Leading the way

Builder HQ to feature sustainable equipment

By TONY RAGGATT

AN old warehouse at Garbutt is set to be our greenest office building.

Hutchinson Builders is transforming a former BOC Group gas warehouse in Duckworth St into their new Townsville headquarters.

In the process, they are installing the latest environmental features.

Project manager Ben Prest, a team leader for Hutchinson in Townsville, said it was hoped the project would position Hutchinson as a leader in sustainable building and give them the edge in winning business.

"By installing these features in our own building we can show what can be done," Mr Prest said.

The company is being assisted by Townsville sustainability consultant Guy Lane.

While the features were expected to increase construction costs, these would be offset by lower operating costs and hopefully a more productive workplace.

Hutchinson was looking to halve the greenhouse gas emissions generated by the use of electricity at its current Aitkenvale premises.

"There is a huge opportunity for this building to become an icon of sustainability in Townsville and show the city a new way of developing property," Mr Lane said.

He said the building's most striking feature would be the near-exclusive use of daylight during office hours.

Reflectors, called light-shelves, on the western windows would allow diffused light into the building and six solar tubes or skylights would help provide light during the day in the toilet and storage areas.

Mr Lane said research into the use of natural lighting in postal service buildings in the United States had found that it improved productivity because postal workers could see better than under artificial light.

'Day-lighting' was also found to improve comfort and health, he said.

When the building's lights were turned on, a bank of super-efficient 28-watt T5 fluorescent lamps would provide lighting in zoned areas.

They would fitted with motion sensors and timers to turn them off automatically when not needed.

Other measures would reduce water and electricity demand.

Tanks would store 100,000 litres of rainwater which would be used for irrigation on the property and for toilet flushing.

A Caroma Zero Flush waterless urinal would be installed and AAA low-flow shower roses fitted to showers.

A 250 litre Dux Solar 1 solar hot water system would provide hot water.

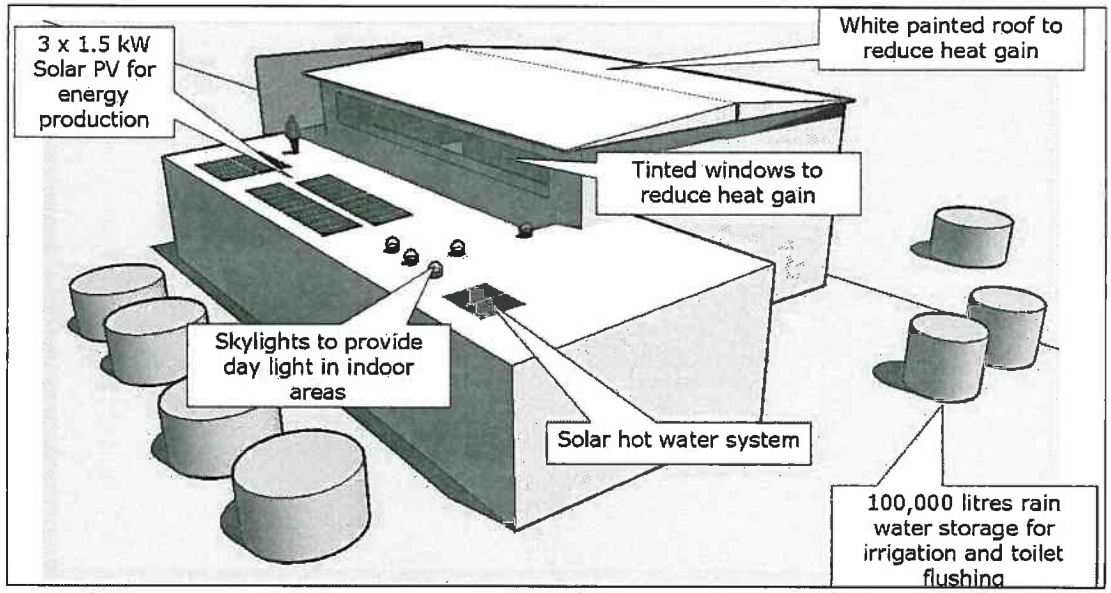
The roof of the building would be painted white to reflect sunlight and reduce heat in the building.

Split-system air-conditioners and a chiller-based system would cool the building, and a 5.6 kilowatt photo-voltaic solar power plant system was being considered.

Mr Prest said the system would cost $70,000 but would cut $1000 a year from power bills.

Additional mains energy would be sourced from Ergon Energy Clean Energy, a certified GreenPower product producing zero greenhouse emissions.

The building is due to be completed this month.



GREEN MACHINE . . . the power-saving features of Hutchinson's new headquarters

OPPORTUNITY: Guy Lane and Ben Prest look over plans for the new building