

Real Sustainable Homes – What sets them apart from the pack...

On the second week of September 2006, seven privately owned Northern Queensland homes joined over 150 homes around Australia and New Zealand in opening their doors to the public as part of national Sustainable House Day (previously called Solar House Day).

With tours, of the houses offered all day, guided by the homeowners themselves and industry professionals, Sustainable House Day is an opportunity to showcase the most sustainable houses in the region and raise public awareness of the features and benefits of homes designed, renovated or retrofitted with sustainability, energy efficiency and climate responsive design in mind.

Reviewing these North Queensland homes, it occurred to me that there were some consistencies in their features. Let's take a look at the types of features that set these tropical homes apart from the pack?

- Emphasis on orientation for prevailing breezes
- Pavilion (pod) building styles featured strongly with the separate pods connected by decking and walkways
- Raised floor, often timber
- A variety of wall materials featured including hebel aerated concrete panels, hardiplank, zincalume and colourbond panels, fibre-cement sheeting (rendered and unrendered), concrete block (highly shaded)
- Wide low eaves
- High levels of roof insulation
- Interiors designed for excellent cross ventilation with partition and louvre walls, raked ceilings with ceiling vents or clerestory windows
- Extensive use of timber and glass louvres
- Natural day-lighting
- Smaller interior floor areas
- Frequently a smaller numbers of bedrooms ie two plus a study/office
- Multiple outdoor living spaces
- Large seamless openings (typically oversized or double opening sliding doors) between indoor and outdoor spaces
- Use of slatted screens externally (sometimes swinging) to provide privacy, security and shade and yet maximise breeze
- Highly ventilated and naturally lit carports and garages that double as useful hobby spaces
- Oversized gutters
- Integrated landscaping design with garden beds positioned close to the house
- Mulched garden beds, minimal lawns, large shrubs and trees for shade and cool microclimate around the house
- Fences designed to minimise blocking of breezes
- Water efficient showerheads
- Energy efficient hot water systems

Sustainable House Day (www.sustainablehouseday.com) is organised nationally by ANZSES (the Australian New Zealand Solar Energy Society).

Article provided by ecoSAVVY Sustainability Consultancy. www.ecoSAVVY.com.au

'Sustainability by Sandy'

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