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The winning home at Eco Village Currumbin.

Eco home a 'weel' winner

Shannon Molloy | August 5, 2008 - 5:00PM

A green-themed home on the Gold Coast that features a urine-separating toilet and natural temperature control system has taken out a national design award.

The two-bedroom home, nicknamed the Living Laboratory, is located in the Eco Village at Currumbin and was built by the estate's developers.

The home was awarded the Greenest Building of the Year gong at last month's Housing Institute of Australia industry awards.

Kerry Shepherd and husband Chris first built the house as a display that illustrated how the village's covenants could be put into practice.

Most of the requirements have become more common in building practice, like cross ventilation and glazed windows, but others are less orthodox, Ms Shepherd said.

"The thermal mass component is a bit different, but it has the ability to capture the sun's rays in winter, hold the heat during the day and then release it at night... in summer it has the reverse purpose and naturally cools the house.

"This system has not been utilised well in design and construction so it's a bit difficult to get your head around."

The couple bought a block of land in the village but were so keen to enjoy the surrounds that they moved into the display home.

"We are the developers of the estate and we live in the display home - it's not something you see that often," Ms Shepherd admitted.

The Eco Village has a number of green requirements that promotes sustainable living, which encourages owners to be creative in the way they apply environmentally friendly principles and features, she said.

"Our home has a urine-separating toilet that uses very little water to flush because it removes urine from solids.

"That urine goes into a bladder and is treated so it can be used in the garden."

In addition, 80 per cent of the home was constructed from recycled materials and a state-of-the-art monitoring system provides instant feedback on energy and water consumption.

While the open-plan home is modest in size, it still provides enough room for a small family to live comfortably, she said.

"We haven't built a large palatial mansion... normally awards like this go to significant homes that are luxurious and built with a large budget.

"This house came in at under \$250,000, which is a wonderful achievement for a one-off custom home."

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