

## From mean streets to green streets

Kath Dolan

April 21, 2012 - 3:00AM

A website is seeking to raise the profile of that rare newcomer, the green rental property.

Advertisement

When [greenmoves.com.au](#) founder Dani King rattles off a list of significant sustainable property developments under construction around town, it certainly sounds promising.

Impressive multi-unit residential developments, such as Breathe Architecture's The Commons in Brunswick, Lend Lease's Converso apartments at Docklands and Stockland's Selandra Rise community, near Cranbourne, will increase the supply of green rental properties in Melbourne.

With councils encouraging sustainable housing in municipalities including the City of Melbourne, Moreland, Yarra, Darebin, Knox, Whitehorse and Banyule, Ms King predicts green properties will be much easier to find and rent.

For now, though, she is the first to admit it's a struggle. The former IT consultant-turned-sustainability adviser launched her website, greenmoves, almost two years ago to advise people about the benefits of sustainable homes and promote green houses for sale or rent.

At the time of writing, however, the site has just two listings for green rentals, only one of which is in Victoria (a house in West Footscray that was recently leased).

"It's actually very difficult to find sustainable rental properties," Ms King says. "There are a couple of reasons for that. The first is there are not many out there."

"A lot of landlords or owners don't tend to be inclined to spend the money on a rental property to bring it up to scratch or to put in energy-efficient features, unless they were already there or they need to do something like replace the hot-water system. Then they might look at something more sustainable like solar. But, generally speaking, people just replace like with like."

As a result, the few green rentals available tend to be highly prized and tightly held. When was the last time you saw "for rent" ads for prestige apartments at Triptych in Southbank or Elwood Green in Elwood, for example?

"I know of about 10 in Melbourne but they never become available - the people who are in them love being there because they're so comfortable and they're cheap to live in," Ms King says.

"When they move, they always tell their mates and their mates move in. I know three of them have come up over the past two years and not one has got to an agent because they get handed on to friends."

Of course, multistorey residential developments aren't the only source of green rentals and Ms King is keen to hear from tenants who think their rental house may tick greenmoves' boxes.

A qualified home sustainability assessor, Ms King says properties listed on the site are assessed and must have at least three sustainable features: one water related (such as water tanks, greywater systems or dual-flush toilets) and two energy related (such as insulation, draught sealing, solar panels or five-star-plus appliances).

New properties must have an energy-efficiency rating of at least seven stars.

Ms King wants to hear from landlords and real estate agents who are seeking practical, low-cost ways to green or market their rental properties.

She predicts a steadily growing demand for sustainable rentals - hence the addition of a "wanted" page to her website - but concedes many in the industry remain unconvinced.

"The biggest challenge has been getting the real estate industry to give it due consideration," Ms King says.

"Their view is, 'Well, nobody's asking for it,' but that's probably because people don't understand the implications of what they're getting. It's starting to [matter to people] and I think they need to be prepared."

*This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/domain/home-investor-centre/from-mean-streets-to-green-streets-20120420-1xanx.html>*