



Bricks and mortar: David Marshall says Phoenix Technology will see its first revenue next year. Picture: BRETT FAULKNER

Waste tips in housing favo

MURRAY JOHNSON

Walter Filler has developed a system for turning landfill waste into building panels.

His company, Phoenix Technology, wants to end our primitive approach to waste, solve the world's housing problems, and create thousands of jobs.

An \$800 million plant on the drawing board for Newcastle could employ 1000 people and produce 130,000 houses a year, Mr Filler said.

The former merchant banker turned Phoenix chairman, David Marshall, said: "We can land a basic three-bedroom house shell in Asia for about \$10,000."

Three multi million-dollar deals have already been signed to provide public housing in China and the Philippines.

Mr Filler said his system would help the environment while saving a fortune in waste disposal costs.

"We have created an entirely new building material and thrown a lifeline to industries hounded by environmentalists for creating waste products," Mr Filler said.

After emigrating from the village of Wiernsheim, in the Black Forest of Germany, in 1969, Mr Filler worked as a business adviser.

Phoenix is his third attempt at

realising a vision which came to him at a rubbish tip in west Sydney.

He was standing at a landfill site in Kemps Creek 10 years ago when he noticed truckloads of perfectly good materials, such as aluminium windows and timber doors, being dumped and covered with dirt.

"I thought it was stupid, and criminal, that we had such a Flintstones solution to waste," Mr Filler, 52, said this week.

"I realised that 99 per cent of what is termed waste is actually incorrectly named," Mr Filler, 52, said. "It was really discarded materials which were a resource capable of being used over and over again. Yet, I saw morons burying it and burning it."

Mr Filler said the waste problem was created by industry and needed an industrial solution.

He has the same view of housing. Mr Filler floated Phoenix on the ASX (as PTL) in 1998 and raised \$6 million in 50 cent shares for research and development.

This week the stock was trading about 32 cents, but Mr Filler is confident of eventual success.

"We have unlimited clients at both ends, supplying our waste and buying our houses," Mr Filler said.

"We will be the biggest low-cost housing producer in the world."



Walter Filler

Mr Marshall, 49, said the company had a market capitalisation of \$16.5 million and expected to see its first revenue next year. Phoenix sorts solid waste into several categories on a conveyor belt, then shreds and crushes it into a fine gravel with heavy machinery to create new raw materials.

German makers, such as Krupp and Dornier, have modified their machinery for the Phoenix system.

"The largest particles are as big as a matchhead, and most of it is sand," Mr Marshall said.

The grains are then sterilised, dehydrated using microwave technology developed with RMIT University. They are mixed with gypsum and cement-based binders, then foaming technology aerates and expands the mixture to fill the building panel mould.

Each panel is coated with a plastic-like UV-resistant Chemplast polymer to seal and finish it. Typical panels are 2400mm high, 750mm wide and about 100mm thick.

Phoenix panels have been tested against fire, water, impact and weather in earthquake-prone New Zealand which has rigorous building standards.

Everything from tree stumps and old fridges is crushed and recycled by Phoenix. It has developed three-bedroom, steel-framed homes 6.3 metres by 9.6 metres, which its panels fit.

"We can land a house in China almost half the price of other systems," Mr Filler said.

Mr Marshall said the product would be available in Australia, Asia was the main customer.

"We are talking to housing authorities which want to build 100,000 homes a year," he said.