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Property owners make net-zero pledge

While government continues to flip-flop on climate change, industry is making its own plans for a sustainable future.



Australia's leaders may have pronounced last rites over the National Energy Guarantee and downgraded the Paris Agreement from a firm commitment to a vague aspiration. But Australia could still make real strides in sustainability if the country's major property owners have anything to do with it.

A veritable sustainability stampede is now taking place, with GPT Wholesale Office Fund and Frasers Property Australia the latest big asset owners to publicly set net-zero targets. GPT's goal is perhaps the most ambitious yet: net zero carbon emissions across its portfolio of 18 buildings in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane by the end of 2020.

Just days later Frasers signed the Net Zero Carbon Buildings Commitment, a global initiative launched by the World Green Building Council. To fulfil its pledge, the company must ensure that every new

building it creates operates at net-zero carbon by 2030, and all existing buildings must meet the same target by 2050. The AMP Capital Wholesale Office Fund, City of Sydney, Cundall and Stockland have also signed the Commitment.

Mirvac, meanwhile, announced its sustainability strategy back in 2014 and is still committed to becoming net positive with zero waste by 2030.

Speaking at AIRAH's Future of HVAC Conference, Bruce Precious, M.AIRAH, from Six Capitals Consulting noted the positive impact that the top end of town could have – and the optimism that this generates.

“There's nothing more important today than taking immediate action on climate change,” he says. “So I'm very encouraged to see property owners setting targets and recognising that we're not waiting for technology. We know how we can create efficient buildings that run on renewable energy – it's that simple and we can do it tomorrow.”

Precious admits that lower tier properties are still an issue, but that the new energy efficiency standards in Section J of the National Construction Code – to be released next year – would help.

“We're not going to turn the laggards into leaders,” he says. “But with regulation we can bring them up to standard.” ■



Nick Duncan, M.AIRAH, is CEO of HydroChem, based in Melbourne. He is a former AIRAH board director.

Responsibilities

Planning the future for our team. This means I'm in touch with all team members across the country and liaising with clients. It's important we meet our clients' expectations every day. It's also important that we're actively planning for the future. I have learnt that projects and changes take time for people to adopt. The sooner you start the journey, the quicker you get to the destination.

Specialty

Specialising is all about education and experience. I'm a product of the 1980s. My parents bought our first home computer in 1984 – a Tandy TRS 80. So computers have been part of my life all the way through. I studied chemistry and law at uni, then worked as a lawyer. Since that career, I've worked in water treatment for over 15 years.

Passion

In terms of work, I strongly believe there is no reason anyone should get sick from Legionnaires' disease.

Challenges

Water treatment is a relatively small industry. The challenge is implementing changes and innovations when the scale is so much smaller than our clients and the large property portfolios.

Favourite destination

We work with a company in Japan. The culture is so strong and the food is excellent. There is a clash of new versus old – some things are space-age and others old-school.

Future plans

Enjoy life, family, friends. Make sure work is a fun place for everyone. ■

HVAC&R's night of nights

Judges have confirmed the finalists for this year's AIRAH Awards.

To be held this year in Melbourne on Thursday, November 15, the AIRAH Awards presentation dinner is the premier annual event for honouring those who have made significant contributions to our industry.

Across 13 categories, the AIRAH Awards will recognise high achievers, stand-out projects, and ground-breaking research. It's also a great chance for the industry to come together and celebrate the work done over the year.

To learn more about the award categories and this year's nominees, turn to our AIRAH Awards preview on page 53.

AIRAH Awards at a glance

Date: November 15

Time: 6.30pm

Venue: Peninsula C
Central Pier, Docklands, Melbourne

Tickets: awards@airah.org.au

www.airah.org.au/awards