

Architect attacks design of new houses in city

A VISITING Perth architect has criticised the design of new houses in Kalgoorlie-Boulder because he says they do not take environmental considerations into account.

Garry Baverstock, a consultant for the Solar Energy Information Centre, said most new houses were not designed to maximise energy efficiency.

"Unfortunately, most houses are nowhere near being climate sensible," Mr Baverstock said.

"The blocks are incorrectly oriented, the form of construction is incorrect, and there is far too much reliance on evaporative cooling and gas heating to stay comfortable," Mr Baverstock said.

Kalgoorlie is very important

because it's growing so much, there's a lot of development going on.

"It's a real pity it's not being done in the right way."

He said houses that incorporated principles of climate-sensible design could save between 60 and 90 per cent on energy costs.

"They're more usable — they're lighter and brighter and more comfortable," he said.

Mr Baverstock was in the city to give a public seminar at Kalgoorlie Town Hall on climate-sensible design and energy conservation in homes.

He told the seminar that by taking into account simple scientific principles, it was possible to achieve temperatures of between 18C and 22C inside houses all year round.

House shape and orientation were

By Andrea Mayes

two important factors in designing new homes.

Mr Baverstock said no special building materials were required to design climate-sensible houses.

"Traditional forms of construction can be used to good advantage — things like brick and iron, as the early settlers did.

"Unfortunately Kalgoorlie has developed this brick veneer form of construction which is totally inappropriate for the climate up here."

Mr Baverstock said reverse brick veneer was more suitable for Kalgoorlie-Boulder, whereby heavyweight brick was used on the inside of houses and lightweight material on the outside.

The temperature inside the house could then be moderated and the house's acoustics improved, creating more privacy between rooms.

He said new sub-divisions had to be planned so they were oriented correctly, to make best use of the sun.

"Unfortunately, with a lot of the new developments, the backyards are facing east or west, which means the windows are on the east or west side — the worst possible strategy."

However, he said town planner Sam McNeilly was aware of the problems and new sub-divisions were now being oriented correctly.

Mr Baverstock said modifications could be made to existing homes that would save energy.

He said insulation could be installed, and the shade control of windows improved by erecting

pergolas or adding roller shutters or external blinds.

Mr Baverstock said one of the major problems was that most people were unaware of solar design principles.

He said he had been encouraged that about 15 people had attended the Kalgoorlie-Boulder seminar.

"It was a great response for Perth, let alone Kalgoorlie," Mr Baverstock said.

"It showed there is a need there and an interest. I was overjoyed given the minimal promotions effort we went to."

Mr Baverstock said he would approach Energy Minister Colin Barnett for funding to allow the Solar Information Energy Centre to travel to all country centres and hold seminars on climate-sensible design and energy conservation on a regular basis.