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## Read all about it: ways to survive the future

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The use of "eco-cement" in building is part of a road map to a sustainable world devised by 85 Australian scientists and researchers during a nine-month internet conference.

The conference culminated in a meeting of 200 senior scientists and lay people in Canberra in November that produced 34 recommendations on sustainability. It was organised by three non-government organisations: Australia 21, Nature and Society Forum and Sustainable Population Australia. A book based on the 85 papers produced will be published by the CSIRO in May.

So-called "eco-cement" is an Australian invention that uses magnesium oxide as a component and is claimed to vastly reduce the amount of carbon dioxide produced during its manufacture, and to re-absorb the greenhouse gas. The manufacture and use of 1.8 billion tonnes of Portland cement globally every year is said

to contribute between 5 and 10 per cent of all anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions.

The major recommendation of the "It's Sustainability, Stupid" forum was that a formal inquiry, along the lines of the Hilmer inquiry into competition policy, be held to identify the legislative and other changes needed for all levels of government to better make decisions on sustainability.

The forum also said state governments should stop broadscale clearing of native vegetation and, with the Federal Government, fund research into farming and land use that works with the environment.

The Federal Government should also implement accounting rules for businesses and government agencies to value ecosystem services, such as the production of clean water, and it should set up a process to uncover hidden environmental subsidies in production, the forum said.

On water conservation the forum recommended strong

mandatory standards on the efficiency of showerheads and taps, and firm targets and guidelines on the return of water flows to the Murray-Darling and other "over-extracted" rivers.

The widespread application of solar energy could go a long way to reducing the need for fossil and nuclear fuels during the next 50 years, it said. Governments should aim to reduce current fossil fuel use by 30 per cent by 2050 and to help achieve this target they should provide support for renewable energy, remove subsidies on fossil fuel use and promote energy-efficiency measures.

The forum agreed that the average house and commercial building should be required to use 50 per cent less energy and water and conform to rules on waste, site ecology, transport and affordability. Australian building innovations, such as eco-cement, should be promoted and more funds directed to Sustainable Cities projects.

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**Cement that inhales greenhouse gases is one step to a more sustainable world, according to some Australian scientists.**