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To Whom It May Concern

When my partner, Suzi Rosedale, and I decided to rebuild our one and a half bedroom fibro beach shack in late 2006 we were extremely fortunate in obtaining the services of Dave Lawrence. Dave drew up the plans for a new house employing solar passive design principles. And now, instead of the hot, un-insulated sauna box that we used to live in, we are proud owners of a cool-in-summer, warm-in-winter, three-and-a-half-bedroom home.

Suzi and I took on the project as owner builders wanting to save some money, but knowing very little about the building trade or the task in front of us. Having lived at 16 Wareham Street for 17 years we had a fair idea of what we wanted, but needed somebody with Dave's patience, design knowledge and attention to detail, to separate the fantasy from the reality.

Dave was always responsive to our suggestions and happy to accommodate our occasionally idiosyncratic wish list- while tactfully pointing out where we were making potentially serious mistakes. He oversaw the project through the often tricky Council DA process- (including preparation of a bush fire report) and also helped us move on with our plans to the Engineers and the various other trades. In fact we went through two major changes of plan after the DA had been approved by Byron Shire Council.

Throughout the build, Dave was readily available for that extra bit of helpful advice via phone or email contact, or in person, and had an answer to the many dozens of questions that arise in any construction project. As a bonus we often received invaluable help from Dave in choosing non-toxic materials throughout (including paint, insulation etc.)

Intrigued by the solar passive approach, Suzi and I eventually did Dave's Energy Efficient Housing Design course at ACE and were able to understand, often in retrospect, the reasons why certain things were there in the plans (such as clerestory windows, louvers, minimal glass on the western side etc.)

Simply put, rebuilding 16 Wareham street has opened our eyes to the potential ways in which we can all use a simple, common sense approach to constructing dwellings that require minimal energy for comfort and avoid any possibility of 'sick building syndrome' through the use of natural products. We have since given away our ceiling fans and air conditioner and look forward to further enhancements towards self sufficiency in the form of solar electric power and rainwater harvesting through tanks. Then we'll happily disconnect from all the grids, and feel a bit smug when energy and water prices go through the roof (literally).

Paul Davies