

Photo Caption:

The elevator shaft and car are lowered into place by crane at the Universal Design Renovations building at Merimbula, under the watchful eye of builder John Bennett.

Accessible for all

A unique redevelopment is going on in Imlay Street, Merimbula, believed to be the first of its type in the district. The duplex dwellings are being completely rebuilt and extended using Universal Access design principles to provide a home for the wheelchair-bound owner, as well as holiday or respite accommodation for disabled people from elsewhere. It is thought that there is a total lack of disabled-access holiday accommodation in Merimbula, and possibly the Shire.

This benchmark design is the brainchild of Disability Access Planner and Architect, Harry Sprintz, of Sydney. The development Application was warmly supported by Bega Valley Shire Council, and Mayor Tony Allen, when it was submitted last year.

Disabled Access construction expert and local builder, John Bennett, proudly told this newspaper that the installation of the lift last week had allowed the roof to be closed up, and works could now proceed quickly. “As well as having access to all parts of the house and gardens for wheelchair and disabled residents and visitors, it is also a very eco-friendly design,” he said. “Both dwellings use the latest and most efficient “evacuated tube” solar hot water technology, and solar cells on the roof will supply surplus electrical power back into the grid. Stormwater will be collected and reticulated to relieve the use of mains water. Lightweight steel frame and Hebel Power Panel walls will save on heating and cooling energy use. It is altogether an exemplar of a building that is designed and made to be both people-friendly and ecologically sustainable”, John Bennett said.