



# Ecovillage Update

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## Project progress

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Cape Paterson Ecovillage. This project has been a long time in the making, as it has been six years since our team identified the Cape Paterson site as perfect for a genuine ecovillage project, and five years since we started engaging the Bass Coast community about the project.

I believe we were in some ways ahead of our time back then, promoting the idea of a housing project that generated its own renewable energy, that had sustainable design, energy efficiency, and water conservation mandated with every dwelling. Since then the world has come a long way in realising that global warming is the defining issue of our time. Australia's direct experience of drought, crop failures, water scarcity and environmental stress, coupled with the certainty of the science on climate change, has meant that action on climate change has become mainstream. For housing projects, this means that intelligent, well designed, high quality sustainable housing is going to be the way of the future. With the onset of carbon trading in 2010, the costs of carbon intensive energy and water will rise, so the economics of sustainable housing will only become more attractive.

The Cape Paterson Ecovillage is our attempt to build a world's best practice inspirational example of sustainable living, which responds positively to the challenge of climate change. As developers we will partner with our householders to deliver well designed, high quality, sustainable, aesthetically beautiful housing that runs on energy from the sun, that collects rainwater, has excellent insulation, thermal mass and ventilation properties, and that promotes a great living experience.

As the project developers we will lead and resource this process and have already pulled together some of the best brains across the disciplines required to deliver this outcome. We plan to use the impressive trade and construction skills that already exist locally in the delivery of the project.

In an increasingly socially isolated world where people often don't know the names of their neighbours, the ecovillage will be designed as a space where the community can come together and strengthen community ties and relationships. The physical layout of the ecovillage will encourage community interaction – the parks and Cape Paterson bowls club and community hub will be a welcome addition to the insufficient open spaces in Cape at present. Community food gardens and the community hub cafe will be great meeting places for residents. Every dwelling will face on to part of the kilometres of walking tracks and cycling paths that permeate the Ecovillage, encouraging people to get out and move their bodies, to keep active lifestyles and good health.

The beauty of the site, ocean views and clean air hasn't diminished over the past six years since we started on this project, and neither has our patience and determination to deliver something we will be proud of at Cape Paterson. Thanks for your patience in keeping involved and interested in the project over such a long period of time. Throughout 2008 we will be working through the formal planning approvals process and look forward to solid progress towards building the project in 2009. This newsletter is the first of what we hope to be a regular communication in 2008/09.



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## What is an ecovillage

According to Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eco-village>, an ecovillage is often composed of people who have chosen an alternative to centralized power, water and sewage systems. Many see the breakdown of traditional forms of community, wasteful consumerist lifestyles, the destruction of natural habitat, urban sprawl, factory farming, and over-reliance on fossil fuels, as trends that must be changed to avert ecological disaster. They see smaller-scale communities with minimal ecological impact as an alternative.

Cape Paterson Ecovillage sits within these parameters, moving beyond a “greenwash” approach with a veneer of sustainability to being a genuine response to the social and environmental problems confronting our society. Through good, clever, quality design, we believe we can do this in a way that enhances not diminishes quality of life. As one resident from Cape Paterson recently told me, “once you live in a sustainable well designed house, you will never go back to one that isn’t.”

## Where are we at

The Ecovillage is still working its way through the planning process. We hope the project goes on formal exhibition over the next few months, and from that point the rest of the planning process will take approximately 10 - 12 months until we are able to commence on site works. We have taken on local comments and adapted our planning approach to request a Comprehensive Development Zone for the site. This is to ensure that habitat areas including restored wetland, heathland and woodland communities which make up the majority of the site by area are protected into perpetuity and are not able to be developed in future. As developers we are happy to ensure that occurs. As Director

of Australian Ecosystems ([www.australianecosystems.com.au](http://www.australianecosystems.com.au)) I will be personally overseeing a lot of the replanting works and will join the planting teams for a few months getting my hands dirty on this project. Having overseen the growing and planting of 15 million plants over the past twelve years on over 500 ecological restoration projects, I know the backwork and effort that goes in to these types of projects.

## Electricity that doesn't cost the earth

At the Cape Paterson Ecovillage, all our houses will be built standard with a grid tied solar electric system. Each of our residents will benefit from getting their household energy from the sun. This means no need for bottled gas, wood or other complicated and expensive fuels.

The systems in Cape Paterson will be sized at around 3.2 kilowatts, about twice the size of the average system.

Surplus electricity will be exported to the grid. A special digital meter will record all power used by the household, and the power fed into the grid for later credit on the householder's bill.

On a summer day each house will generate more than 20 kWh of energy. Those households who take up the Ecovillage solar challenge will be net exporters of renewable energy to the grid.

In order to size a solar electric system that will provide all of our household energy needs, energy efficiency and passive solar thermal design is the key. This means the highest achievable passive solar design, with the right thermal mass, and when using electricity for cooking our food or boosting solar hot water on a cloudy day in the middle of winter it's important to choose the right type of appliances.

An advantage of building an ecovillage community is that we will be able to leverage economies of scale to reduce the costs of these appliance choices. Residents will be able to choose from a list of the highest quality most innovative products on the market to give the very best in quality and environmental performance. For instance induction cooktops which serve 50% of the European market will be standard. The hot water boosting will be done by a heat pump rather than gas giving three times the heating performance of a conventional electric system.



