



Photos: Ted Baghurst

Blue sky thinking
Auckland's first six Green Star-rated building is just about to open its doors.

By Patrick Rose



Trailblazer

The New Zealand Green Building Council has awarded the Geyser building a 6 Green Star rating, only the second building in the country to achieve this benchmark after the Christchurch Civic Centre. The rating indicates that the building has attained the highest standards for sustainable design. NZGBC CEO Alex Cutler says it's not just about reducing costs through energy efficiency.

"Businesses here will be making a statement about their commitment to staff, customers and the planet," says Cutler. "Much of the focus of green buildings is on benefits such as energy and water savings but just as important is the quality of the working and living environment."

According to Cutler, over 600,000m² across the country have already been certified with their matrix and all schools are now required to get a 5 Green Star rating. Ms Cutler says that international research shows improving the quality of the workplace boosts productivity and reduces sick days.

Office dwellers of the future won't have the pasty fluorescent-light tan and the physiognomies adapted to breathing only air conditioned climates. The office buildings of the future will use natural light and cleverly ventilated air flow to bring workers closer to the rhythms of the day and make them happier and healthier.

After 14 years of on-and-off planning and development, a new building in Parnell promises to be an example of the future of environmentally conscious commercial development. The Geyser building on Parnell road is Auckland's first 6 Green Star rated eco building and represents a milestone for sustainable architecture and a benchmark for the industry.

"It's a huge leap forward for Parnell, but it's a huge leap forward for the whole country," says Marco Creemers, Samson Corporation general manager, who oversaw the new development. "It's a common sense thing really; you're spending so much money on a big asset, you want to make sure that it's going to be here for a long time and that it's going to be really efficient."

Mr Creemers says the buildings offer tenants a stylish space that will have only one-third of the overheads. Environmentally-friendly design elements like the courtyard for natural light, the

solar panels for hot water and the natural ventilation to replace air-conditioning promise to make the space a more affordable choice in the long term.

With seven retail or restaurant spaces on the ground level and 5000m² of office space spread over five buildings, the new complex is filling up prior to the opening on September 1.

Creemers' company was behind the Iron Bank building on K road, which received a 5 Green Star rating from NZGBC. He says that going green usually means 10% added building costs, but those are recouped between 4 – 7 years after completion from energy savings.

One of the most distinctive features of the Geyser building is the exterior composed of thousands of glass panels that

open to create airflow. The two layers of glass create channels for ventilation or buffers from the cold winds to keep it warm.

Despite the ultra-modern feel of the complex, its energy-saving design elements are simple and proven technologies.

"None of the innovations at Geyser or overly complex or prohibitively expensive," says Ms Cutler. "This is about creating a thermal envelope and thermal ventilation. Similar systems could easily be adopted by other projects across the country."

The Geyser building is located at 100 Parnell Rd.

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