

Hardie souls

Cement fibre products from James Hardie provide builders with environmentally friendly cladding solutions.

As regulators and consumers become more aware of green issues, architects and builders have come under increasing pressure to improve the environmental performance and sustainability of the homes they build. Many assume that green design comes with a significant price tag due to increased construction complexities and material costs. However, this does not have to be the case if architects and builders are willing to be innovative.

James Hardie, the world leader in fibre cement building products, provides several cladding and façade solutions that provide builders with more sustainable construction options. Cement fibre cladding products offer significant sustainability advantages over many traditional building materials but also balance other factors such as cost, ease of construction and street appeal.

Energy boost

While much of the initial focus on building sustainability was centred on the issue of energy efficiency, a more holistic approach has now emerged. This approach takes a much broader view of construction. It is now recognised that 'embodied energy,' (which is the energy expended through all



the processes associated with the construction and maintenance of a home – from the extraction of raw materials, their processing and maintenance thereafter) plays a significant part in the overall lifecycle analysis of a new home.

Conventional wisdom assumes that the embodied energy content of a building is small compared to the energy used in operating the building over its life. However, according to Pierre Castien,

General Manager of James Hardie Europe, recent research has shown that this is not always the case and that embodied energy can, in fact, be the equivalent of many years' operational energy.

The single most important factor in reducing the impact of 'embodied energy' is to design buildings with the total lifecycle in mind, essentially ensuring that they will be long lasting. This means the use of durable products is extremely important, particularly as some cladding products, such as timber and metal, need regular treatment to preserve their visual and protective qualities and can be prone