

## **Green schools better for kids' grey matter**

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STUDENTS who learn in "green schools" could achieve much higher academic test results, environment group Green Cross Australia believes.

Classrooms built to green standards lead to better student and teacher health, resulting in fewer sick days and higher teacher retention rates, the group's chief executive Mara Bun said.

"Green schools are more energy efficient and have healthier classrooms that improve student and teacher performance," she said.

"They also save money for the school administration, help protect the environment and reduce carbon emissions."

Better site and design planning also lessen the need for features including air-conditioning, artificial lighting and heating, thus decreasing operating costs.

Ms Bun said green classrooms had better natural light, reduced glare, good ventilation and acoustics, insulation, and paints and carpets that do not release toxins into the air.

She said studies done in schools in the United States in 2005 showed green features improved student performance by up to 25 per cent.

Queensland is planning 36 new schools by 2026 for the state's south-east and these, as well as schools being rebuilt after Victoria's bushfires, should be built according to green principles, she said.

At Bulimba State Primary School, students are learning about climate change through initiatives such as a worm farm and a vegetable patch, deputy principal David Simms said.

"It's all about breaking bad **habits** and educating people about how they can save money and energy by doing really simple things," Mr Simms said.

The school also recycles paper and cardboard, batteries, mobiles phones and computers. Second-hand pavers, timbers, retaining blocks and building materials are used for landscaping and repair work.

In 2008, the State Government introduced the Queensland Solar and Energy Efficiency Program, a \$60 million investment in solar panels for every state school.

The Federal Government's \$42 billion stimulus package includes a \$14.7 billion boost for 9540 schools around the country.

The Greens' leader, Senator Bob Brown, last month received assurances from federal Treasurer Wayne Swan that the schools package would include green elements.

Green Cross Australia is an offshoot of Green Cross International, which was founded by former Soviet Union president Mikhail Gorbachev in 1993 to foster sustainable partnerships between business, government and the community. It has 20 offices internationally.