

# Mullum Creek

## Guiding residential development



Eva Matthews explores the Mullum Creek project and the building materials guides that are helping owners meet important environmental design criteria.



Image courtesy Danny Matthews

↑ Artist's impression of a home design from Mullum Creek's 'Living Design Principles'.

IN 1958, Bob and Rivkah Mathews—ordinary people with a passion for nature and social justice—bought a property and built a family home on 20 acres of open paddocks and natural bushland in Donvale, a suburb 20 kilometres east of Melbourne. Over time, they bought adjacent parcels of land, growing the property to some 20 hectares.

When the land was re-zoned from rural to residential in 1972, Bob and Rivkah had ambitious hopes to coordinate the development of neighbouring properties so as to preserve the natural landscape as much as possible. Many of the neighbours, however, had other ideas!

In the late 90s, the three Mathews children—Steven, Danny and Sue—reignited the vision with a commitment to conservation, good design and social responsibility. Embarking on a lengthy and complex planning process, they finally saw that dream approved by council in 2012 for the environmentally sustainable residential development that is Mullum Creek.

The property has been subdivided into 56 lots, with each being oriented to maximise

access to sunlight (for solar PV and passive design purposes) and views of the creek and bushland. A cycling/pedestrian track will link with the Yarra Trail, enabling an easy fossil-fuel-free commute into Melbourne and the development has 45% dedicated open space.

To ensure the successful implementation of the Mullum Creek vision—beautiful, sustainable homes with a minimum 7.5 Star energy rating—land purchasers are guided by comprehensive design criteria, developed by an expert collective of building and landscape architects, urban planners and ESD consultants, that have been on board since the project's early days. These criteria seek to uphold environmental principles including by using construction methods and materials that minimise their carbon footprint and impact on the environment.

To this end, owners are supported through financial incentives to access architects and design professionals who are familiar with the site and prescribed design principles. The project consultants have also put together a number of materials guides designed to help owners understand the environmental pros and cons of various products and also to make it easier for them to choose those that will achieve their sustainable design ambitions.

Just 18 months since launching the development, nearly all lots have been sold, showing that there is a healthy desire for people to live in harmony with their environment. Let's hope that the blueprint that has been so thoughtfully developed to minimise the residential footprint for this project is mirrored in similar urban and regional developments—and individual projects—into the future. \*

### Building materials guides

The following guides (with entries chosen for their low impact in production, use and/or eventual disposal) are available on the Mullum Creek website.

While they, and several other useful resources, have been developed primarily for the future residents of Mullum Creek, they can be (and the Mathews family hope they will be) accessed by anyone embarking on a sustainable building project.



#### TIMBER

Includes information about products, species used, recommended applications (e.g. framing, joinery, cladding), manufacturers and retailers.



#### CLAY

Includes brands, suppliers, reasons for recommendation (e.g. embodied energy, thermal mass properties, sound attenuation, whether recycled/recyclable).



#### CONCRETE

Includes brands, suppliers, reasons for recommendation (e.g. insulating properties, recycled content, embodied energy, whether locally sourced/produced, meeting environmental/quality standards).



#### STEEL

Includes brands, suppliers, reasons for recommendation (e.g. prefabrication, efficient processing, meeting quality standards, efficiency of use, strength grade).

View guides at: [www.mullumcreek.com.au](http://www.mullumcreek.com.au)