



New homes, such as this in Kellyville, in north-west Sydney, must be more environmentally sustainable. Photo: ROBERT PEARCE

NSW has energy-guzzling project homes in its sights

Tina Perinotto

NSW Premier Bob Carr yesterday launched the state's contribution to the Year of the Built Environment with a big promise: the days of huge, energy-guzzling project homes were numbered.

In the same way the *Residential Flat Design* book lifted the game for apartment developments in aesthetic terms, so the YBE initiatives would do the same on sustainability issues for project homes, Mr Carr said.

The NSW government has already implemented the first step, decreeing that by July, every new dwelling in NSW will need to save 25 per cent in energy and 40 per cent in water measured against BASIX, its building sustainability index.

Now it has thrown its weight into the YBE, launched by the federal government late last year. The NSW government has initiated a program of talks at Sydney's Town Hall, built prototypes of sustainable houses for the public to view at the city's Circular Quay, instituted a roadshow taking green building

ideas from the city, along the coast and into the rural centres, and has set up a schools program.

The first major event will be a forum on April 7, at the Riverside Theatre in Sydney's Parramatta, to thrash out a way forward.

Mr Carr said environmentally sustainable housing was an issue now for everyone, not simply an optional extra for the wealthy.

"New houses should incorporate the best design principles."

"Houses being built in western Sydney should incorporate the best design principles and reduce stress on our environment, such as designing a house to maximise winter sun, cutting energy costs," Mr Carr said. "Good design can be incorporated into all new housing in our cities, making them healthier and more pleasant places to live."

Government architect Chris Johnson said the talks at the Town Hall aimed to attract more than 1000 people at a time and would

feature speakers such as former PM Paul Keating and UK-based architect Norman Foster.

The roadshow, he said, aimed to generate broad community interest because it was important for the events not to be viewed as Sydney-centric. "It is our task in this year to raise widespread awareness in the community about bettering the built environment, to raise the bar on what is acceptable and create a vision and path to what is desirable," he said.

The NSW president of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, Caroline Pidcock, said there was an "acceleration" in the numbers of design and development professionals who were switching to a sustainable view.

"The urgency with which everyone is going to get on top of those issues is now becoming apparent," she said.

Ms Pidcock said the site of the launch yesterday, Kogarah Town Square in southern Sydney, was chosen because the project exemplified sustainability principles: from energy generation through photovoltaic cells to water harvesting and conservation.