



## MELBOURNE RENTAL MARKET IN RECOVERY MODE AS VACANCY RATES DECLINE

Rental growth in the inner Melbourne apartment market is forecast to continue to strengthen during the next few years, according to BIS Shrapnel. The forecaster expects a combination of strong tenant demand and declining rental supply will maintain pressure on vacancy rates in this market.

The inner Melbourne rental vacancy rate peaked at just under 8 per cent in mid 2004, before returning to a balanced market rate of 2.7 per cent in June 2006, and figures released for the March quarter 2007 show the inner Melbourne vacancy rate is now less than 1 per cent.

The contracting new supply in this market has been exacerbated by particularly strong demand from overseas students and inner city professionals, according to BIS Shrapnel's Inner Melbourne Apartments, 2007 to 2012 report.

The recovery in the Melbourne apartment market follows on the heels of four to five years of a rental stock oversupply in inner-city apartments and subsequent poor growth in rents and prices, according to BIS Shrapnel senior project manager and report author Mr Angie Zigomanis.

In the three years to 2005/06, a record number of apartment projects were completed in the inner Melbourne area (averaging 3900 dwellings per annum), states BIS Shrapnel.

"Weak rental conditions have meant landlords had to be very competitive to attract tenants either from existing inner Melbourne apartments or apartments in less expensive adjoining suburbs," said Mr Zigomanis.

## SOUTH-EAST QUEENSLAND DEVELOPER BRINGS SUSTAINABLE HOME DESIGN INTO THE MAINSTREAM

Despite the big dry and Level 5 water restrictions, residents of Highfields Village, just north of Toowoomba in Queensland, will still be able to water their lawns and gardens, thanks to a new range of environmentally sustainable homes.

Highfields Village developer Lauder is currently marketing the first completed home of the six POWER (Protect Our World Environment Resources) Homes.

The first POWER Home is a four-bedroom, two-bathroom house and land package priced in the mid \$400,000s. The homes are being built by local builders the Schriek Building Group and local Toowoomba subcontractors.

Mac Stirling, Managing Director of Highfields Village developer Lauder, said his company was serious about developing sustainable and smart housing outcomes for Highfields.

"The connection to the Council's new recycled waste-water system will further reduce the POWER Homes' water usage and complement the other water-saving features such as rainwater tanks, water-saving plumbing features, AAA dual-flush toilets and a water-pressure limiting device, which will substantially reduce the reliance on mains supply of water for both the house and garden by approximately 90 per cent."

The POWER Homes are fitted with a 22,750 litre underground rainwater tank and a separate 3000-litre underground recycled water tank that is connected to both roof run-off water and a recycled water pipeline system.

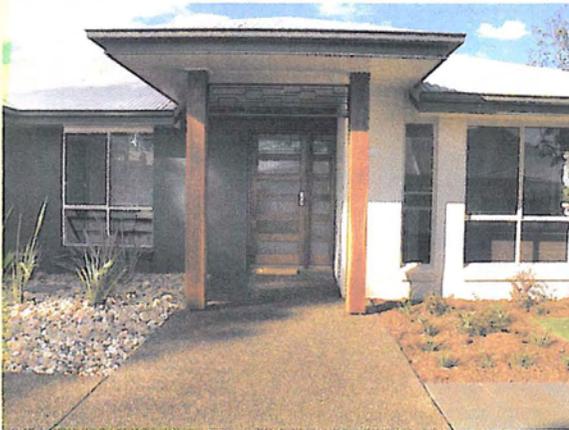
All the homes will be dual plumbed and connected to a twin-pipe reticulation system, allowing potable water to be used for drinking, showering and laundry and recycled Class A+ water to be used in the garden and for flushing toilets.

Mr Stirling said the POWER Homes had been designed to meet residents' needs as they changed throughout their lives, as well as making their home more liveable, secure, cost efficient and environmentally friendly.

"The POWER homes will feature a greenhouse efficient solar hot water system that will save approximately 80 per cent on water heating bills – \$240 a year off the average family's energy bill.

"The use of fluorescent lights and internal and external light switches with built-in motion detectors reduce the amount of power utilised and are a good security measure.

"To promote good indoor air quality and avoid irritation and allergies, the POWER Home will feature low-odour paint, 100 per cent wool carpets and low-emission laminates.



IMAGES: LAUDER

## GREENHOME: YOUR ONE-STOP SHOP FOR DISCOVERING HOW TO HELP THE ENVIRONMENT

GreenHome is a program designed by the Australian Conservation Foundation to help Australians reduce their impact on the environment by taking action at home.

From tips on saving energy and water as well as reducing waste, to calculating your environmental footprint, GreenHome shows you how to choose actions that make a difference.

GreenHome focuses on simple, practical ways to help you green your home and lifestyle. Topics covered include "Renovate to Save", which explores both energy and water-saving renovations.

Designing homes for energy efficiency makes sense, with research indicating that 39 per cent of the day-to-day energy consumed in an average Australian house goes into space heating and cooling.

Passive design elements can be used when planning a major renovation or building a home to reduce or eliminate dependency on artificial heating and cooling. By keeping summer sun out and letting winter sun in, energy efficiency is improved, reducing greenhouse pollution and energy costs. The seven elements of passive design are: orientation, zoning, thermal mass, shading, insulation, ventilation and glazing.

Consumers of grid electricity can offset its environmental impact by purchasing Green Power as well as installing solar panels. The Federal Government offers a rebate for household solar power to generate electricity.

When building or renovating, there is also a lot that you can do to dramatically cut water use. The installation of greywater and water recycling systems, rainwater tanks and water-saving devices help to make homes and gardens water-efficient and sustainable.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT GREENHOME AND HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO A BETTER WORLD AT [WWW.ACFFONLINE.ORG.AU/GREENHOME](http://WWW.ACFFONLINE.ORG.AU/GREENHOME)

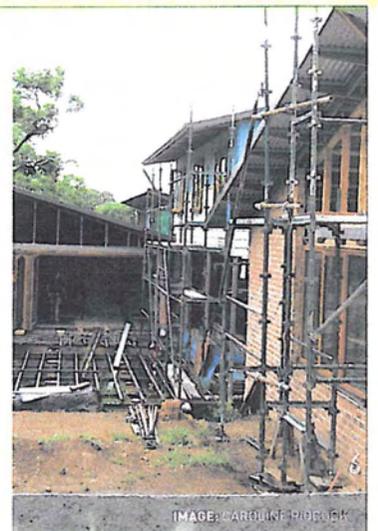


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