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## Competition aims to prove that building sustainable homes is already possible

# Tomorrow's houses today

By **BRUCE MUNRO**

A NATIONWIDE competition to build sustainable housing is being launched by Otago Polytechnic today.

The Sustainable Habitat Challenge (Shac) '09 will see inter-disciplinary tertiary-led teams throughout New Zealand competing to prove sustainable living is already possible, national co-ordinator Tim Bishop says.

"It's about producing real homes, generating new knowledge and building partnerships between people with the skills and resources to make sustainable living a reality," Mr Bishop said.

Mr Bishop comes to the role from the University of Otago, where he was involved in research into energy efficiency as part of his master's degree.

At this evening's launch, Mr Bishop will outline the competition's goals and timetable.

The competition is funded by the Ministry for the Environment.

It is hoped up to 10 teams, comprised of industry professionals, local government representatives, academic staff and students, will enrol for Shac '09 by early May.

Completed houses will be judged in October next year.

"We want to give today's and tomorrow's professionals the chance to work together and explore their ideas around sustainable solutions for housing," Mr Bishop said.



**Sky's the limit:** Otago Polytechnic's Tim Bishop (left) and Philip Ballard discuss the nationwide sustainable housing competition being launched today.

"We want to provide opportunities for researchers in New Zealand to build a body of knowledge to take us into the future."

Discussions with tertiary institutions throughout New

Zealand had been positive.

"In Auckland, Unitec looks like taking a lead, while in Wellington, Victoria University showed most interest."

Dunedin's team was likely

to be a polytechnic and university collaboration.

"We had a meeting last week that was very positive."

"There were ecologists, builders, anthropologists, historians... all contributing

to design a better way of building to support sustainable communities."

Sustainable living involves reducing the use of resources, while improving quality of life.

"We are throwing out the preconceptions of what sustainable housing should be like."

— Sustainable Habitat Challenge co-ordinator  
Tim Bishop

"The way we build housing today presumes an infinite availability of resources."

"There is no point trying to create a sustainable future we don't like; but we need to use what we need for today and leave enough for tomorrow."

Judging criteria will include energy consumption, water use, waste production and how the home integrates with its surrounding community.

"We are throwing out the preconceptions of what sustainable housing should be like."

"So we are starting with the key issues of sustainability and leaving it to the teams to see what they come up with."

"It could be anything from a beach back to an inner-city apartment."

Teams can receive a contribution of up to \$10,000 towards their project but will have to find ways to fund the rest of the cost.

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