



Vinyl Council at Form & Function 2006

Vinyl Council of Australia

PVC has a place in sustainable building

PVC is unfairly targeted in Australia according to environmentalist Dr Patrick Moore.

The Greenpeace co-founder provided his views on sustainable building at the Form & Function exhibition in Sydney in April. In seminars sponsored by the Vinyl Council of Australia, Dr Moore told visitors his life story as an environmentalist and his views on sustainability.

Highlighting PVC and timber as maligned materials in the green building industry, Dr Moore provided challenging perspectives emphasising the need for LCA (life cycle assessment) studies to identify true impacts.

"There is absolutely no evidence that vinyl damages human health or the environment", said Dr Moore. "Further, PVC is durable, low-maintenance, recyclable and performs well on LCA tests."

Challenging the notion that only renewable materials are green, Dr Moore believes durable products also have a place in sustainable building.



What does it mean to be green? Dr Moore provides some challenging perspectives.

He said durability is particularly important with structures exposed to the elements – such as roofs and walls.

As such, PVC has a place in sustainable building. Internationally it is currently used widely for pipes, siding, windows, roofing, fencing, decking, wall coverings and flooring.

Tracing the criticism of PVC back to Greenpeace's campaign against chlorine, Dr Moore reminded the audience that several key industries, including medicines and healthcare, rely on chlorine

chemistry.

And, as Dr Moore said to his Greenpeace colleagues at the time "Guys! Its not within our jurisdiction to eliminate an element of the periodic table!"

Dr Moore criticised the development of green building tools that ban materials without LCA or other evidence. PVC has been cleared through a number of LCA studies, particularly in Europe and the US. Australian green building groups have not acknowledged these studies yet are unlikely to repeat

these studies in Australia.

Dr Moore was once on the Greenpeace frontline protesting against nuclear testing, whaling, and seal hunting and was arrested on numerous occasions. Eventually when Greenpeace started to become "anti-science and anti-technology", Dr Moore left.

Preferring to choose science and common sense over emotion and rhetoric, and frustrated with the 'zero-tolerance' stance some activist groups have moved towards, Dr Moore fashioned himself as the sensible environmentalist. He believes cooperation and compromise among environmentalists, government and industry are essential for sustainability.

Dr Moore spoke at three, one-hour seminars and moderated a further two seminars highlighting the ways Australian manufacturers are responding to the green building industry. Council members Armstrong World Industries and Vinidex were two of the manufacturers featured. More than 120 visitors listened to Dr Moore over the three days of the expo.

Patrick Moore interviewed on ABC Radio National

A recent ABC Radio National interview with Dr Patrick Moore generated many responses by listeners who were both supportive and critical of the interview.

On his *Counterpoint* program, host Michael Duffy spent 15 minutes asking Dr Moore about PVC, his

history with Greenpeace, and other topics including nuclear energy and genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

Dr Moore spoke about the qualities of PVC in a fire, the durability and usefulness of PVC in building and construction, the low amounts of dioxin generated by PVC

manufacturing, the insidious problem of activist groups like *Healthcare without Harm*, and the current misguided attempts of the building industry in Australia to restrict PVC use.

Dr Moore also pointed out that the USGBC spent two years undertaking an exhaustive study on PVC

and concluded there was no reason to discriminate against vinyl.

Both the original interview and feedback episode are available on www.abc.net.au/rn/counterpoint/ Also, select 'have your say' to read online feed-



PVC stands tall

A PVC pipe wall provided a talking point for guests at the 2006 Form & Function expo on April 6 – 8.

Council staff and volunteers at the PVC stand answered visitors' queries and debated the merits of PVC in building and construction.

The delegates were a mix of architects, builders, designers and engineers; groups with varied perceptions of PVC. Says one volunteer, "visitors generally knew nothing or thought that PVC was bad". A number of specifiers who use PVC regularly were pleased to see the public promotion of PVC, and the recyclability of PVC was a frequent topic for discussion.

Several designers wanted to know what colour the pipes came in as they were inspired by the pipe display on the stand!

The PVC pipe wall was courtesy of Iplex

Pipelines, Armstrong World Industries donated vinyl flooring for the stand. Both materials contained recycled PVC providing an opportunity to demonstrate the industry's commitment to sustainability.

The Gates giveaways were also popular with the designers and architects. These were PVC rulers created from recycled gates from Christo's 2005 installation.

The council would like to thank the volunteers who assisted at the stand: Armstrong's Rob McLorinan, PIPA's Mark Heathcote and Dimi Pesudovs, Nylex's Joanna Baker and Helen Matthews, Polyflor's Jeff Ruthven, Australian Vinyl's Nigel Jones and Andrew Ferguson, and Vinidex's George Macovaz, Eddie Richardson and Graeme Dash.



PACIA's Maree Lang (left), Sophi MacMillan & Andrew Ferguson at the PVC stand

Sales talk

Greenpeace's Poison Plastic campaign was the beginning of anti-PVC activism said Dr Patrick Moore at a PVC industry seminar on April 10.

Thirty-two Melbourne based industry employees heard Dr Patrick Moore trace the history of anti-PVC sentiment from Greenpeace to organisations such as

Healthcare with out Harm and the *Healthy Building Network*.

PVC salespeople who encounter negative attitudes towards PVC are not always fully informed of the issues and the history of PVC discrimination. This seminar provided an opportunity to hear from an environmentalist with a history in activism and a good understanding of

public perspectives on PVC.

Dr Moore provided information sales staff can use in the marketplace. His message was simple and clarified uncertainties. Says one guest, Dr Moore "reinforced that we work in an industry that is beneficial to society". Another appreciated him clearing up the myth about PVC and dioxins.

Melbourne Green Building Challenge

PACIA, in conjunction with the Victorian EPA and the Vinyl Council hosted 84 delegates at a green building seminar in Richmond, Melbourne in April. Architects, government representatives and industry heard keynote speaker Dr Patrick Moore and others give their perspectives on green building.

Joining Dr Moore at the morning seminar were manufacturers talking about green building initiatives. These included Vinyl Council members Armstrong and Vinidex. Armstrong's Rob McLorinan spoke about the use of PVC

and other waste streams in vinyl flooring and Vinidex's Daniel Steedman covered Vinidex's innovative strategies with PVC pipe.

A different perspective on green building development and policies from Rob Enker of the Victorian Building Commission ensured a number of views were aired.

The forum was well received and lively discussions followed at lunch. One delegate said that with more such forums hopefully the misconceptions will diminish and the Green Star rating

tool will evolve to accurately measure what it was meant to!



Sophi MacMillan, Patrick Moore and Robyn Hageman at the Green Building Challenge seminar.