

Sustainable building

When you're building a house, it's important to make sure you use strong, long-lasting materials that are low maintenance and free of toxins. Include universal design elements such as lockable cabinets for medicines, hard-wired smoke alarms and plan the kitchen so it's not also a passageway.

What you can do

You can minimise impacts on the natural environment while you're building your house. This doesn't need to add to the cost, but simply requires planning:

- ask your builder to use renewable resources, for example, plantation timber or recycled timbers
- ensure you, your builder or landscaper doesn't allow sediment (soil and mud) and materials such as cement waste and paint to wash into stormwater drains
- keep cutting and filling to a minimum to avoid interfering with natural drainage which causes instability and destroys vegetation
- work around established trees rather than cutting them down
- retain the natural slope and flow of your land where possible
- termite treatment – use products such as termite mesh rather than poisonous sprays
- use stumps to minimise cut and fill required
- roof design – higher ceilings and roof pitches facilitate air circulation

Solar energy

Solar Photovoltaic (PV) solar energy systems convert sunlight into electricity. PV systems are made up of solar panels, which are placed on the roof of your home.

PV systems interact with the electricity grid. If you install a solar PV system you can sell excess electricity you generate to the grid. That is, you can sell electricity during the day and buy it back at a cheaper rate to use at night.

The Energex solar PV program provides access to electricity when solar panels don't generate enough power for your needs.

The program allows excess electricity to be sold to Energex at agreed rates.

Rebates

While PV systems cost from \$15,000 to install, there are rebates available. The federal government's Australian Greenhouse Office offers a PV rebate program with rebates of up to \$4,000.

The Australian Greenhouse Office will also offer up to one million dollars to residential property developers to support the installation of PV systems over 2003/04 to 2004/05.

To be eligible for a PV rebate, you must be able to show that the person who will install the PV system is suitably qualified and experienced. For example, the installer will usually have a Business Council for Sustainable Energy (BCSE) accreditation (full or provisional) for PV design and installation.

The Queensland State Government's Energy Advisory Service also offers rebates.

Energex credits your electricity account up to \$0.28 for each kilowatt per hour (kWh) of electricity that your residential solar PV system generates.

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BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL GREEN HOME FACT SHEET – SUSTAINABLE BUILDING

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