



## Green actions speak louder

Owners who build a green house now can save energy costs while watching its market value rise.

IT is a sad fact that the average house has been built with scant regard for energy efficiency.

In spring and autumn it might be fairly comfortable, but so is a tent.

In summer the average house is oppressively hot without air-conditioning and in winter it is freezing without artificial heat.

The owners face high energy bills, even without energy-sapping fads like swimming pools, spas and halogen downlights.

New dwellings tend to be a little better than old ones because of improved minimum standards required under schemes like the Building Sustainability Index (BASIX), but minimum standards fall short of what is possible with a bit of intelligence.

To add insult to injury, new dwellings are often too big, especially with average families getting smaller.

It seems to me that far too much emphasis is placed on the appearance of dwellings, or, more correctly, on what people think a house should look like.

More often than not the result is a standard brick-veneer dwelling with high embodied energy and poor thermal performance.

Embodied energy refers to the energy that was used to manufacture and assemble the components.

For instance, bricks, concrete and aluminium have relatively high embodied energy. But if these components last a long time and are fit for their purpose, that embodied energy can be justified.

Often, however, there are better materials available.

True it is that conventional-looking houses can perform well in terms of energy needs if they are oriented correctly to the sun, with good solar access in winter and shading in summer, have adequate cross-ventilation and are well insulated.

Such a home is still a rare beast, BASIX notwithstanding.

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### Living Green Designer Homes

Central Coast builder Craig Riddle of Living Green Designer Homes understands all this and is offering an alternative.

When Agnes Castaigns was in the market for a house last year she stumbled across a two-bedroom house that Craig had built at Kurri Kurri on spec.

Agnes was looking for a house that would be in sympathy with her environmental awareness and one look at Craig's building



Living Green Designer Homes built this house in Kurri Kurri.

told her she was looking at something special. The design is deceptively simple.

It is simple in the sense that unnecessary complexity is eliminated, particularly with the roof structure.

It is deceptive in that great care has been taken with passive solar elements, to allow for natural cooling in summer and warming in winter.

Beauty is achieved, as is often the case in good design, with the form being dictated by efficient function. Materials have been selected

for their relatively low environmental impact, including plantation-grown timber.

The building came with a one-kilowatt solar power system installed, which should produce most of the house's electricity, given that there is no air-conditioning (ceiling fans are used instead) and there is a gas hot water system and gas stove.

The house is also well insulated. A skylight in the centrally located

bathroom eliminates the need for artificial lighting during daylight hours.

### Water efficiency

The builder has not forgotten water efficiency, with a 5000-litre water tank installed, plumbed to the washing machine and toilet. The toilet is dual flush and there is a water-efficient shower head.

The small garden is planted with drought-tolerant natives.

### Icing on the cake

Taking environmental responsibility one step further, Craig Riddle has used an offset scheme to neutralise the carbon emissions associated with construction.

Naturally this added to the cost of the project, but because costs have been controlled throughout, offsetting doesn't necessarily blow the budget.

As awareness increases, such homes should increase in value above market rates.

Rising energy prices, especially electricity prices, should guarantee it.

Living Green Designer Homes has a number of designs. Go to [livinggreendesignerhomes.com.au](http://livinggreendesignerhomes.com.au).

### DIARY DATES

- **Thursday:** Lake Macquarie Climate Action meeting, council chambers, Speers Point, 7pm, 4973 1363.
- **Sunday:** Farmers market, Newcastle Showground, Griffiths Road entry, 8am-1pm.
- **April 16:** Climate Action Newcastle solar power info session, Tomaree Library & Community Centre, Town Centre Circuit, Salamander Way, Salamander Bay, 6.30pm. Go to [climateaction.org.au](http://climateaction.org.au) and click on "Newcastle's going solar".
- **April 18:** Free workshop on keeping chooks, Medowie, 9.30am-noon, 4980 0251, [melinda.anderson@portstephens.nsw.gov.au](mailto:melinda.anderson@portstephens.nsw.gov.au).
- **April 19:** Farmers market, Newcastle Showground, Griffiths Road entry, 8am-1pm.
- **April 27-May 1:** Nobbys Beach dune care with Conservation Volunteers Australia, 4926 2103 or [newcastle@conservationvolunteers.com.au](mailto:newcastle@conservationvolunteers.com.au).
- **May 1:** Critical Mass bike ride, from Civic Park, meet at 5.30pm for 6pm start.



**Trading Hours and Long Weekend Trading Hours**

We are open 8.30am-4.30pm every Sat & Sun!

On Long Weekends we are open for Monday Public Holidays 8.30am-4.30pm

**Come along and experience some fun & excitement during the school holidays**

There's plenty to keep the little ones entertained at Morisset Mega Market. We've got carnival rides, an amusement arcade, as well as a petting zoo, along with activities such as face painting, jumping castles, and slot cars to name a few.

### Children's Birthday Parties -

Enquire about our children's birthday party option with our very own Mega Mouse!

**Over 100 market stalls with lots of bargains & fun, all undercover!**

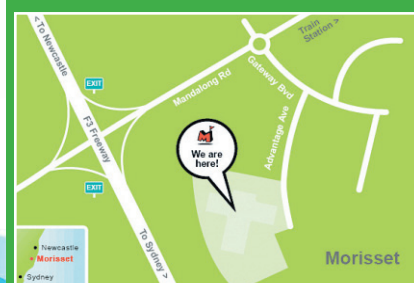
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### HOW TO GET THERE



Just off the F3 Freeway. Take the Morisset Exit.