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Net zero energy homes to save homeowners on energy costs

On behalf of the Australian Government, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) has today announced \$784,000 in funding to Mirvac Victoria Pty Ltd (Mircvac) to trial their 'net zero energy' housing estate in the Melbourne suburb of Altona North.

Mircvac's master-planned community "The Fabric" will include two, three and four bedroom townhouses and future mid-rise apartments. In the first phase, Mircvac will build 49 new townhouses which will demonstrate the feasibility of achieving net zero energy homes at scale and significantly reduce energy bills for homeowners.

With the support of ARENA the \$2 million project will see each of the townhouses designed with a minimum 7 star energy rating. Each townhouse will have a minimum of 3.8-5 kW rooftop solar array, 10 kWh home battery storage, real-time smart home energy monitoring, upgraded wall and roof insulation, double glazed windows and energy efficient electric appliances, heating, cooling, lighting and hot water systems.

The townhouses will also be ready to provide demand response with heating and cooling devices enabled to speak to the grid. There will also be provision for a 32Amp electrical point installed in the garage for current and future EV owners.

By demonstrating net zero energy homes at scale, The Fabric aims to accelerate the net zero energy concept throughout Mircvac's portfolio and through the wider housing industry by providing insight into cost-effective design opportunities, in conjunction with live market testing to gauge the acceptance for net zero energy homes. The project will also provide 24-months of de-identified energy data to ARENA to review the impact of the homes in operation.

ARENA CEO Darren Miller said the project will demonstrate the benefits of incorporating consumer energy technologies and energy efficiency into new homes.

"By incorporating energy efficiency, renewable energy and smart heating and cooling when designing and building new homes, Mircvac's trial will hopefully encourage a step change in the housing industry. Through this project, Mircvac will be able to offer home buyers features that will help reduce energy use, energy bills and emissions from the beginning."

"The Altona North site will provide the perfect test case in pushing to create change in the building industry and also inform potential buyers about the benefits of owning a net zero energy home," he said.

Mircvac's Victorian General Manager of Residential Elysa Anderson said: "Driven by a desire to reduce environmental impacts and improve operational affordability for the Fabric's future residents, we have committed to an extensive trial of the net zero energy homes sustainability model, where the goal is to create net-zero energy homes by incorporating low-energy-use and renewable-energy-power."

"Net zero homes at The Fabric will offer both environmental and economic benefits. Lower energy consumption enables families to spend less money on their utility bills; it's also the most responsible and sustainable choice for future generations," she said.

Mircvac is expected to commence construction on the townhouses in The Fabric in late 2020.