

## **What is sustainable housing?**

Simply put, sustainable housing is simply housing that is better. Better all round - providing benefits to us economically, environmentally and socially.

Often times when we think of sustainability we focus on the environmental benefits only, but there are plenty of other areas where sustainable housing can provide for better housing (and market differentiation for you).

In this article we will overview some aspects of housing that contribute to providing social benefits and improving a home's social sustainability performance.

As you read you might like to consider whether your homes have got all their bases covered and which elements you might like to offer from now on.

The social aspects touched on in this article include: Lifestyle; Health; Safety; Security; Accessibility and Neighbourliness/Inclusiveness.

### **Lifestyle**

- ✓ durable and easy to clean surfaces – less time spent on maintenance, more time for relaxing
- ✓ outdoor living spaces – kicking back with nature around you, lower stress levels

### **Health**

- ✓ non-toxic paints, sealants & glues (especially inside) – minimise risk of respiratory diseases, cancer, SIDS
- ✓ well ventilated spaces – reduce growth of moulds, reduce allergy triggers
- ✓ reduce chemical use – choose non-chemical termite barriers and surfaces that can be cleaned without harsh chemicals, minimise suppression of the immune system
- ✓ minimise dust collecting surfaces – build cupboards to ceiling; bevel top edge of door frames/skirtings; minimise use of carpets, reduce allergy triggers

### **Safety**

- ✓ lockable cupboards for medicines and chemicals – minimise risk of poisoning
- ✓ minimise steps - including shower (step-free), minimise trip hazards, toe injuries
- ✓ minimise pointy corners – minimise risk of knocks and bruises
- ✓ visual connection between main living areas and children's play areas (outdoors or indoors) – easier supervision
- ✓ sun-shading of patios and play areas – reduce UV exposure, skin cancer
- ✓ screen living spaces – limit contact with mosquito borne diseases
- ✓ physically separate driveway from play areas – improve child safety around vehicles
- ✓ street number clearly visible from street – easy location in emergency

### **Security**

- ✓ living areas (indoors and outside) towards front of house – passive surveillance of street and for neighbouring properties
- ✓ line of sight from street to entry points – enable passive surveillance by neighbours
- ✓ gravel paths around perimeter of house – audible warning of visitors
- ✓ side glass or peephole - ability to view visitors before opening exterior doors

### **Accessibility**

- ✓ spacious doorways, pathways and rooms and level thresholds - accessible by people with limited mobility (elderly (residents or short/long term visitors), disabled, injured, ill)

### **Neighbourliness / Inclusiveness**

- ✓ outdoor living at front of home – eg verandah, deck, sitting area, produce garden, enable casual interaction with passers-by, counter isolation
- ✓ low fences - to comfortably see and speak over them, conversation with neighbours and passers-by

Article provided by ecoSAVVY Sustainability Consultancy. [www.ecoSAVVY.com.au](http://www.ecoSAVVY.com.au)