

LOS ANGELES

Key representatives from the Aga Khan Development Network joined California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to further cooperative green economy strategies, increase the use of sustainable clean energy and reduce oil dependence and greenhouse gas emissions.

"Ultimately, the issue of climate change and how we adapt will come about from the bottom to the top," Schwarzenegger said. "It is our ability to galvanise citizens, to see that their economic and environmental futures are dependent upon action. It is time for us to stop waiting for someone else to take the lead."

LONDON

British TV Channel 4 is aiming to raise the *Titanic* – with the help of a reality show run by architects. An on-camera construction team will reconstruct key parts of the ship, from its engineering to the elaborate finishing touches of the transatlantic liner's public spaces. In an attempt to be authentic, only traditional Edwardian techniques, machinery and materials will be available to the team of experts. The *Titanic* sank on its maiden voyage in 1912.

ST PETERSBURG

The seat of Russia's former Tsars, St Petersburg, is in danger of losing its World Heritage status. Gas giant, Gazprom, is set to commence work on the construction of Europe's tallest skyscraper. Opponents are hoping that Vladimir Putin, who initially supported the project, will change his mind. If he bans the Gazprom project he'll help the city to retain its heritage listing.

MELBOURNE

The Roofing Tile Association of Australia (RTAA) has launched a fully compliant roofing system for tiled roofs that meets the rigorous new Australian Standard for bushfire zones, introduced by the Victorian Government in March 2009. Victorians planning to rebuild on sites assessed as the highest level of bushfire risk – "Bushfire Attack Level – Flame Zones (BAL-FZ)" – can be assured of the fire resistance of materials used in the system, which includes all concrete roof tiles manufactured in Australia. Builders and homeowners wishing to rebuild can contact their preferred roof tile supplier or go to the RTAA website, www.rooftile.com.au, for full details on the certified roofing system.

Aussies win in Barcelona

Australian architects shone at the recent World Architecture Festival awards in Barcelona. Allen Jack+Cottier principal architect Michael Heenan took out a major award for Berry Sports Hall in NSW.

Located in Berry's rolling agricultural landscape, the centre is composed of a collection of early to mid 20th century institutional buildings among established gardens and mature trees. Primary schoolchildren are the predominant users.

The building has a simple form and scale, similar in appearance to a farm shed. But the heavy, off-form concrete walls are perforated with an array of "starlight" holes, thus giving the structure a playful feeling of lightness and life. Internally, the holes provide excellent daylight, while in the evening, the light source is reversed. The building itself becomes a glowing array of star lights reminiscent of the country sky above.

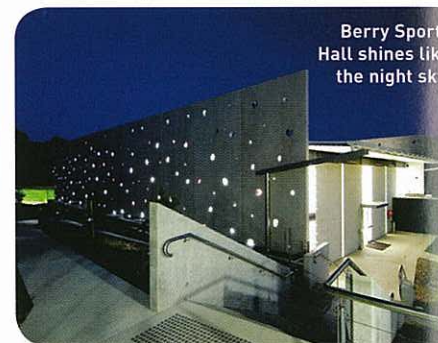
Also honoured at Barcelona was Choi Ropiha architect John Choi, whose new TKTs booth and the redevelopment of Father Duffy Square create a new centre for Times Square in New York. Based in the Sydney harbourside town of Manly, Choi Ropiha recognised that Times Square had nowhere for people to sit and enjoy the passing show, no arrival marker – no place for a Kodak moment. The design solution was a series of red resin steps rising from ground level atop a steel frame roof for TKTs's operations and a grandstand where

TKT patrons and visitors alike could pause to take in the passing theatre of Times Square. It was a stroke of genius that led to a complete reconsideration of the plaza and the urban environment of Times Square.

Michael Heenan was outspoken about the contrast between peer recognition in Barcelona and the low-key style back home. "When we go overseas we are favoured for our capabilities ... every word you say is taken as an important comment on design. That doesn't happen in Australia."

Fellow Australian winner, John Choi, was hopeful the awards would lead to more exciting opportunities.

"I think Australia is producing some of the world's best housing and residential projects, but our public projects are still behind and that is mainly because there is a lack of maturity in our public sector. They're more risk-averse than wanting to commission an exceptional project. But hopefully that is changing." ■



Berry Sports Hall shines like the night sky

BCI survey taps market sentiment

For construction professionals in Australia the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) was bad news, certainly more so than for the average Australian. The downturn impacted both the economic fundamentals of their projects and their capacity to ensure they were financed.

As a result, it doesn't surprise that when asked "How would you describe your company's general attitude to the current financial situation?" the gloom factor prevailed: at the current juncture of the downturn close to 60 per cent of respondents expect things to get worse, before they get better, while only 40 per cent see "business as usual" or even anticipate new opportunities.

Clearly, the proverbial drop from the top to the bottom is the deepest in Queensland. This is the reason that respondents in Queensland are the ones with the gloomiest outlook: 70 per

cent are seeing a worsening of their situation, while only 11 per cent (against 20 per cent national average) expect new opportunities.

Having said that, it is NSW with the biggest percentage of decision makers "going into survival mode" – almost one out of every three (28 per cent) sees the survival of their firm threatened by the downturn.

On the other end of the spectrum, Victoria seems to be home to Australia's more optimistic construction professionals: less than 50 per cent see themselves worse off than before the crisis, and one in every four firms sees new opportunities.

Even more upbeat are decision makers in the smaller states and territories: 33 per cent anticipate new opportunities, almost equal in number to those experiencing problems (36 per cent). ■