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LAND REPORT



A 96sqm custom home on a Witchcliffe Ecovillage cottage lot. Images: Witchcliffe Ecovillage.



Owner and builder Laurie Bycroft at his home in Witchcliffe Ecovillage.

LIVING IN ALIGNMENT WITH MOTHER NATURE

BY KEREN BELLOS

A vibrant community believed to be one of the world's most sustainable urban developments is taking shape in the South West.

Witchcliffe Ecovillage, located 10km south of Margaret River, is an innovative carbon-negative development of about 350 homes.

Targeting self-sufficiency, it uses solar power, onsite rainwater collection and fresh food sourced directly from its community gardens and agricultural lots.

A joint venture between Sustainable Settlements and Perron Group, the 120-hectare semi-rural development goes beyond merely adopting renewable technologies – it integrates regenerative agriculture, passive-solar design and eco-conscious building techniques.

After nearly a 14-year journey from vision to reality, the Witchcliffe Ecovillage will eventually be home to about 750 people wanting to reduce their carbon footprint while enjoying a greater sense of community.

"It's the most sustainable residential development in the world that I'm aware of," Curtin University Sustainability Policy Institute John Curtin Distinguished Professor Peter Newman said.

According to Sustainable Settlements Sales Representative and Communications and Marketing Manager Jo Thierfelder, more than 50 homes are already built, with a similar number under construction using sustainable materials such as hempcrete, Forest Stewardship Council-certified timber and straw bale.

All residences must meet Witchcliffe Ecovillage's housing standards, including a minimum 7.5-star Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme rating.

"Every ecovillage home must comply with our comprehensive sustainable

building design guidelines," Ms Thierfelder said. "Homes are certified carbon negative using life cycle assessment software, must adhere to passive-solar design principles and achieve higher-than-standard thermal efficiency ratings."

Also centred on creating an inclusive, well-connected and resilient community, Witchcliffe Ecovillage will feature 11 strata clusters – each with 19-25 homes around a shared garden with a meeting house, a covered orchard, a chicken pen and play spaces.

There will be paths linking the clusters, as well as 11 electric vehicle charging stations.

"At the heart of the project, a village square will be surrounded by a community pub, a cafe, a nature playground, mixed-use buildings, co-working office spaces, a boutique backpackers' hotel, dedicated tourist accommodation, a commercial precinct and a food hub," Ms Thierfelder said.

"More than 50 per cent of the

120-hectare site is dedicated to community gardens, public open space, Ecovillage Commons and agricultural land, threaded with walking trails, bush conservation zones, three huge dams and a community-scale wastewater treatment plant."

Witchcliffe Ecovillage has already earned accolades, recently triumphing in the Sustainability and Affordable Housing categories at the 2023 UDIA WA Awards for Excellence.

The judges praised the team for global leadership in sustainable urban development and a holistic approach to housing affordability, from initial purchase price to ongoing living costs.

"We have addressed the challenge of affordability by limiting the size of lots and homes, and setting financial eligibility criteria on affordable lots, by providing smart infrastructure that reduces living costs, as well as through providing support to owners during the design and build process to ensure an affordable outcome," Ms Thierfelder said.

"Our passive-solar-designed, thermally efficient homes require little to no heating or cooling to keep them beautifully comfortable all year-round.

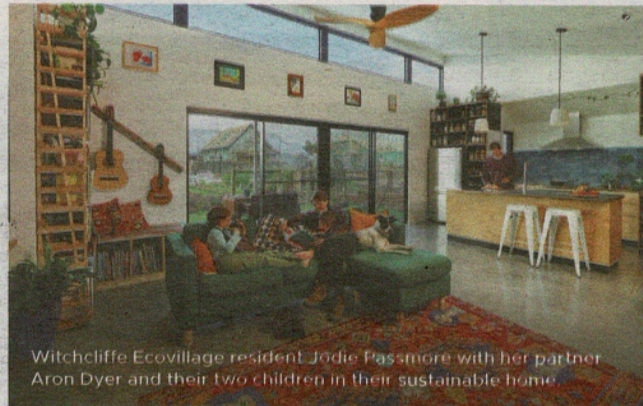
"With minimal ongoing energy costs, no water bills and zero food miles on the fresh food from their gardens, ecovillagers have much lower living costs than standard Australian households."

Ms Thierfelder said the final stage was selling fast, with Witchcliffe Ecovillage drawing buyers mainly from the local area and Perth, though interest from the east coast and overseas was growing due to regional Western Australia's competitive pricing.

Witchcliffe Ecovillage has attracted a wide demographic, including young families and retirees to professionals and tradespeople.

Ms Thierfelder said the team wanted the ecovillage to serve as a model sustainable development, showcasing the potential of sustainable living and setting a benchmark for others.

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Witchcliffe Ecovillage resident Jodie Pasmore with her partner Aron Dyer and their two children in their sustainable home.



Property on the eastern edge of Witchcliffe Ecovillage Cluster 1C.

2023 UDIA WA AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE WINNERS



ONE Subiaco by Blackburne.

Russel Perry Award for Urban Development Excellence

ONE Subiaco by Blackburne

Affordable Housing

Witchcliffe Ecovillage by Sustainable Settlements and Perron Group

Marketing

Ora Sorrento by Megara

Social & Community Infrastructure

Rockingham Youth Centre by City of Rockingham

Masterplanned Communities

Exchange at Curtin University by Curtin University

Residential Subdivision

Henley Brook by Mirvac

Apartments (High Rise)

ONE Subiaco by Blackburne

Apartments (Mid Rise)

NOMA Residences by Parcel Property

Medium Density Development

Victoria House by Hesperia

Boutique Development

Salt Lane at Shoreline by DevelopmentWA

Urban Renewal

Montario Quarter by DevelopmentWA

Sustainability

Witchcliffe Ecovillage by Sustainable Settlements and Perron Group

Design

Victoria House by Hesperia

Judges Award

7A and 7B Carman Way, Bassendean – Specialist Disability Accommodation by Foundation Housing

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

Stockland Young Development Professional Award

Lachlan McCaffrey, Stockland

Women in Leadership

Nicole Lockwood, Infrastructure WA