

RACA : 88 Field Street Article

RPM Consulting Engineers have been appointed to refurbish 88 Field Street, Durban, an iconic 24 storey glass building, erected on the Corner of Pine and Field Streets in 1983.

Designed by two of our Industries foremost Engineers, the airconditioning system represented the most innovative design of its time, incorporating chilled water storage, thermal storage and many more features designed to save energy. Built at a time when electricity costs were of little consequence, the design indicates the foresight of its creators, the late Mr Pat Murray and the late Mr Geof Alder.

The complexity of the system was in many ways its downfall. After the excellent maintenance programme carried out by the original building owner, subsequent owners have under estimated this aspect, to the extent that over the years the original design integrity has been seriously compromised. In addition to this unfortunate state of affairs, a recent ill-advised upgrade attempt has worsened the situation. As a result, acceptable conditions within the building are no longer attainable.

RPM have now been tasked by the new owners, with reinstating the airconditioning system to its original design specification, with a view to achieving a further 30 years of reliable operation.

There is nothing fundamentally antiquated about the original design, said Patrick Burke, CEO of the RPM Engineering Group. Many of the original design features represent current trends, which confirms just how ahead of its time the airconditioning specification was, adds Burke.

Nevertheless, some additional features will be incorporated to further enhance the system and to bring it up to 21st century specification, particularly with regards to environmental and energy considerations.

By Patrick Burke: FSAIRAC

Date: 5 May 2014