



# Save with sun power

## Green homes have financial attraction

SOLAR hot water systems, insulation and water tanks are attracting significant value to houses as electricity costs rise and people become more environmentally aware.

Former Brisbane valuer and now an author and academic at Deakin University in Melbourne, Richard Reed, said people now had to ask whether they could afford not to be sustainable.

"The market is saying 'we want sustainable features,'" Mr Reed said.

He said water tanks,

native gardens, solar hot water and eaves were big issues for buyers.

"A new house also has to have a northerly aspect. Previously no one really worried but now there's a premium for it. A garden that is fully turfed with a sprinkler system will be devalued but how much people will pay for sustainable features is the million-dollar question."

Living near a rail line or other public transport was also adding a premium to property.

John McCarthy

**A** FREE natural resource to heat hot water is available from the sun, but most households aren't using it according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Dr John Cole, from EPA Sustainable Industries, said for most Queensland households, around 35 per cent of their annual energy use is for hot water.

"By using the sun's energy to heat water, the average household can reduce its yearly hot water costs by 85 per cent when compared with conventional electrical systems," Dr Cole said.

"As well as costing less to run, solar hot water systems have a significant environmental benefit as their reduced energy use means less greenhouse gases produced."

He said climate change had risen in prominence as a major global issue and it was now the

single biggest environmental threat facing the community.

"Reducing energy and water use is critical to managing climate change. Sustainable houses do that and save money for the homeowner."

The Real Estate Institute of Queensland is working in partnership with the EPA to promote sustainable housing practices.

REIQ executive manager Elissa Keenan said that despite Queensland's year round abundance of solar energy, most Queensland households still use electric hot water systems which are the biggest consumer of electricity in most homes.

"As solar hot water systems provide the greatest potential for savings on energy costs and greenhouse emissions, they make smart sense for homeowners and

the environment," Ms Keenan said.

A solar hot water system works by taking energy from the sun which is absorbed through solar collectors. This solar energy heats water which circulates through the collectors and into a storage tank ready for use.

Queensland Sustainable Housing regulations which came into effect in March require greenhouse-efficient hot water systems to be installed in all new homes.

According to the EPA, there are two types of solar hot water systems available to be installed in homes.

A thermosiphon system is the most common type of solar system which consists of roof-mounted solar collectors with a storage tank positioned immediately above the collectors.

The split system or forced circulation system is popular with householders who prefer their tank at ground level. This system has collectors on the roof and the storage tank on the ground. These systems require a small electric pump and as a result are generally more expensive to buy, and operate than a thermosiphon system.

Ms Keenan said that the number of people in a household should determine the size of the storage tank.

"Installing a solar hot water system can save average households between \$200 and \$250 a year on electricity bills, with many systems being eligible for rebates from the federal government."

For further information visit [www.epa.qld.gov.au/sustainable\\_industries](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/sustainable_industries).