

SUSTAINED BY DESIGN

LYDIA KELLNER
property editor



lydia.kellner@news.com.au

TOWNSVILLE property investors are increasingly embracing sustainable design as they build new homes or renovate existing ones.

Figures released exclusively to the *Townsville Bulletin* this week show houses listed with sustainable features account for 11.3 per cent of all house listings within the greater Townsville area and sell for almost 13 per cent above the median Townsville house price.

National research manager for PRDnationwide Louise Moeller said sustainable living was in increasing demand as the region continued to fight the drought, steep insurance rates and electricity costs.

"The median price of houses advertising eco-friendly features is \$397,500, compared to the Townsville City median of \$352,500," Ms Moeller said.

"This indicates that the average

house with eco-features lists for 12.8 per cent above the median Townsville house.

The most common eco-friendly feature found in Townsville houses listed are solar panels.

"These were present in almost half of all sustainable-focused homes (47 per cent), with solar-based features accounting for 59 per cent of all features listed.

"Only 5 per cent of houses included a water tank as one of the property's features."

Ms Moeller's research also revealed that over a quarter of all sustainable house listings (29 per cent) highlighted an energy efficiency rating of medium or above as an eco-friendly property feature.

"This indicates that an awareness of the importance of energy efficiency for houses is gradually influencing the way people think about property, and in selling and buying property," she said.

According to realestate.com.au energy efficiency homes have been a big selling point over the past seven months with a total of 60 properties sold since January 1.

Their selling point? Solar. Real Estate Institute Queens-

land Townsville zone chairman Damien Keyes said sustainable housing was becoming increasingly popular among home buyers.

"Anything sustainable is topical and is a conversation we weren't having 10 years ago during open homes," he said.

"But now, it's coming up quite regularly as people look to reduce their overall costs.

"For years, sustainable housing in the building industry meant a rise in the overall cost of a new home, so people just went with whatever they could afford.

"But now, buyers are coming around to the idea which is partially because of improved technology which has made owning solar more affordable."

Townsville builder Darren Finlay from Finlay Homes said solar, tapwear to reduce water consumption and overall positioning of homes were on top of the list for sustainable housing.

"I think the shift is due to economic conditions," Mr Finlay said.

"Once upon a time, the overall cost of living was relatively cheap and housing was affordable but now, people always look for ways to save money."



ECO-FRIENDLY: Frank Dalmeyer outside his sustainable house in South Townsville. PICTURE: ZAK SIMMONDS



'Triple Zero' home pays three times nothing for bills

SUSTAINABLE living doesn't come much better than this South Townsville cottage.

Frank and Katharina Dalmeyer's compact and intelligent home at 11 Perkins Street is Townsville's first "Triple Zero Home" – it comes with zero electricity bills, zero gas/fuel bills and zero emissions.

Built by Finlay Construction, the home's compact and intelligent design won the Townsville and North Queensland Energy Efficiency categories at the 2015 Housing Industry Association Awards and has since become a glimpse into the future of housing design.

Mr Dalmeyer, who is also the owner of Tropical Energy Solutions, said The Triple Zero House was designed to enable the comfortable and sustainable living of two adults or a small family in a hot tropical environment.

"Its construction materials and construction principles aimed to combine a low carbon footprint with longevity and low operational expenses," he said.

"The property is close to the CBD but not connected to the power grid. Instead a PV solar array plus battery bank allows the operation of all usual modern appliances including three air conditioners at day and/or night."

Cooking and hot water services are provided by the solar power system, too.

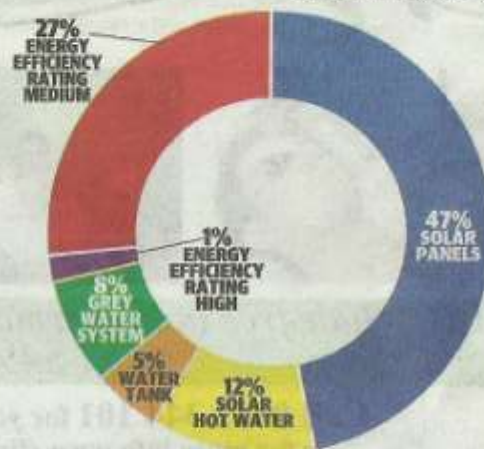
The building also comes with high internal ceilings, solarspan roofing and low-e windows to minimise the external heat loads. A C-Bus control system assists in the load management and only energy efficient appliances are used.

The house is built on a 300sq m block and surrounded by water efficient landscaping and fruit trees.

POPULAR ECO FEATURES

Breakdown of the specific sustainable features included in eco-friendly houses in Townsville.

Source: PRD Nationwide Research



TIPS TO DESIGN A COOL HOME IN QUEENSLAND

ORIENTATION AND SHADING

Have the shortest walls facing the sun. This means the long axis of the house should run east-west to minimise its exposure to morning and afternoon sun. The living area should be to the north and bedrooms to the south.

Have generous eaves, verandas and plants to shade windows and walls.

VENTILATION

Design should be open-plan, with minimal hallways and internal walls kept to a minimum to allow cross-ventilation. There should be at least two windows or doors in each room, positioned to catch breezes from the southeast and northeast.

BUILDING MATERIALS AND COLOURS

Use lightweight building structures, which cool faster at night, and shade any concrete block walls. Paint and roof should be light colours, and the roof and walls insulated to keep out the heat.

OUTDOOR ROOMS

These are often the best-used rooms in the home. They should be weatherproof, well-ventilated and centrally located. Courtyard spaces within the home create usable space and encourage breezes.

