

The fight for energy efficiency

TWENTY years ago most people were oblivious to environmental problems faced by the earth and unaware of the impact of wasting energy.

"The average person did not care," said Perth architect-designer Garry Baverstock.

"The focus then was mainly from a few qualified people with scientific backgrounds, enthusiastic about improving energy efficiency and natural comfort in homes.

"Among that group was the lunatic fringe. In some ways this made solar energy difficult to promote to the average person because he saw it as odd and strange.

"Pictures of early houses in the United States were high-tech, odd-looking structures, aesthetically foreign to the average person.

"Negative ideas became entrenched in the early development of solar housing."

Things are far different these days, as Mr Baverstock — who has won many awards for his solar energy-designed homes — can testify.

"My first 10 years were spent trying to change the average person's perception that they could have an energy efficient, naturally comfortable home, using the sun to the best advantage.

"It has taken all this time for these ideas to be integrated into the public perception of being "normal."

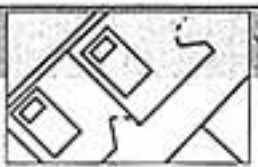
Mr Baverstock named an award winning Albany home which won his company three Housing Industry Association regional awards — best design, best home in that category and the Golden Key award.

"It had architectural style and merit, as well as energy efficiency, which proved these ideas can be integrated and acceptable."

In 1994, Mr Baverstock won the Institute of Architects energy and conservation award for a big French provincial style mansion in Cottesloe.

The judges said the home was "an excellent example of using solar energy and producing an energy efficient, comfortable home."

*Designer
focus*



■ Architect Garry Baverstock — planning for the future.

Light, temperature control, cross ventilation and natural cooling effects through ventilation were highly desirable and human requirements for a home, Mr Baverstock said.

"By leaving them out, we are providing a sub-standard home. The design challenge is to integrate these features in an aesthetically pleasing way."

Educating the public, designers and builders and fellow professionals meant attitudes towards solar energy had changed, Mr Baverstock said.

"Throughout the 80s, continual media focus on global environmental problems, helped people shift attitudes and accept design principles in solar housing.

"The next challenge is to take these ideas to the mass market. This is where governments — including the WA Government — can establish a vision for integrating energy efficiency throughout the housing industry.

"To spearhead this vision, the National Housing Energy Rating Scheme will greatly increase community awareness and place them in a powerful position to make more demands in the marketplace for project builders to follow."

HERS is a nationwide scheme which allows the energy efficiency of all new and existing Australian housing to be rated so that one house may be more easily compared with another in terms of its heating and cooling needs.

Work on HERS started in 1993 and a

computer simulation tool has been released in WA, for architects and designers, among others.

Mr Baverstock is currently employed as a consultant with Landcorp to help redesign a subdivision for Clarkson and to design four concepts for display homes to launch the housing rating scheme.

The first step has been to canvas major builders for their acceptance, support and practical considerations.

"The intent is to survey likely participants to establish a detailed brief of criteria for designing tight budget homes," Mr Baverstock said.

"The blocks will be rated in isolation, with the Housing Energy Rating Scheme adopted for houses located on these blocks.

"If it is possible to save 60 to 90 per cent of energy in the home and reduce Greenhouse gases by 20 to 30 per cent, it makes sense for everybody to add this criteria to their home design as a high priority.

"This is an advantage not only financially but also for coming generations."

Josephine Allison