

Making a display of carbon reduction

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VICTORIA'S largest residential developer has joined the push for greener suburbs with Australia's first carbon-neutral display homes open in new estates.

Developer Delfin Lend Lease yesterday launched a zero-emission demonstration home, designed with the CSIRO, which is powered by renewable energy.

The home at its Laurimar estate in the north-eastern suburbs, near Whittlesea, has energy-saving technologies and solar panels that use up to 70 per cent less energy than a traditional home of similar size.

It is hoped to serve as inspiration to the 500 householders building on the estate.

Real estate group Mirvac last week won a Premier's Award for its display home, which has a 9.2-star energy rating and also claims to be carbon neutral, erected at its Waverley Park village at Mulgrave.

Mirvac Design's national housing director, John Eckert, said the company wanted to see how green it could go using its local suppliers and contractors, and recycling local materials such as old timber from stadium seating at Waverley Park.

"We didn't want the house to look like a spaceship or out of place with the estate," he said. "It still had to have a residential quality, even though you can run it like a machine with the shutters, panels and levers."

The houses have grey-water recycling systems, underground rainwater storage, reverse brick veneer walls to improve insulation, low-toxin materials and north-facing windows.

Last year, state and federal governments agreed to lift the national residential standard from five to six stars by May 2011, at the latest.

It sparked concern from industry groups including the Master Builders Association of Victoria, which estimated it would add \$10,000 to the cost of building an average home.

Mr Eckert said the Mirvac prototype house cost three times that of an average house to build but much of that was because it was a first attempt.

He said ideas such as a computer meter for energy usage and a single switch to kill power to appliances when leaving the house would be incorporated to all new homes on the estate.

However, he said the take-up by Waverley Park buyers had been slow because of the cost.

Research leader Dr Greg Foliente of the CSIRO said the organisation initiated the Laurimar display house two years ago because it wanted to get the housing industry and individual households involved in reducing the nation's carbon footprint. "The housing sector is responsible for about 13 per cent of national greenhouse gas emissions," he said.

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