



B.E.N.D. eco-housing

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Bega Eco Neighbourhood Developers Inc [BEND] aims to create high-standard housing while consuming much less of the Earth's resources, both in construction and in the long term. The use of permaculture principles in the design helps ensure that resources will be used more efficiently and sustainably.

website: www.thebegavalley.org.au/22231.html

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The idea for the eco neighbourhood of Bend was born in a Bega living room in 2002. Two years later, Bega Eco Neighbourhood Developers Inc (BEND) purchased land bordered by the Bega River and five minutes walk from the Bega Post Office. Much of the finance came from well-wishers who never intended to live there.

BEND aims to create high-standard housing while consuming much less of the Earth's resources, both in construction and in the long term. The use of permaculture principles in the design has helped ensure that resources will be used more efficiently and sustainably.

The north-facing site was divided into a residential zone with 22 housing sites overlooking the agricultural and conservation zones. The Bega Valley Shire granted development approval in 2006 enabling bank loans to be raised to cover the cost of installing the grey water system, access ways and a stand-alone fire-fighting system. A community water grant covered the cost of large tanks to store water from the rooves of a neighbouring aged care hostel. All houses will collect their own drinking water and only dry compost toilets are allowed. Council exacted high standards for the grey water system and the precedent has now been set for others to follow.

When first presenting the concept to the Council, Jenny Spinks said that Bend would be a success 'if we have a street with all the houses facing north'. Seven years later, she is amazed at how much of the initial vision has been achieved. Planning regulations have accommodated straw-bale housing construction, a centralised grey water system and at least 30 composting toilets in one street. One privately owned house is occupied, five are nearing completion, the building of five duplexes for low-income residents in partnership with Community Housing Limited has begun, and Council has approved plans for the Neighbourhood House. Six thousand trees, shrubs and grasses have been planted around the river's anabranch.

