



Eco-architect Garry Baverstock visits a building site in Ardross. Picture: Bohdan Warchomij

# Low-energy woes

by sue emmett

RELUCTANCE by WA builders to produce affordable, sustainable housing is costing the State millions of dollars in wasted resources, lost jobs and export opportunities, says internationally recognised Nedlands-based eco-architect Garry Baverstock.

Mr Baverstock said building companies perceived low-energy designs as too costly to construct.

As a result, they were still marketing mainstream housing designs to the bulk of the community.

"The State cannot allow this malaise to continue if we are to provide young West Australians with a future, retain a share of the global market and meet new Australian greenhouse targets," he said.

Mr Baverstock founded WA's first solar energy research centre in South Perth 20 years ago.

He has won many national awards for his solar developments, was part of the 2002

National Tour on Sustainable Housing and speaks regularly at national and international passive-energy conferences.

Recently, US energy experts invited him to build an Internet site on solar energy technology.

"Thirty per cent of our community has adopted sustainable-living ideas now, but the figure must be boosted to 50 per cent before the building industry will sit up and take notice of customer demand," Mr Baverstock said.

He said home owners in Mt Pleasant, Applecross and other City of Melville suburbs were the most receptive to sustainable living.

"However, first-home buyers in particular cannot afford to build or buy anything but a low-energy home," Mr Baverstock said.

"If the housing industry is reluctant to provide this, then state and federal governments should take the lead to encourage homebuilders to look for sustainable-energy designs rather than the status quo.

"US scientists have released conclusive evidence that the world is experiencing the start of the greenhouse effect.

"WA has the best natural resources in the world and we have the expertise and a socio-economic responsibility to show leadership in our region of the globe.

"The implementation of sustainable, low-energy policies and ideas in WA will not only create a better environment for us to live in, but open new doors of opportunity for the community to grow with."

Housing Industry of WA chief executive John Dastlik said the association had developed and was implementing a Greensmart plan for the industry.

It included accredited training programs for builders.

"We are very aware of the need for the industry to change, but it's a huge process and cannot happen overnight," Mr Dastlik said.