

# Choose NC interviews the Eco Construction Cluster

Created in 2017, the Eco Construction Cluster brings together companies working for the promotion and development of New Caledonian eco-construction.



Sheraton Lift, Bâtiment Concept NC

## \_\_In the space of a few years, the eco-construction industry has reached a peak of growth in Caledonia. What is the current situation of eco-construction in New Caledonia, challenges and opportunities?

Our natural heritage is an exceptional heritage with high added value that must be preserved. Caledonians and institutions are well aware of this. Eco-construction represents a solution of the future for New Caledonia since it allows the country's economy to develop while respecting this concern for preservation thanks to sustainable constructions that respect the environment and the well-being of its users. It is the opportunity to intelligently develop our territory, to create a new vision of construction, new markets, new professions, in addition to an economic boost offered to the construction sector but also a social lever since this vision of construction is concerned with residents and their well-being. Even if the environmental interest of eco-construction is no longer to be proven, this sustainable vision of construction must overcome a few challenges to prevail. Promotion and communication are levers to be activated to show the economic advantages of green building. Indeed, some say that it generates an additional cost but if we consider a construction as a whole (investment and operation), this potential defect can be transformed into quality. For example, by building a

crossing habitat or by mounting walls 3 m high, there is certainly a small additional cost during the construction but in the end there are above all great savings in operation since air conditioning is no longer necessarily necessary, in a well ventilated room.

## \_\_The Eco Construction Cluster was created in 2017, it brings together companies working for the promotion and development of New Caledonian eco-construction. To learn more about the history of the Eco Construction Cluster, what were the key stages in its development in New Caledonia?

The initial impetus was made in 2017 by the Southern Province, which saw it as a sector of the future. Then came the structuring of the cluster with 3 highlights: 1) The BDCAL project, launched in 2019, which aims to participate in the structuring of a sustainable construction sector through the establishment of a Caledonian Sustainable Buildings label (BDCAL). This will be a participatory and voluntary process, which will rely on a network of construction stakeholders who will participate in improving construction projects in terms of energy and environmental performance. This cluster-led project is funded by ADEME and the Caledonian Energy Agency.

2) The constitution of a working group dedicated to WOOD at the end of 2019. This group includes all the players in the wood industry: producers, sawyers, traders, carpenters, etc. Its members have chosen to share their expertise and knowledge through a Caledonian guide to the use of construction timber. This guide, accessible to everyone in the documentary resources of the cluster's website, will thus allow anyone wishing to build a timber construction to fully appreciate its aesthetic qualities and energy performance.

This group is also working on the future of the sector, since this year it launched a carpenter training course with technical support from the Training Center of the Chamber of Trades and Crafts.

3) The creation of a working group dedicated to the Circular Economy in the construction industry, which began on the "hats of wheels" with the development of sheets that will constitute the guide for materials resulting from recycling. This guide will allow everyone to know the possibilities of recovering waste in the construction industry, waste can be a raw material, it is important to know the channels in order to recover it when possible.

## \_\_You network the players in the sector to promote its development and stimulate innovation by offering appropriate tools such as inter-member meetings, working groups, collective missions ... What are your objectives for the next 3 years?

Our objectives are readjusted each year in order to best meet the needs of our members, our institutional and financial partners and the context which, nowadays, changes very rapidly. However, we follow 4 main lines of conduct and our objectives evolve within this framework:

1. Be a benchmark player
2. Contribute to business development
3. Develop competitiveness and innovation
4. Professionalize the players in the sectors relating to eco-construction



The new town hall of Hienghène in New Caledonia © Athanor

## \_\_Eco-construction represents 300 direct jobs in the region and a turnover of XPF 7 billion. How important is it to the Caledonian economy?

The importance of green building lies in the fact that it is a sector of the future which is only in its infancy. Energy transition, respect for the environment and sustainable development are essential issues that the construction sector cannot ignore. The construction sector must renew itself to meet these challenges. It must improve its concepts, its methods, its achievements ... By turning to eco-construction, the construction industry will be able to innovate, find new economic life and rehire again. Eco-construction allows more local economic benefits since it promotes the use of local materials, more technicality in the stakeholders and finally sustainability in the construction choices. Ultimately this makes the Caledonian economy more resilient.

## \_\_Your final message for potential investors interested in the eco-construction sector in New Caledonia? What do you think are the main assets of this region?

The eco-construction sector is a new and dynamic sector that meets current expectations. New Caledonia is a country in the making with demanding regulatory and standards tools in the construction field. Green construction in New Caledonia is therefore a serious market with strong growth potential. We have the potential to be a "showcase" for green building in this region of the South Pacific.

