

Turning lights off turns us on to the planet

By OWEN JACQUES

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DINERS at George's Thai restaurant at Mackay Marina were last night treated to a candlelit dinner for all the right reasons.

As part of the Daily Mercury's Mackay's Biggest Turn Off campaign – to get homes and businesses to turn off their lights for half an hour to raise awareness about the environment – George's Thai hit the off switch.

Restaurant co-owners George and Vera Thanyakittikul said they thought it was a good idea to join in and turn off the lights for about half an hour for the environment.

"We turned off the lights and put candlelights on the table," Mr Thanyakittikul said.

"It was a good thing to do."

He said switching off the lights was something easy that the business could do, with minimal disruption from 8pm until 8.30pm and "then

it's finished.

"I think it was okay for the half hour."

Last night's demonstration was considered a success.

Eimeo resident Sandra Cain had a letter published in the Daily Mercury's letters to the editor section yesterday about the importance of doing practical things to help out the environment.

She said Mackay's Biggest Turn Off was a good start.

"Anything that gets people thinking more – it's a good thing," Mrs Cain said.

"It doesn't seem to be considered very often."

She also said that debating over climate change was pointless.

"Whether we have climate change or not isn't the issue, it's that we're making a mess of the planet," Mrs Cain said.

She said people should be encouraged to do more to help the environment rather than being satisfied with a half hour in the dark.

"I'd like to see more people doing practical things about it," she said.



George's Thai at the Mackay Marina was plunged into mood lighting as they took part in Mackay's Biggest Turn Off and turned off the lights for 30 minutes to spread awareness about the environment.

PHOTO: AMANDA BALMER 281107/426

Solar supply set to power northern suburb of future



Robert Kerr of Carbon Friendly Enterprises, left, and Plantation Palms developer Kim Clarke check out new solar lighting for the planned suburb.

PHOTO: AMANDA BALMER 281107/261

By SARAH CRAWFORD

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IF all the street lights in Mackay were run on solar energy an entire power station could be shut down for good.

It's an inspiring thought.

And it is something that developers of the planned Northern Beaches green suburb, Plantation Palms, want to put into practice on the streets of their 298ha estate.

By creating solar street lighting, developer Kim Clarke said they would save money for the residents and reducing greenhouse gas emissions at the same time.

"By day, the lights will be pumping electricity back into the grid and by night the solar energy will light up the streets," he said.

The production of power to send back to the electricity grid and the low cost of the solar energy will mean residents save on their bills.

Carbon Friendly Enterprises marketing manager Robert Kerr said the installation of solar lighting would pay for itself in three to five years through electricity savings.

But before the streets of the future suburb could be lit-up under the soft glow of solar, Plantation Palms developers had to get their proposal

approved by Ergon Energy and Mackay City Council.

Yesterday, they began their demonstration on the effectiveness of renewable energy by installing solar lights for their billboards.

"It will be a great demonstration on sustainable energy," Mr Clarke said.

Mr Kerr whose company was installing the solar panelling on the billboards said there had to be about a week of extremely overcast weather before the pow-

er source failed.

"And then there is a back-up system that lasts between three and seven days," he said.

Plantation Palms is off Eimeo and Mackay-Bucasia roads.

About half the estate will be park and wetlands, and the developers are planning to install a grey water system for all homes.

Mackay City Council approved the first 100 blocks of the development, which will eventually house 5000 residents, on August 23.

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