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Smarter design shown to boost home efficiency

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HOMES could be at least 90 per cent more environmentally sustainable, according to research findings to be released today.

The research by the Co-operative Research Centre for Construction Innovation will be released at today's Urban Development Institute of Australia, Queensland state conference in Port Douglas.

CRC chief executive Dr Keith Hampson says the research suggests detached homes can be more than 200 per cent more energy efficient by adopting better designs.

"The research suggests that subdivision and home designs addressing aspect, shape, typography, slope and density can result in a mix of homes with good orientation for maximum solar access and ventilation," Dr Hampson says.

UDIA Queensland president Peter Sherrie says consumers need to be taught to have a greater appreciation of more sustainable products.

"Exciting improvements are possible," Mr Sherrie says.

"We are becoming increasingly aware that the industry requires a supportive market, along with a supportive planning framework which rewards, rather than inadvertently penalising, sustainable developers.

"Unfortunately, restrictive regulations, added costs and untrained planning staff are unintentionally favouring mainstream development over the unfamiliar territory of sustainable innovations."

Dr Hampson says more sustainable houses should be built in Queensland.

"To achieve this, we will work with industry to optimise the environmental impact of built facilities as well as delivering a sound conceptual basis for economic, social and environmental accounting of the built environment," he says.

'IMPROVEMENTS are possible' . . . Peter Sherrie

According to the report, medium and high-density multi-storey apartments can be up to 50 per cent more energy efficient than the equivalent-sized detached dwellings.

But even they could still achieve up to a 92 per cent increase in efficiency with good design issues.

The report found altering the orientation of homes on lots reduced energy use by 10 to 32 per cent and good breezes can improve efficiency by 5 to 15 per cent.

According to the report, developing an appropriate subdivision design rating tool for energy efficiency in south-east Queensland would implement energy efficient innovations.

"Assessment of existing lot rating methodologies has found they go only part of the way in assessing the issues that need to be considered in land development in Queensland," Mr Sherrie says.

He adds that the UDIA will launch a sustainable development program called Enviro-Development in Queensland next year.

It is a ratings system whereby developers could be eligible for a range of incentives for sustainable practices and would earn the right to market their product as an Enviro-Development.