



•The Universal Design Project takes shape in Imlay Street, Merimbula.

## Making holidays more accessible, by design

Merimbula has been chosen as the site for an innovative new home renovation project, which will showcase the concepts of 'universal design'.

In the first project of its kind in Merimbula, a holiday shack in Imlay Street is being transformed into a dual occupancy residence designed to provide modern holiday accommodation for people with physical disabilities.

Universal Design, a concept that originated in the US, utilises a number of principles that help those with access challenges to move with greater ease

around the home.

The owner of the property, Alex Cochran, of Sydney, developed an interest in Universal Design after his partner, Desiree, suffered a stroke in April 2006 and was confined to a wheelchair.

"A holiday should be relaxing for all family members and this unique project will provide an ideal destination for everyone," Mr Cochran said.

Mr Cochran and his partner plan to move into the top floor of the renovated duplex while the bottom floor will be leased to holiday-makers.

"We intend to renovate this duplex so that not only is it friendly to Desiree and I, but will also provide an easy living holiday venue for those families that have similar accessibility issues," he said.

The house will include features such as wide wheelchair friendly doorways, swing doors, non-slip floors, no stairs and accessible shelves and cabinets, helping to make life a lot easier for those with limited mobility.

The house also includes a separate living area for a live-in carer.

"But what makes the

project even more exciting is that at its conclusion, Merimbula will have a short-term holiday accommodation venue that will be ideally suited to people with disabilities and carers," he said.

Mr Cochran said embracing Universal Design would not only add to individual quality of life, but would also ease the burden on future governments.

Universal Design renovations allow people to live in their homes longer, therefore reducing the demand placed on aged care.

The new duplex will also help address the acute shortage of respite care facilities in the Bega Valley, he said.

The renovation is being fully documented on the website [www.universaldesignrenovations.com](http://www.universaldesignrenovations.com) with a hands-on account of the trials and tribulations captured by Mr Cochran in an online blog.

He said this was the first time in Australia where this process has been documented in the public domain.

"It will give others following in our footsteps a great guide," he said.

## Nominate a volunteer

Bega Valley Shire Council is urging local not-for-profit organisations to nominate their most dedicated workers for the 2008 NSW Volunteer of the Year Award.

Mayor Tony Allen said the shire had a very high level of volunteerism, through sporting and service clubs, emergency services, library and gallery volunteers, hall and cemetery committees, and charity fundraising organisations.

"The NSW Volunteer of the Year Award is a wonderful opportunity for one of our own volunteers to receive well-deserved, State-wide recognition and to be thanked for their generous contributions," Cr Allen said.

All entrants must be nominated and must have volunteered for the equivalent of one day a week (or six hours) for at least six months over a 12 month period.

Entries close on September 30 and nomination forms and information are available through the Centre for Volunteering website, [www.volunteering.com.au](http://www.volunteering.com.au)

## Don't zone out on the phone!

The NSW Police Force has launched a striking new advertising campaign, which warns pedestrians to limit distractions when crossing the road and to watch for cars when wearing headphones.

Growth in the use of portable media players and mobile phone usage has sparked a need for greater awareness among both pedestrians and motorists to ensure these new technologies don't lead to a rise in pedestrian accidents.

"Although there has been no significant increase in pedestrian incidents to date, the growth and uptake of these new technologies is seemingly a potential problem," Traffic Services Commander Chief Superintendent John Hartley said.

"The public needs to be aware of the impact of these new technologies and the distractions they create - both pedestrians and motorists alike."

"The message to pedes-

trians is never cross a road while using headphones or mobile phones.

"Pedestrians need to take responsibility for their own safety by using crossings, obeying road rules and being aware of their surroundings. Parents need to educate and speak to their children about the potential safety impacts of these new technologies."

In 2007, almost 80 pedestrians across the State died as a result of collisions with cars.

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