



## MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 27-May-22

### WITCHCLIFFE ECOVILLAGE SETS GLOBAL STANDARD IN SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY LIVING

**WITCHCLIFFE, Western Australia:** One of the world's most sustainable residential communities, the Witchcliffe Ecovillage, is being developed in WA's South West and the response from buyers across Australia and the world has been phenomenal. Driven by word of mouth referrals, Stages 1-3 are now sold out. Stage 4 (55 lots) opened to a ballot application on 18 May and eager buyers have snapped up 34 lots in less than a week.

The Witchcliffe Ecovillage's unique offering of a carbon negative, highly sustainable and resilient community in WA's beautiful Margaret River region is clearly resonating with buyers, despite or perhaps in response to, the climate of uncertainty and shifting values caused by the global pandemic.

Self-sufficient in renewable energy for households and electric vehicles, rainwater and fresh food produce, the Witchcliffe Ecovillage is an innovative, semi-rural community that will eventually be home to around 700 like-minded people who are motivated to reduce their carbon footprint, slow down and live a more meaningful life without compromising comfort, privacy, amenity or affordability.

Distinguished Professor of Sustainability at the Curtin University Sustainability Policy Institute, Peter Newman AO, noted the Witchcliffe Ecovillage's unique ability to achieve both the Paris Agreement and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

"It's the most sustainable residential development in the world that I'm aware of," Professor Newman said.

"I don't know any of any other development that can claim to achieve energy, water and food self-sufficiency all on one site as well as being a place for real community," he added.

The Witchcliffe Ecovillage utilises state-of-the-art renewable technologies, regenerative agriculture practices, and passive solar and low carbon building techniques. Importantly, its focus on integrated, people-focused design outcomes will help to create a thriving social community that is inclusive, well-connected and resilient.

"People keep telling us they love the Ecovillage concept and its values, and how it's just what the world needs right now," said Sustainable Settlements director and Ecovillage co-founder, Mike Hulme.

In addition to three residential lot types, the Ecovillage also has short stay, tourism, mixed use, agricultural, commercial and aged / dependent care lots available for sale, some of which are already reserved before they've even hit the market.

# WITCHCLIFFE

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## ECOVILLAGE

Comprising five stages in total, the 120ha development will also have a significant public realm including a beautifully landscaped village square at its heart. This will be surrounded by a community pub, café, nature playground, mixed use buildings, co-working office spaces and a boutique backpackers' hotel. Dedicated tourism accommodation, a commercial precinct that extends the Witchcliffe village main street and an Ecovillage Food Hub will cater to locals and tourists alike.

More than 50% of the site is community gardens and public open space. In addition to the 11 residential clusters and their central community gardens, the Ecovillage features huge tracts of open space threaded with walking trails, bush conservation zones, its own community-scale wastewater treatment plant, and a privately owned certified organic vineyard and productive agricultural lots. Three magnificent dams provide abundant clean water for irrigation, stormwater reuse, riparian habitat, and recreation.

"In time, we hope to attract visitors from all over the world who want to learn from what we're doing and experience a holistic, sustainable community based on permaculture principles. But more importantly, we are excited to deliver exceptional social, economic and environmental outcomes for the Ecovillage community and the Margaret River region as a whole," said Mr Hulme.

The Ecovillage is located in the historic hamlet of Witchcliffe, 8km south of Margaret River, 270km south of Perth in the mild climate of Western Australia's beautiful South West. Nestled within the world-famous Margaret River region, which is renowned for premium wine and world class food, this biodiversity hotspot is embraced by sea, forest and abundant farmland.

The privately-owned Ecovillage project began in 2010 when the 120ha farmland site was first purchased in a 50/50 joint venture partnership between Mr Hulme's company Sustainable Settlements and his long-time business partner Stan Perron.

"I'm incredibly buoyed by the terrific response to Stage 1-3 sales, which is all the more incredible given we have done very little marketing until now," said Mr Hulme.

"Buyers are discovering the project organically, through word of mouth and our [beautiful Ecovillage film published in late 2021](#), which demonstrates the level of sustained interest and desire people have to live a more sustainable life. We have a diverse age group of people buying into the village, ranging from first home buyers to young families, empty nesters and retirees. Around 50% of the buyers are coming from the Margaret River region and the remainder from Perth, but we also have people who have moved from all over the Australian east coast, New Zealand, Middle East, Singapore and the UK."

"Interestingly, many people come from a professional background and the vast majority intend on working or retiring within the Ecovillage, with a few commuting to work in the region. We will have NBN fibre to the premises, which will enable people to easily work from home, take breaks in their community garden for a cuppa with their neighbours or participate in community groups."

"After spending more than 11 years planning for and working to develop this vision, it's immensely gratifying," Mr Hulme said.

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### ABOUT THE ECOVILLAGE

The [Witchcliffe Ecovillage](#) is a highly sustainable, fully integrated residential community located in semi-rural Witchcliffe, Western Australia. Led by Sustainable Settlements, the privately-owned joint venture will be self-sufficient in water, renewable energy and fresh food production. Utilising best practice technological innovations and human settlement design based on permaculture principles, the Witchcliffe Ecovillage aims to be a world leading model of sustainable living.

### ENERGY

Designed to create significantly more energy than it consumes, the Ecovillage's sophisticated energy network will incorporate solar PVs on every roof, and Tesla Powerpack and Powerwall batteries, and microgrids that enable power sharing between residents and businesses. Solar powered electric vehicle fast-charging stations will be located in every residential cluster to cater for tourists and locals alike. The entire Ecovillage will be 100% solar powered.

### WATER

Ample, high quality water will be captured and reused on site by three large dams, household rainwater tanks and a network of stormwater rain gardens. A community-scale wastewater treatment plant will treat all sewerage on site and irrigate onto a community avocado orchard and wood lot. The entire Ecovillage will be 100% self-sufficient in water.

### FOOD

Fourteen agricultural lots irrigated by the dams will be available for purchase by residents and will provide opportunities for high value, small scale commercial horticulture. Supplemented by 11 cluster community gardens, this fresh produce will feed residents and can be sold at the Ecovillage Food Hub, which will eventually become home to a food distribution network for the entire region.

### COMMUNITY GARDENS

Utilising best practice human settlement design, homes will be configured in clusters surrounding feature-rich community gardens. These will become the heart of daily Ecovillage life, providing both a convivial social setting and abundant household fresh produce. The seemingly benign acts of gardening, socialising and sharing resources with neighbours is underpinned by a deliberate design principle that seeks to address society's growing social problems of isolation, depression and anxiety.

### HOUSING

Every lot at the Ecovillage has been carefully oriented to maximise solar capture for passive solar homes that will be built in accordance with our [Sustainable Building Design Guidelines](#) using natural materials, such as timber, stone, hempcrete, and straw bale. Houses will undergo life cycle and thermal assessments and are required to be carbon negative.

### ECONOMICS

# WITCHHILLIFE

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## ECOVILLAGE

In a region with a shortage of smaller and lower cost housing stock, affordability has also been a key driver of the project. There are nine different lot types designed to attract a diverse demographic, including families, retirees and young people. The project will also create a mix of commercial, creative, food, tourism and agricultural business opportunities, which will boost regional tourism and create jobs, enabling some residents to live and work in the Ecovillage.

### **TOURISM**

With public amenities that include a pub, café, creative and food hubs, clustered around a beautifully designed Village Square and commercial precinct, the Ecovillage is destined to become a major tourism drawcard in a region renowned for its world class local food and premium wine.