

The Queensland Smart and Sustainable Homes Program Summary Sheet

Vision

The Smart and Sustainable Homes program aims to increase the uptake of more sustainable housing practice among Queensland industry and consumers.

Sustainable housing is defined as designing, planning and building dwellings to make them more socially, environmentally and economically responsible.

Program history

The Department of Public Works is supporting sustainability in the housing sector through the Smart and Sustainable Homes Program.

The Smart Housing initiative was established by the Department of Housing in 1999 to promote Triple Bottom Line sustainability (environmental, social and economic) in the design and construction of housing in the private sector. The Smart Housing Design Objectives were developed in 2004 as part of the Year of the Built Environment. A revised version was released in September 2008 as the Smart and Sustainable Homes Design Objectives.



The Smart Housing initiative was transferred to the Department of Public Works in January 2007 and has merged with the Sustainable Homes Program to form Smart and Sustainable Homes.

The Queensland Sustainable Homes program is a legacy of the 2004 *Year of the Built Environment – Towards Sustainable Communities* (YBE). YBE involved a collaborative effort among government, industry, environmental and community groups to raise awareness about the built environment and its affect on peoples' quality of life.



YBE provided a focused opportunity for people to examine the lessons of past design, planning and building decisions, and to explore improvements for the future through investment in sustainable development via affordability, design quality, building codes, life-cycle considerations, heritage conservation and more efficient water, energy and resource management.

What the program is

The Smart and Sustainable Homes Program provides government leadership in the practice of sustainability to the residential housing design and construction industry, through provision of public display houses throughout Queensland. The homes are demonstration projects that adopt sustainable housing design principles, using the Smart and Sustainable Homes Design Objectives as the minimum criteria and that suit the local climate.

The program is promoting the principles of sustainable housing in a way that people can easily relate to, thereby maximising community awareness. These demonstration homes set out to demystify the meaning of sustainable housing.

By applying the design principles displayed in these sustainable homes, home builders and renovators can learn how to build homes that work for them, making for healthier households and long-term, sustainable communities.

Target audiences

The objective of each local project is to actively inform the local community, especially local government officers, industry stakeholders and consumers, about how sustainable housing design can be achieved, including its practicality and financial viability.

The program is also intended to build consumer demand for more sustainable practices with new housing, renovations and products and materials. It is intended that the display houses will be promotional resources to guide and influence future housing development in participating areas. Other potential spin-offs may eventuate, such as the development of tools, policies and planning instruments to support more sustainable housing and urban development.



About the Program

At the end of 2008, there were 14 completed projects in the program, including one block of 18 units. Each demonstration house is branded with the tag *Sustainable Home* and then the city/shire of its locality eg. *Sustainable Home Toowoomba*; *Sustainable Home Livingstone*.

The display homes are open to the public for a minimum of six months. However, a longer period is preferred as it enables visitors to experience design for climate with seasonal variations. After this period, the home is sold to return costs to the proprietor and to demonstrate the financial decisions.

Responsibilities

The major contribution required for participating organisations is land availability to provide a suitable site for the display house (considering environmental issues, ease of public access and neighbourhood amenity etc).

The responsibility and cost of developing a display house can be shared among a coordinated group of stakeholders. However, a Project Coordinator is assigned to manage the project at the local level. Adequate project resourcing is also necessary to facilitate various design and construction phases (including local market analysis and project briefs). Resourcing is also required for educational and promotional activities to market and staff the house during construction and the display period.



Acceptance of a local project into the Smart and Sustainable Homes program is subject to the design meeting minimum performance requirements as outlined in the 'Smart and Sustainable Homes Design Objectives' to ensure the house demonstrates sustainable housing. As these Design Objectives are performance-based, there is scope to allow flexibility in design.

The Program Steering Committee provides local projects with ongoing assistance during the development of the project, including draft templates for market analysis, project briefs and contract advice, if required.

The Committee provides a communication/consultation guideline and tools to streamline efficiency with research, and marketing and communication opportunities for the local Project Coordinator.

Partners involved

The Smart and Sustainable Homes program is coordinated by the Steering Committee, comprising representatives from the State Government agencies and industry organisations listed below. Participating local governments are partners.

State Government

- Department of Public Works (lead agency)
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Department of Housing

Industry

- Australian Green Development Forum (AGDF)
- Bendigo Bank
- Housing Industry Association (HIA)
- Illumination Engineering Society (Lighting Society)
- Queensland Master Builders Association (QMBA)
- Planning Institute of Australia (PIA)
- Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA)
- Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA)

Public education benefits

The program themes centre on raising community awareness about the benefits of homes being more cost-efficient, environmentally-friendly and socially responsive. The program seeks to demystify the general public's understanding of a sustainable house, by providing a practical demonstration showing that a sustainable house looks and feels like a conventional house.

Additionally, this program is not just about designing a 'green home'. It is about creating a more comprehensive approach for housing design utilising the "triple-bottom-line" approach which balances environmental, social and economic design issues. Sustainable housing is housing designed to suit the local climate, the environment and the varied life situations people are likely to face.

Significantly, the program also aims to present the case for long-term investment in the operational budget and savings of a sustainable home, not just up-front capital costs.

Project Information

Please check the Sustainable Homes website for current information (www.sustainable-homes.org.au).

Further information

For a copy of the Smart and Sustainable Homes Design Objectives, other publications and information, visit: www.smarthousing.qld.gov.au

