

# Home, sweet (green) home

Clever design means we don't have to give up creature comforts to live more sustainably, and developers are getting in on the act, writes

Scott Elliott.

Australian law previously refused incorporating environmentally sensitive design into their new leases, relying on materials and methods that would have been familiar to our grandparents. But as evidence for climate change mounts and state governments scurry to enforce a six-star minimum standard, our attitudes and our homes are set to change.

To service this change in mindset, developers are creating cutting-edge, environmentally sensitive buildings and sustainable communities.

Mark Thomson of the Australian Green Development Forum says the recent environmental catastrophe in his home state of Queensland has reinforced the importance of property development which does not contribute to climate change.

"There is definitely a change in the way people are thinking about green development," says Thomson. "I believe that change is generated by our improved understanding of climate change.

There are various weather events happening here and around the world but, interestingly, here in Australia we are carrying on as though it's business as usual. We persist in using the same materials that we've been using for the past 20 years."

"For example, we assess to have a fixation with brick veneer predominantly around the country but, surprisingly, veneer-brick veneer seems to be a more climatically appropriate type of construction in many Australian regions."

According to the Sustainable Materials Program, the construction of a regular brick veneer house requires the same amount of energy as it takes to run one for 15 years.

Thomson says that incorporating environmental sustainability is about engaging entire communities as well as individuals.

Purpose-built apartment

projects are leading the way, through a combination of low-impact yet high-density living in close proximity to the country's urban areas.

Particular emphasis has been placed on locating such buildings within a state's three of railport hubs, starting from the sustainably certified hotel of transport-oriented developments.

A West Australian development known as the Summer fits the bill for its proximity to a railway station. The Summer is the country's first building to have both included a Green Star residential rating.

The building will reuse about 60 per cent of the waste from the demolition of an existing building, and most apartments will have dual aspects for natural ventilation.

Moveable screens on the balconies will provide solar shading.

Lloyd Clark, general manager of the building's developer, Metis, says there are commercial imperatives to ensure a building is environmentally friendly.

"It is in fact to see that the market is far more savvy when it comes to sustainability than ever before. Everyone is looking to reduce their footprint," he says.

"The state's development industry has for some time been stuck in a spiral of apathetic design, which has had a terrible impact on the city's streetscapes."

A recent meeting of Australia's state and territory leaders put forward the notion of a national standard, whereby all new homes address its requirements six-star rating. New guidelines require higher levels of compliance, which often translate into increased building costs for environmentally sensitive projects.

Hyvonia Property Group executive Brian Abolkin says that sustainable features were central to the company's Talera apartment development in Fremont, in Sydney.



"To implement the principles of ESD (environmentally sustainable design) into a building, there's obviously a cost that goes into that," he says. "The design is not usually the cost source but rather the compliance that goes with it — someone sitting there ticking off that you've done something or coming out and writing a report."

Abolkin adds that mixed-use developments are often among the most environmentally conscious, given they address in both residential and commercial ESD requirements.

Stockland's Prince Henry at Little Bay development, on a peninsula south east of Sydney, is indicative of how the larger listed players view green as good.

Stockland is about to release Mantra apartments there, and some will be equipped with smart wiring that turns off air-conditioners when no one is at

home. A grey water recycling system will pour its contents into the surrounding landscaping.

Urban infill projects have also proven there is tremendous scope for development within cities. In Melbourne, the aptly named Air apartments on the site of the former Fremantle Prison will house four wind turbines on top of the 16-story building, generating enough electricity to power the development's common areas.

The \$114 million development from Vast Property Group will consist of 259 apartments in the north Melbourne suburb of Caburg. Prices start at \$308,000, reasonably cheap in the current market.

The developer has made a commitment that at least 20 per cent of the timber used for the site will be from sustainable plantations.

This is significant given that

