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851 This research building is an initiative for the study of health and population problems in the KwaZulu-Natal district. The distinguished, aesthetically pleasing building combines modern, sustainable design with using local labour and materials, and provides a vibrant environment for interaction and research. Set on a south-facing slope, four research pods cluster around a cruciform space containing social functions. A 15-metre (50-foot) tower acts as a thermal stack that allows the area to ventilate naturally. It is a strong reference point around which circulation and communal activities are arranged, and also makes a bold statement to the surrounding landscape. Within each pod, open-plan offices offer maximum exposure to natural light and ventilation. Concrete frame construction infilled with steel, blockwork, aluminium, glass and timber panels displays a vibrant honesty.

Eucalyptus, ubiquitous in the area, is used to support the main tower and roof, with saplings used for shading and balustrades. Storm water is collected in tanks or channelled into the adjacent wetland system, grey water from low-volume showers irrigates the gardens and sewage is treated on site.

- 1 Main view with the central tower
- 2 The eucalyptus-framed tower interior
- 3 Section through the sloped site
- 4 Section through the tower
- 5 Floor plan

Client

The Africa Centre for Health and Population Studies

Area

2,700m²/29,052 sq ft

Cost

US\$1,000,000