Dr Richard de Dear has worked in the area of thermal comfort over the last 25 years. His most significant contribution is the adaptive model of thermal comfort, on which he wrote his PhD under supervision of Dr Andris Auliciems. When the connection between building energy efficiency and global warming was made clear in the early 90s, the adaptive model attracted widespread international interest. In the mid 90s de Dear was commissioned by the American Society of Heating Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) to conduct a series of thermal comfort field studies in different climate zones, culminating in a collaborative project with Dr Gail Brager at the University of California, Berkeley, in which an adaptive model for specific application in naturally ventilated buildings was developed.

In the last seven years much of de Dear's time has been spent enhancing the impact and uptake of the adaptive model internationally. The de Dear and Brager model was elevated to the status of an international engineering and design standard in 2004 when it became part of ASHRAE/ANSI's Standard 55; Thermal Environmental Conditions for Human Occupancy. Apart from informing engineering standards, de Dear and Bragers' adaptive model is being widely applied to housing and building design internationally, including the landmark San Francisco Federal Building; the first naturally ventilated office building on the US west coast since the advent of air conditioning (http://www.pritzkerprize.com/164/pritzker2005/sanfranciscofederalbuilding.htm).

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