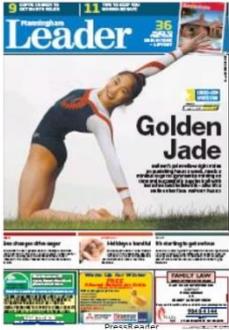


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Apples not far from tree

MATHEWS ESTATE STAYS GREEN

Anna Chisholm

WHEN Steve, Danny and Sue Mathews' parents bought a property in Donvale more than 50 years ago, it was because of the rural setting.

Not long after, Bob and Rivkah Mathews built their home at Mullum Estate on Old Warrandyte Rd, planting an apple orchard as well as gradually adding adjoining parcels of land.

But the orchards didn't always bear fruit and were removed in 1972, with the land being rezoned from rural to residential.

The couple fought hard to keep the 20ha site, bordered by the Mullum Mullum Creek and the Green Wedge, untouched. Decades later, the land remains the same – open paddocks and rolling hills occupied by curious kangaroos, beside the late-1950s-style home.

"Our parents came here because they loved the environment, landscape and nature," Steve Mathews, an ecologist and environmental planner and consultant, said. "There is a long history of grazing paddocks and there is still a number of fully grown remnant eucalyptus."

It was his father Bob who created a plan to co-ordinate the development of neighbouring properties, to cluster homes together and keep the bushland setting.

Although some chose to develop independently, the family has continued their parents' conservation cause and recently received the

“Because we all love the land we didn't want to see it chopped up in an unsympathetic way”
- SUE MATHEWS

EnviroDevelopment certification from the Urban Development Institute of Australia.

The family donated 9ha of land to Manningham Council, allowing the completion the Mullum Creek Linear Trail Link upgrade.

More recently the family has put 9ha of land up for sale, which will be used for 56 environmentally friendly homes.

Sue Mathews, an environmental philanthropist and an Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network board member, said a panel of architects and designers with experience in sustainable housing helped with the design work.

"Up to 45 per cent of the land has been dedicated to open space and homes can only go ahead if they reach a 7.5-star energy rating," she said. "Because we all love the land we didn't want to see it chopped up in an unsympathetic way."

Each home is assessed against an individual 3D building and landscaping envelope to make sure natural light is available for solar energy.

Danny Mathews, who works with environmental groups, said he will maintain the original home. Details: mullumcreek.com.au.



The Mathews family, including siblings Danny, Sue and Steve, has lived on Donvalé's Mullum Creek Estate for more than 50 years and developed the land themselves. Pictures: STEVE TANNER