

## David John Oppenheim (1948 - 2007)



David was a man of vision: from his proposal for a big, outrageous windmill on the Bolte Bridge to power 2,000 Docklands apartments, to his love for the bucket in his shower.

David was a leader. He sought to inspire people with green building design rather than by preaching. He believed that after air-conditioning was introduced into office buildings we forgot the common sense rules for passive solar design, and providing natural ventilation and daylight. He was passionate about the need to understand buildings by measuring their performance in order to inform better design strategies.

David was involved in energy efficient, low environmental impact architecture for over 3 decades. His environmental concerns were initially fuelled by the oil crisis of the 1970's; this drove him to develop and search for practical, simple solutions that could be integrated into the built environment to improve the quality of people's lives.

David's first solar building was erected in 1976, after which he was involved in over 1000 projects guided by the principles of low energy design. He became known as "Mr Solar" from his constant attendance and presentations at renewable energy forums, and his writing of over 45 publications on the topic of Ecologically Sustainable Design. He was a well known advocate for the environment on a vast number of committees including: the International Energy Agency, Olympic Coordination Authority Energy Expert Advisory Committee for the Sydney 2000 Olympics, the Green Heating Steering Committee, the Royal Australian Institute of Architects National Environment Committee, and the Australian and New Zealand Solar Energy Society. His influence has been further extended by his lecturing of a whole generation of Victorian Architecture students. David also taught in Italy and in Syria through a United Nations program.

David was a founding director of Sustainable Built Environments (SBE), established on the vernal equinox in 2001 with the intention of providing Ecologically Sustainable Design (ESD) advice to the "top end of town". Under David's leadership, both SBE's built and consultancy projects have won awards at State and National level, and have been featured in publications in Australia and overseas. David saw SBE as an organic firm with members of the multi-disciplinary team being added to the potting mix to enable green projects to grow.

David has provided ESD advice for most building types in Australia, and for projects in the Middle East, China and India. He designed numerous award winning low-energy houses and was described as an "inspired designer" by his contemporaries. David's most recent key projects included: 500 Collins St – the first 5 Star Green Star office refurbishment in Australia; the proposed redevelopment of the RAI's Victorian office, and the Qatar National Bank Building.

David Oppenheim's persistence, positive attitude, attention to detail and brilliant mind led him to be a well-respected leader in the field of Ecologically Sustainable Design. His concern for the environment was strongly linked with his love for people and most particularly family. He humorously advocated a return to "Nanna-technology" where we live life as our grandmothers did in order to reduce our environmental footprint and leave a legacy for our own grandchildren. His simple approach to solving the problems of the world and innate ability to translate these learning's to his students and contemporaries made him mentor and inspiration to many, not the least the staff of SBE who aspire to achieve as much.

In the words of one of David's favourite books *The Lorax* by Dr Seuss:

*"UNLESS someone like you*

*Cares a whole awful lot,*

*Nothing is going to get better.*

*It's not."*

