



Solar boost for community house

THE Cheeditha Community is about to build its own passive-solar house on a site near a namesake outcrop north of Roebourne, close to Cossack.

It breaks new ground not only for its energy efficiency but its health considerations with a separate ablution block well away from the kitchen and eating areas.

"This has been done to suit their lifestyle and is in complete harmony with their culture and traditions," explained architect Garry Baverstock, of Baverstock Murphy and Associates.

"By introducing the ablution block as an artistic component, it conforms with their mystical qualities and spiritualism and has been done in close consultation with community leaders. We see this project as an innovative approach to begin meeting the real needs of Aboriginal people.

"Hamersley Iron has provided the training money for the community to develop the construction skills needed to build their own home."

The community leader, Michael McDonald, responded to a North-West lecture tour sponsored by the Office of Energy and Western Power and met the architect.

Professional services were volunteered and, with close co-operation of all, a solution was found for a harsh, arid environment.

The concept exploits a breezeway principle the community had already accepted. Stone walls were a logical choice, being a familiar

material to aboriginal culture.

These will be shaded by 2.8m-wide verandas which will enclose the home on all sides but still allow the winter sun to penetrate indoors on the north elevation. This sheltered space will be widened to 6m on the eastern end for outdoor living in any weather.

To avoid the transfer of heat through corrugated iron, the prefabricated roof panels will all be insulated.

The steep roof has allowed for high ceilings and clerestory glazing at the ridge will provide ample natural lighting while also trapping the warmth of the winter sun.

The home has two main wings, each with three bedrooms for single men, and one terminating in a television lounge, the other with an internal kitchen.

An external kitchen is off the shaded outdoor living area, and includes barbecue facilities as well as a pit for cooking a whole kangaroo.

With cross ventilation so important there are no windows to the bedrooms, only louvre panels with security screens. The outside wall to each of these sleeping areas has been curved to symbolise the rainbow serpent.

Solar hotwater systems are to be carefully installed so that they are partially covered in summer but provide the full boost in winter.

Calculations of indoor comfort indicate a maximum temperature around 28C in summer, dropping to about 20C in winter.

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