



There were some heavy hitters at the official launch of the Cape Paterson Eco Village 'Zero Carbon Study' hosted by the Alternative Technology Association in Melbourne last week. Those at the launch included: from left, back, Phil Alviano Master Builders Association (partially obscured), Mike O'Mullane Cape Paterson Ecovillage, Bass MP Ken Smith, Tosh Szatow study author, Ash Beaumont from Beaumont Concepts, Ian Porter CEO Alternative Technology Association, Damien Moyse Alternative Technology Association, Rob Gell sustainability advocate, Cr John Duscher Bass Coast Shire, front, Tony O'Connell TS Constructions, Win Laing Sustainability Victoria, Peter Reefman sustainable housing designer, Tad Hendry Beaumont Concepts, Brendan Condon Cape Paterson Ecovillage and Peter Steele Moreland Energy Foundation.

Cape a \$100m showcase for future housing

WHEN the crowds flock to Cape Paterson in the summer of 2012-13, it won't just be the waves at the local surf beach that will be attracting them.

If the launch of the \$100 million Cape Paterson Eco Village 'Zero Carbon Study' is anything to go by, and an independent peer review funded by Sustainability Victoria says it is, they'll also be coming here to take a look at the future of housing.

According to director of the eco-village group, Brendan Condon, site work on the "ground-breaking" project is set to start as early as February 2012 and by the time it's finished, they will have set a new Australian standard in sustainable housing right here in Bass Coast.

"When we went into this project, we did it with the aim of giving the housing industry a strong lead, of setting an example, on how to build more sustainable houses.

"Which is why we commissioned the Zero Carbon Study. "The brief we gave them for the study was that we wanted to know the most efficient way to produce a carbon neutral housing project and along the way they had a Eureka moment.

"They found out that we had passed the tipping point where the rising cost of water, energy and petrol was basically overtaking the cost of sustainable energy systems such as solar panels and that the economics of building this way were fundamentally positive."

Under the Cape Paterson Eco Village plan, 220 homes will be built on a site adjacent to the foreshore reserve, each of them designed to achieve a 7.5-star energy rating with low-energy appliances, a 3.2kW solar panel system, a 10,000 litre water tank and provision for generating enough electricity to power an electric car.

"The research showed that one of these houses, when compared to a conventional 6-star house (with a conventional petrol vehicle), will generate savings of up to \$300,000 over a 25 year period, based on publically available estimates of future energy costs.

"If they reinvest those savings, they will be repaying their mortgage seven to eight years earlier," he said.

Mr Condon said that Sustainability Victoria was very interested in the outcomes of the original carbon neutral housing study when it was published in December 2010 and asked for it to be peer reviewed, agreeing to



An example of one of the 7.5-star concept house designs prepared by Beaumont Designs for the Cape Paterson Eco Village project.

put \$10,000 towards the cost of an independent consultant.

It was the peer response to the original carbon neutral study which was launched last Tuesday, November 29, by Bass MP Ken Smith at a function in Melbourne.

In brief, the study's major findings (using the Cape Paterson Ecovillage as a model) include:

- * Thanks largely to more efficient in-home technology, onsite power supply and electric vehicles, investing in sustainability features could realise up to 10 per cent after tax returns per annum over 20 years;

- * Continued improvements to house design, a bulk construction program, bulk buying program and delivery model innovation will drive down costs and further improve the financial proposition for residents.

- * The extra investment in sustainability features is easily offset by energy and water savings that allow faster mortgage repayments.

"Previously, the cost of sustainable residential development could not be justified on financial terms and buyers paid more for high standards of environmental performance.

"Our study shows this is no longer the case, and smart home buyers can save hundreds of thousands of dollars by investing in an eco-friendly home," Mr Condon said.

According to a review of the original report by energy consultant Anthony Szatow, the carbon-neutral approach could save an owner \$120,000 in mortgage payments alone compared with a new six-star house not to mention savings on energy and water bills, expected to top \$200,000 over 25 years.

Project director Brendan Condon said the results suggested a tipping point had been reached

at which the financial benefits of green homes outweighed the costs.

"These are significant findings that are applicable to the whole housing industry," he said.

A Sustainability Victoria spokesman said the agency believed the analysis showed the project had great merit.

Big launch

Mr Condon said there were about 70 people at the launch in Melbourne, including some long-term residents of Cape Paterson, and all of the stakeholders including local builders and designers.

Cr John Duscher was there representing the Bass Coast Shire Council.

"The Master Builders Association, the Alternative Technology Association, Sustainability Victoria, most of the main housing development firms in Victoria and super funds willing to invest in sustainable housing were also there."

The event was hosted by sustainability and climate change expert, Rob Gell and involved an hour-long presentation of the findings of the report and the peer review comments.

"The peer review was conservative in its assessments but understood the benefits and said that further opportunities to reduce costs would be available if building materials and sustainability systems could be bought in bulk."

Mr Condon said this idea would be pursued.

"We are prepared to subsidise some of the cost of including these systems but if we can save by buying in bulk we'll certainly do that."

Mr Condon said the project would be developed in stages and it was likely that 40 to 50 blocks would be released in the first

stage.

He said property owners would have the opportunity to choose from 12 designs as well as the potential to work with the designers to customise the designs to their requirements, while still including the sustainable elements.

"While it is a requirement that all homes be connected to power and water, the potential is there to be self-sufficient in those things. In fact, the village will produce more power than it uses over the course of the year.

The Cape Paterson Ecovillage is the vision of Brendan Condon and Mike O'Mullane who have supported the project through an eight-year planning process.

It involves: large-scale revegetation of natural habitat (including planting about 600,000 plants indigenous to the area); re-establishing wetlands; new walking and cycling tracks; high performance sustainable housing; on site power generation; a fleet of communal electric vehicles; community gardens; and community workspaces.

The Cape Paterson project has had a troubled life since being announced eight years ago.

It was approved by Planning Minister Matthew Guy in May after being modified to address community concerns.

Mr Condon said that such things as the new wild fire management regulations had been addressed in the project's design and was not expected to be a sticking point when the plans were submitted to the shire for its approval in December or January.

Mr Condon said the group stood ready to address interested local groups about the benefits of the project and would have models of the house designs available for inspection well ahead of the release of land early next year.