time around.

State departments including VicUrban and the Department of Planning and Community Development are major sponsors of the event.

One session will be a workshop for green minds to develop a hypothetical blueprint for a zero-emission precinct in Melbourne's CBD.