

## **Sustainability is coming North**

*The Housing Industry Association - Northern Australia has invited ecoSAVVY Sustainability Consultant Sandy McCathie to write this column to help create awareness for sustainability amongst HIA members in the north.*

As the need for sustainability becomes increasingly acknowledged, this article briefly touches on why sustainability will increasingly affect the housing industry, where the pressures are coming from, what the regulations will initially affect, the potential impact of sustainability on your market share, and some aspects that you might want to first consider offering your customers.

Why sustainability will not go away....Australians are currently using the world's available resources at four times the sustainable rate and with the global use rate at around double the world's resources per year, we are already beginning to see social, environmental and economic equity problems arising - locally, nationally and in all the countries of the world.

To address the issue of our continuing unsustainable behaviour, the housing industry is being called on to urgently improve the way our buildings and urban developments are designed, constructed and operated.

To enforce this, regulations are and will continue to be introduced that address 'sustainability' performance.

Regulations currently being drafted address: climate responsive design to improve energy efficiency of building envelope (to affect classes 1-5); energy and water efficiency for appliances and fittings installed in homes and buildings; smart housing elements (including universal design, passive safety and security), and greywater reuse.

Pressure is also coming from land developers and consumers who are also beginning to ask for more sustainable houses. Land developers, themselves required to meet higher standards and/or capitalising on the increased consumer demand for 'eco' houses and developments, will increasingly place 'sustainability' conditions on the development of their land. Builders, sub-contractors and suppliers who don't take on sustainable practices above and beyond the regulations will increasingly be excluded from these markets.

As a result of these changes in expectation, housing industry businesses are faced with a choice: either position to capitalise on the opportunity this long term trend presents or potentially lose market share as the demands of the market shifts.

For those who would like to begin the transition, some easy to implement and market, sustainability options to consider offering your clients or installing as standard include: AAA-rated shower heads (save electricity and around 50,000 litres of water a year); energy efficient solar hot water heaters (there are a number of options now available including heat pump, split system solar, instantaneous gas); house designs orientated for comfort, optimising shading and catching breezes; a package of appliances that are energy and water efficient (aim for at least 4-stars). Also, with the wet season coming on, ensure that your erosion and waste management practices are in place, to avoid litter and silt ending up in our waterways and roads.

Delivering sustainable products and services is a newish but rapidly growing marketing opportunity, there for the taking, for those with the inclination.

If you have a sustainability related topic or question that you would like addressed in HIA Building News or would like to provide feedback on this column, email: [info@ecosavvy.com.au](mailto:info@ecosavvy.com.au)