



#### FACT FILE

Where to for the future:

- More terraces/row houses – the ultimate design for modern tropical homes.
- More duplexes.
- More prefab, modular houses.
- Shady street trees to encourage walking.
- Safe bike lanes to encourage cycling.

**T**here are many steps we can take towards a more “green” way of life as RACHEL LICCIARDELLO discovers when she checks in with EcoSavvy’s sustainability consultant and director Sandy McCathie.

#### Tell me about your business EcoSavvy.

EcoSavvy’s goal from the outset has been to work with different players in the housing market to promote the availability of sustainable homes in north Queensland. Subsequently, clients have included builders, developers, government and individuals. A recent project I am very proud of, resulted in the release of a CD titled *Breakthrough Ideas for Sustainable Urban Development in North Queensland*, the findings of which will be demonstrated in a small sustainable village at Kelso.

#### Why are environmentally sustainable development principles essential to efficient home design?

An efficient home uses electricity only when it needs to. Critically this means less reliance on things like airconditioning, which is achieved through designing or modifying homes to be more suitable and more comfortable naturally in our tropical climate. Efficient homes are also low maintenance and use low chemical products for cleaning, for pest control and in the garden. Efficient homes reduce the amount of resources they use – choosing smaller homes and smaller parcels of land, or choosing to live in denser forms of housing like

townhouses, terraces, units or apartments all help to achieve communities that are more efficient for all. Efficient homes should also consider the types of materials used. Ask where your timber is coming from and evaluate the quantity of concrete, steel and aluminium used once you have considered its embodied energy (the energy it has taken to create those products).

#### What are your top tips for being eco savvy?

The most important environmental principle for homes in Townsville is to be designed for our tropical climate. This means minimising heat gain and maximising prevailing breezes and airflow through your home. Homes requiring a lot of air conditioning often have electricity bills two or even three times as much as predominantly naturally ventilated homes. Even with an existing home, consider retro-fitting something that will improve comfort naturally and reduce the amount of time that airconditioning is required.

#### What new green products are set to change the way our homes operate?

Living spaces that blur the lines between indoor and outdoor living are coming into vogue while smart metering and selecting an appropriate electricity tariff will also help. Other areas include mulched, lawnfree gardens, ridgecap vents rather than whirly birds as a more efficient way to cool your roofspace and bamboo cabinetry and flooring, which is a fantastic renewable material.

#### Do you think environmentally responsible developments, products and principles receive enough attention and funding from the relevant government bodies?

Ultimately no, government bodies definitely need to take more leadership and demand higher environmental standards from housing and new developments. In particular, it is government’s job to create an environment in which consumers and the building and development industry have it in their best interests to act and produce housing that is more eco-friendly. The system must reward those who make eco-friendly choices. That said, we as consumers and businesses often don’t always put the environment first either, so we all really need to step up to the plate and start taking responsibility for our own choices and buying patterns.

#### I have read the average person’s largest contribution of carbon emissions is from eating red meat, with its farming, production, packaging, transport and so on, is this true?

No, from my understanding the average Australian’s lifestyle choices produces approximately 27 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions every year, of which one third of a tonne is contributed from eating meat. Meat however has a far greater carbon footprint than grain and vegetable based foods due to the reasons you mention above. Introducing a couple more vegetarian meals a week into your diet or reducing the amount of meat served is a relatively easy way to reduce your emissions. CL