

*winner*  
**MASTER BUILDERS  
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 EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2012**



Excellence in Energy Efficiency  
 builder: Right Homes / phone: 9355 0374  
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# NATURAL STUNNER

*A passive-solar design combined with good insulation, rainwater tanks and the harnessing of natural cooling and heating have given this Willagee home top honours in energy efficiency*

**T**HE new 6-star minimum energy rating may be just around the corner, but the occupants of this award-winning Willagee home are already enjoying year-round comfort and much smaller utility bills.

Built by Right Homes and boasting an 8.5-star energy rating, the home has been declared a shining example of energy efficiency and construction excellence.

Winning top honours for Excellence in Energy Efficiency in the Master Builders Bankwest Housing Excellence Awards, it clearly demonstrates that smart choices at the design stage can result in a comfortable, contemporary residence that's easy to live in and doesn't cost the earth.

"It showcases just what can be achieved when passive-solar design and sustainable building practices are carefully combined," says Gary Wright, director at Right Homes.

Conscious of conserving precious resources, the owners opted for a 3kW photovoltaic system to generate electricity, a 3000-litre tank to harvest rainwater for use in the toilets and laundry, and a greywater system so water can be recycled for use in the garden.

"I think many clients see energy efficiency

as the main hurdle but the reality is that all components in a home need to be analysed for better living practices," Gary says.

"Sometimes the best home is not the one that will save you the most money to live in – it's the one that will be more comfortable and improve your overall health."

Airconditioning was a no-no for the owners who wanted to rely instead on passive-solar design, good insulation, thermal mass and natural breezes for climate control.

Gary says the owners have already seen a dramatic drop in their energy costs compared with their previous home. The house seems to be generating more electricity than it's using, resulting in a \$152 credit on the owners' most recent energy bill.

Built on a sloping site, the property makes the most of solar orientation, with living areas facing north so that they can harness Mother Nature's own cooling and heating abilities.

"For summer protection, eaves and a covered solar pergola have been used to protect windows and walls from the hot summer sun," Gary says.

He says there is a growing awareness of the new minimum 6-star energy rating that comes into effect at the beginning of May.

"This will affect new homes in a really significant way as the impact will reduce the need for artificial heating and cooling to new homes," Gary says.

"This in return will reduce running costs and the burden that new homes place on Perth's power consumption as we move forward."

The owners of this Willagee award winner were also determined to be stingy with water and calculations indicate that the home uses 72 per cent less water than a standard WA house. The reduction means it will take four years to use the same amount of water a standard home guzzles in one year.

Designed to meet the clients' needs, the home has three double bedrooms, a big living area, a home theatre and a home office.

Universal living features include lever handles, flush thresholds, wide doors, flick-mixer taps and easy-to-reach power points.

There's ComfortPlus low-e glass, low VOC paint, formaldehyde-free cabinets and bench-tops, ceiling fans to help circulate air, sliding doors and breezlocks so that windows can be safely left open to catch cooling breezes at night, and tiled floors to capture winter warmth from the sun during the day and radiate it back at night.

Gary says materials were chosen based on their environmental impact, allergenic properties, accessibility, affordability and insulation/thermal properties.

"It is the simplest thing to incorporate 'green' living into new homes as all the services can run in conjunction," Gary says.

This is far more cost effective than retrofitting features at a later date.

Paula Evans



Pictures: Kameraderie Images

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