Townsville Bulletin

Smart house keeps tabs on appliances

SARAH WEBB | December 8th, 2012

A TOWNSVILLE builder is taking house smarts to the next level after calling on technology specialists and leading university researchers to create the region's most intelligent home.

Builder Darren Finlay, of Finlay Homes, has teamed up with technology specialists and university researchers to create what he believes will be North Queensland's smartest house.

And in a Jetsons-style move, he'll even live in the home with his family for a year as part of the study.

Construction of the "Innovation House" will take three years.

Mr Finlay said the project aimed to set new benchmarks and find alternative solutions for how homes are designed, built and lived in.

At the heart of the "10-star home" is a state-of-the-art technology hub capable of controlling every device and appliance, as well as capture data from the home's energy, water and waste output for detailed analyses by James Cook University researchers.

"With the home's state-of-the-art automation system we can control every single electrical device from one central panel and even from afar through a smart phone or tablet device," Mr Finlay said.

"While this is the direction that home functionality is heading, we're actually more focused on finding the best solutions for energy, water and waste reduction so that we can continue to build smarter homes in the future.

"While living in Innovation House we will be constantly replacing, trialling and monitoring many different electrical appliances, from stoves, lights and home-theatre equipment to airconditioners, so that we can scientifically measure their environmental and financial efficiency."

Townsville's AV Design has been tasked with designing, programming, installing and monitoring the home-automation technologies for Innovation House.

AV Design's Micheal Engel said the capacity of the home's automation system, called C-Bus, was virtually limitless.

"Home automation puts control and convenience in the hands of the home occupant and utilises electricity very efficiently within a home, allowing not only a reduction in power bills, but also making them an environmentally friendly choice," Mr Engel said.

"There exists a misconception that home automation adds unnecessary costs and stress, yet in actuality the cost of installing such technology can be offset within a few years by the savings made in power bills.

"Being able to understand and monitor electricity use informs behaviours and consistently leads to more sustainable energy use."

When completed in April, Innovation House will be on public display for 12 months before the Finlay family takes occupancy.

The home is being built at Sanctum estate, Mt Low, with the support of Townsville City Council, Ergon, James Cook University and Maidment Developments.

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