

Backing the green horse

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Bricks and mortar has long been a trusted safe bet. Warr even safer bet.

For the most part, developers and builders have not wan But members of the general public have been prepared to expectation of reaping a greater return. Some have even l favourite of brick veneer, opt ing instead for the apparen

But strawbale is not a new phe nomenon. It is a construc farmers on the treeless grasslands of America's Great Plains used their hay balers to mak building blocks. And our own Melbourne even has straw panel homes that had been goin

Bridget Puszka, principal architect at BP Architects, was approached by clients wanting h post and beam farmhouse on their land in Gippsland, Victoria. One half of the couple w mentally benign as possible, and both were keen for the external walls to be strawbale.



The client was keen to raise the bale wal and family, but with everyone being time way. The local builder initially contracted mate rial he had little experience with. So travelled from Central Victoria to compl came from that region, working out at al In all it did not come in as economi call: does, however, feel that monetary pay ba aes thetics and atmosphere are very posi points out that the other half of the cou: complete convert, eager to send her data liveable internal temperature, regardless c

since been opened up for the 2008 Sustainable House Day Tour.

Not only are home owners embracing the benefits of strawbale construction, so too is the Australian Wildlife Hospital, the largest operational element of Wildlife Warriors a late Steve Irwin and his family. Six thousand wildlife animals are treated each year by the sorts of logistics are not best served by a converted avocado packing shed, so Gipp hat be the largest wildlife hospital in the world. Made of straw.

Gipp looked up everything she could on the subject. Eventually she found herself in tou Architects, and Frank Thomas of Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow Strawbale Construction. T largest strawbale building in Australia. Being open to the public the hospital, walls require achieved by rendering them with lime, which cures to a rock hard surface. Internally, We thermal mass to even out swings in temperatures.

The strawbale construction has become as much of a talking point as the hospital's work intentional. "Not everyone is interested in animals. You'd be surprised how many visitors by their other half," she says. "I wanted those people to also gain an envi ronmental edu surgeon who was visiting the hospital and commented it was "nicer than any private war

Like Puszka with her residential strawbale proj ect, Webb feels than many people believe events or using an agricultural waste material that is a strawbale structure, will work out c remains a labour inten sive construction method, especially in prepping the walls for their applied, rather than hand trowelled.

Thomas agrees. After working on nearly 90 strawbale buildings in more 10 years, he belie arranging work shops to facilitate free labour, clients should expect their strawbale buildi After all, as he points out, the walls are probably less than 30 per cent of the total cost c

But all agree that wonderful aesthetics aside, strawbale construction affords strong, long-sighted test results that rate rendered strawbale walls at R8 and R10. Even using the con nominated in the Gippsland farmhouse 6 star energy rating, insula tion standards are exc

When asked what it would take for century old strawbale construction to move more ma as most of the residential projects on his books were currently employing strawbales. He who can make bales more regular would be well received.

For Puszka, it came down to the industry at large taking note of market forces and respo for greener homes.

Thomas, convinced that strawbale interest is already there from home owners, thinks that all we are really taking about is an alternative envelope of the house. All their skills : building, it is just that they would now be backing the horse with the bright green colour

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