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KOGARAH TOWN SQUARE: WINNER OF 11 DESIGN AND PLANNING AWARDS FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFICIENCY

19th July 2004

Imagine every new apartment building and house generating its own electricity via new solar technology, and reducing its mains water supply consumption by over 40 percent... this is the potential demonstrated by the Kogarah Town Square development, designed by Australian architects Allen Jack+Cottier.

Recipient of the 2004 RAI Award for Ecologically Sustainable Design at Saturday's RAI Awards presentation dinner, the multi-award winning Kogarah Town Centre, commissioned by Kogarah Council and completed in 2003, clearly shows that designing to high standards of energy efficiency and water conservation, can enhance, rather than detract from, budget and design considerations.

In an Australian first, each of the three 6-8-storey buildings in the Kogarah Town Square project has its entire roof covered in light sensitive modules. The solar panels provide power to the public and retail spaces, with the excess power going into the grid with a rebate for the development's residents. A peak 160kW of solar power is generated, with a saving of 143 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year.

Peter Stronach, the Allen Jack+Cottier team leader for the project, said "Many people have the idea that good environmentally-sensitive design costs more than conventional ways of doing things, and can only be achieved at the expense of good looking buildings. This is actually not the case at all.

"Kogarah Town Square shows the benefits of integrating environmental principles into the initial design process, providing architectural forms and living/working spaces that are in harmony with the environment.

"These principles can also be applied to smaller projects. We now have the potential to transform the most common form of roofing in Australia into a major source of solar power generation. Even on less than optimal days, the roof area generates power with minimal loss of efficiency, using a standard, commercially available roofing system," he said.

In another first, specially designed transparent modules are featured on the north facing Town Square/Belgrave Street corner. They simultaneously generate power while letting in natural light, and were designed by Energy Australia. They are also used in the large skylight in the public library space at the rear of the Square, linked to a display at the Square's entrance that indicates the amount of energy generated in real time.

Adjustable awnings, adjustable louvres and fixed sunshading provide shelter to residential balconies and openings, creating architectural interest while increasing the energy efficiency of the buildings. Extra wide insulated cavity brick construction aids in maintaining a more stable internal temperature.

The innovative water management program at Kogarah Town Square also sets new standards in environmental conservation of water. It is designed to deliver a saving of 42 percent in mains water supply, via a combination of recycling and efficiency measures. 85 percent of the stormwater falling on the site each year is collected and stored in large retention tanks the size of Olympic swimming pools under the basement carpark. Conserved rain water and treated water is recycled for use in toilet flushing, irrigation and water features.

Responsible environmental design was only one of Allen Jack+Cottier's goals for this development. Another guiding principle for the design was to emphasise the feeling of community.

The Town Square provides a strong focal point for the Kogarah Municipality and local community. Street level retail enlivens the development, and links it with the established 'main street' shopping of nearby Railway Parade. Emphasis was placed on maximising the feeling of accessibility, interaction and diversity at street level. In addition to the significant amount of retail space at street level and within the arcade, the Town Square space, public library and public foyer (fitout not yet completed), public car park and the 193 residential apartments, all combine to create a thriving central community asset for Kogarah.

Despite the high density, the project also delivers a feeling of community through liveable, people-sized scale, excellent sightlines into and out of buildings, separation of residential and public access, and a diverse residential mix, with apartments overlooking the activity of the central Town Square, or the large internal landscaped courtyards.

This project was developed with a high level of community consultation, and will play a role in educating the broader community about the benefits of energy efficient design as an example of how it can be achieved cost effectively.

Kogarah Town Square has received the following awards:

- 2004 NSW RAIA – Winner – Ecologically Sustainable Design
- 2003 NSW Urban Design Institute of Australia (UDIA) – Winner – Energy Efficiency
- 2003 Green Building Awards, TAS & Francis Greenway Society – Gold Medal
- 2003 Planning Institute of Australia – Honourable Mention – Australian Awards for Urban Design Excellence
- 2003 NSW Urban Design Institute of Australia (UDIA) – Commendation – Public Sector Leadership in Urban Development
- 2003 Australian Property Institute – Winner – Excellence in Property – Australand Local Government Award
- 2003 Banksia Environmental Awards – Finalist – Leadership in Sustainable Buildings
- 2003 SEDA Green Globe Awards – Commendation
- 2003 Keep Australia Beautiful Metro Pride Award – Winner – Best Overall Sydney Metropolitan Council
- 2003 Local Government & Shires Association Awards – Winner – Excellence in Environment – Sustainable Design, Planning and Building
- 2003 Winner – Water Sensitive Urban Design Award (Belgrave Street Stormwater)

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