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It is expected that Victoria will soon become the fourth state or territory to adopt a 'feed in tariff' for houses that generate renewable energy. At present, a household that generates surplus electricity receives a 'one for one' credit for the electricity it supplies to the grid. A 'feed in tariff' multiplies this credit so the household receives a significant bonus. For example, in ACT a household pays a standard or greenpower tariff (currently 17-25c/kWh) for what it uses, but receives a feed in tariff of up to 65c/kWh for what it exports to the grid.

If Victoria follows the ACT's lead and introduces a gross metered feed in tariff, our householders will be compensated for the highly valuable, climate positive power they are generating during summer air conditioning peaks and in doing so contributing to the Victoria's energy security. And with a decent ACT sized feed in tariff that could mean a good sized cheque each year for solar power produced and excess delivered to Victorian electricity customers (mostly through supplying our neighbours in Cape).

A great feature of Grid Interactive Solar systems is that they don't have any batteries – the electricity grid is their battery, they have no moving parts and are virtually maintenance free apart from an optional mop down of panel surfaces once a year.

## Global Village - Ecovillage

Worlds best practice ecovillages – Australian and international examples

This section of the newsletter will bring our readers up to speed with some of the best examples of Ecovillage developments in Australian and internationally. One example of a peer project that I have been communicating with for some time is the Currumbin Ecovillage in the Gold Coast hinterland. This project has won a string of national environmental awards for their work in water and energy efficiency and community development initiatives, including the National Urban Development Institute of Australia Environment Award for 2007. I have met a number of the Currumbin Ecovillage residents over the past four years, who have very high

praise for the quality of the project. We see ourselves in a friendly competition with the Currumbin Ecovillage and are confident we can meet and exceed the environmental standards achieved there. For more information about this project visit their website at <http://www.theecovillage.com.au/>

## Sustainable Living Festival

Our group again exhibited at the Sustainable Living Festival at Federation Square this year in February. The Ecovillage display achieved solid interest from the tens of thousands of visitors who came through the festival, with a number of Bass Coast residents making contact with us at the event. This has been a key event for raising the profile of the project and meeting sustainability experts who will assist in delivering the Cape Paterson Ecovillage. At the event I was asked to come on stage and gave an interview about the Ecovillage on 3RRR radio science programme "Einstein Agogo" – visit this link for a podcast of the interview. My part of the interview starts about halfway through the interview, talking about Climate Positive then the ecovillage - <http://cdn1.libsyn.com/rrrfm/Einstein-A-Go-Go-20080217.mp3>

## Australian Ecosystems News

Australian Ecosystems is the company that will perform the enormous ecological restoration of the "wild zones" or habitat areas on the ecovillage site. The project will transform a 40 hectare cleared and ecologically degraded site back into a functioning biodiverse area connected to the coast. Australian Ecosystems is Victoria's largest ecological restoration company, with consulting botanists, ecologists, a large indigenous nursery, and landscaping and planting teams.



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The company has won several national awards for its restoration works. For a detailed look at some of the projects that have been carried out by Australian Ecosystems visit their website at <http://www.australianecosystems.com.au/Projects.htm>

## *Pelican/Climate Positive news – planting at Tarra Bulga*

Australian Ecosystems has established Climate Positive – [www.climatepositive.org](http://www.climatepositive.org) and Pelican – [www.svpelican.com.au](http://www.svpelican.com.au). These two not for profit organisations work in the environmental and sustainability fields.

Climate Positive works with individuals, communities and corporate clients to understand climate change; and measure, reduce and offset carbon emissions. It has worked with 50 companies including some of Australia's largest. Climate Positive and Brendan Condon were recently featured in the Age newspaper in relation to biodiversity work they are performing with the Trust for Nature in the Strzelecki Ranges in South Gippsland. Visit the link to the Age Online for the full story. <http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/of-his-own-tree-will-one-man-grows-back-to-the-future/2008/02/10/1202578601347.html>



Pelican is a 60 foot ocean going catamaran that sails Australian waters performing social and environmental projects. Both of the directors of the Cape Paterson Ecovillage Mike O'Mullane and Brendan Condon are founding members of the team that built Pelican. Pelican has performed a range of interesting projects since her launch four years ago including a 4000 nautical mile survey of the Great Barrier Reef looking at the impacts of global warming, and filming an ABC documentary on Blue Whales called the Big Blue.

Pelican recently featured on the ABC 7.30 report for her work with the troubled youth of the Hopevale Aboriginal community north of Cooktown. For a podcast of this programme visit <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2007/s2067950.htm>

## *Water Feature*

There's nothing nicer than drinking clean fresh rainwater all the time. – and with an automatic dual supply switch we can experience that. In the unlikely event that Cape Paterson's average 900mm of rain per year, being collected from all the corners of our eco houses, combined with our householders' 20,000 litre water tanks leaves us dry, the dual supply switch will automatically switch us over to Cape Paterson town water supply. This has the added benefit of the ecovillage not adding any appreciable burden to the existing Cape Paterson water infrastructure: a winwin for all.

If you have any queries about the project or this newsletter please contact me on [Brendan@australianecosystems.com.au](mailto:Brendan@australianecosystems.com.au) or call me on (0412)198974

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