

## The practice of sustainable design in a heritage overlay



Mark Sanders, Director



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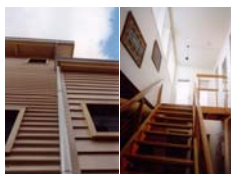
### Who is Third Ecology



Established in 2003, Third Ecology's mission is to create ecologically conscious and responsive buildings that minimise their impact on the natural and human environment

This is achieved through three aspects to business:

- Architects - since 1995
- Sustainability Advisors and Assessors - Since 2000
- Builder (Construction Manager) - since 2008
- For all of the above, sustainability is key - projects and operations



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### What will be covered today



- Climate change as a context
- Choices and judgments to be made - the relative importance of heritage and sustainability
- Heritage overlays and sustainability
- Examples - strategies and outcomes, other experiences and thoughts



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Climate change as context



Climate change will – and is already – effecting us all. Everyday we see or experience something – either directly or through the media – that demonstrates that climate change is happening.

- Severe weather events that lead to the loss of life and property – heat waves, floods, bushfires
- Infrastructure failure – power, rail – and the economic costs
- Higher commodity and food prices
- Loss of habitat/species – natural and urban

It is time for us to adapt or 'perish' if we wish to survive and thrive in a climate challenged world.



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Choices and judgments



- My base assumption is that building/place should be retained – embodied energy, streetscape value
- What to do with poorly orientated (front or side faces north) buildings and landscape?
- Some 'minor' alterations/additions may be required to create a more sustainable outcome – this could include how a client is able to use a dwelling
- Most decisions do not 'conflict' – especially the non visual works to the rear of dwellings, internal works, 'invisible' works...although some experiences suggest otherwise
- Other aspects do conflict – water tanks, solar panels, solar hot water, etc

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Heritage overlays and planning

- Planning – especially in relation to heritage – is an adversarial process
- Much seems to come down to 'personal' interpretation by the heritage advisor...conflicting 'world views' are common
- Much seems to be about – for individual dwellings at least – 'what it looks like' (and value judgments)
- Some things are accepted/acceptable (TV antennae, power lines, driveways – but not often car ports – other 'bits and pieces' attached to buildings/places)
- Trying to second guess as an experienced professional is hard enough, trying to explain to clients is sometimes impossible. Balancing these 'conflicts' can give 'heritage' a bad name
- Where issues are seemingly black or white, we as a society need to have a better understanding of what is more important
- VCAT is a cop out

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### Example 1 – Geelong West Residence

- 1915 dwelling, 1 star becomes 6 star....plus rainwater, greywater, sustainable materials, productive landscape,
- Strategies included:
  - ✓ distinguish between old and new (new contemporary living areas on slab, north glazing for passive solar)
  - ✓ improve existing – insulation, double glazing, draught sealing
  - ✓ underground rainwater tanks and rainwater supply throughout
  - ✓ grid connected PV system
  - ✓ grey water diversion to food producing and 'exotic' landscape
  - ✓ compared to average Victorian house on per person basis, 80% less potable water use (even during stage 4 restrictions), 90% less electricity use (incl PV system input), then GreenPower, Offsets (incl other lifestyle aspects)

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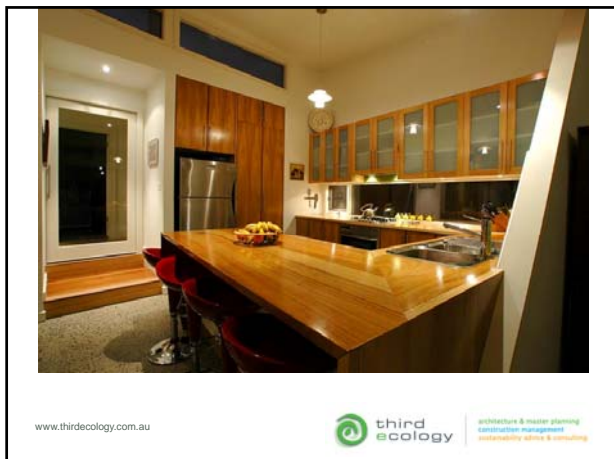
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**Example 2 – Newport Residence**

- 1930's dwelling, 1 star becomes 5 star.....plus rainwater, greywater, sustainable materials, productive landscape
- Strategies included:
  - ✓ creation of courtyard to allow north sun to new living spaces (front faces north so not ideal)
  - ✓ requirement to create small ensuite/WIR to side at front (set back, recessive), reinstatement of bay window
  - ✓ distinguish between old and new (new contemporary living areas on slab, north glazing for passive solar)
  - ✓ above ground rainwater tanks and rainwater supply throughout
  - ✓ grid connected PV system
  - ✓ grey water diversion to landscape

Rejected by heritage advisor (side addition, bay window until photo produced, rainwater tanks reduced in capacity, other 'concerns')

Appeal has now been lodged at VCAT

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 **third ecology** architecture & master planning  
construction management  
interior design & consulting

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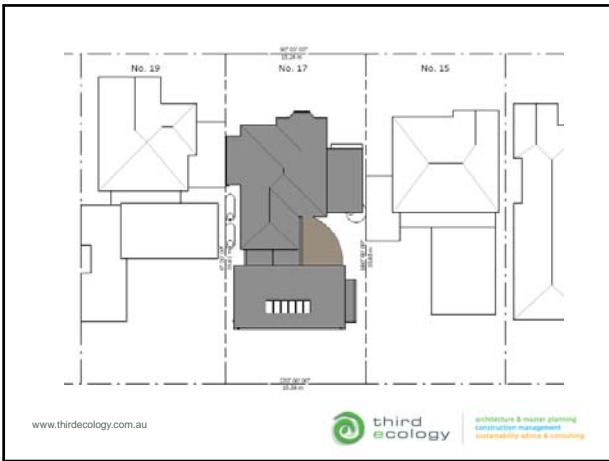
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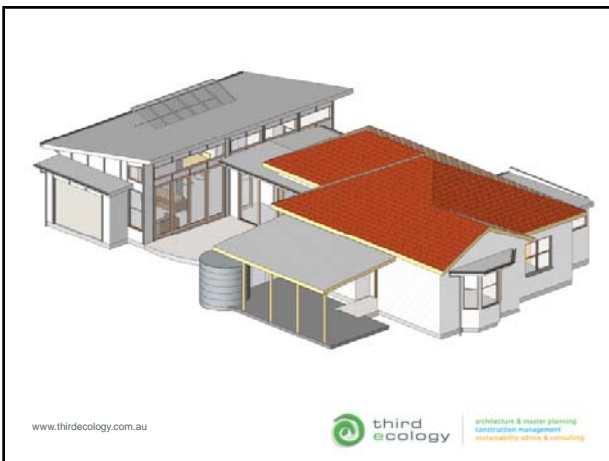
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Concluding thoughts and comments

- Where a council heritage advisor supported an application, the project went to VCAT mainly on issues associated with waste water, and VCAT rejected proposal based on heritage – resubmission is about to occur
- Where a full restoration was 'threatened' with rejection by heritage advisor due to effect on streetscape, yet project was 'invisible' from street
- I understand the importance of heritage and why overlays are in place, however a 'lowest common denominator' approach does not serve heritage – or the perception of heritage – well
- Planners/planning schemes and heritage advisors/heritage overlays (and often 'buried' supporting scheme documents) sometimes need a more 'balanced' approach
- There is too much waste of time and money in the context of where this money could be channeled – eg more sustainable projects, renewable energy

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Thank you



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