

# Qatar and Australia share green building expertise

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Qatar and Australia can learn from each other on issues of sustainability and energy conservation as both countries live in an environment of water scarcity and dry arid landscapes.

This was the key point discussed at a seminar organised by the Qatar Green Building Council (QGBC) yesterday, which hosted a trade delegation from Australia that shared its expertise on sustainable and environment-friendly building practices.

Under the banner of Sustainable Design in Hot Arid Climates, the seminar brought together key policymakers from Qatar's green building industry and leading Australian experts in energy conservation, green building research and best practice.

QGBC director Meshal al-Shamari pointed out similarities between the Australian and Qatari environment, both of which feature water scarcity and dry arid landscapes. "The two countries can learn much from each other. Issues of sustainability and energy conservation are of increasing importance in Qatar in alignment with Qatar National Vision 2030. As a result, an entire industry is now beginning to grow here with a focus on conservation, sustainability and renewable energy."

QGBC board member and founder of the Arab Engineering Bureau, Ibrahim M Jaidah, said there was immense interest in green building practices among developers in Qatar as awareness grew about their benefits.

He pointed out that Qatar had a history of green building practices that grew out of necessity among local communities while dealing with the hot climate. "In many ways, early Qatari buildings adopted green practices through strategic site placement, ensuring that openings did not face west,



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the hottest side, the use of alleyways and alcoves to provide naturally shaded environments and with wind towers that captured cool breezes. Today, we can still adopt these basic concepts in the planning stages of construction."

Gerard Seeber, Australia's senior trade commissioner for Mena, spoke about the strategic partnership between the two countries and their robust economic relationship. Australian companies have been involved in the building of several important

structures in Qatar, including the City Center mall, Education City and the Kahramaa building, he said.

Robin Mellon from the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) said, "Since the GBCA was formed in 2002, we have certified over 7mn sqm of sustainable development. Working with other green building councils such as Qatar, we can learn from green building professionals, case studies, technologies and approaches in order to find the best outcomes through good design, good technol-

ogy and good behaviour to achieve good health, well-being and business practice. The similarities in climate and diversity mean that there are significant opportunities for both Qatar and Australia to achieve greener, more efficient and better quality development."

The future of environmental issues was touched upon by James McGregor of Australia's leading research facility, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. He said sustainability endeavours of the future

would span not just green buildings, but green communities, power stations and water utilities as well.

Stressing the significant benefits of green building practices for the country, al-Shamari said: "Research has shown us that saving energy consumption is a key marketing tool for landlords, creates an enhanced personal space for occupants and increases productivity by up to 25%. As Qatar transitions from a carbon economy to a knowledge economy, these capabilities are of increasing importance."