

What it's about

BANKS, developers, casinos and first-home buyers are trusting their luck to the ancient Chinese art of feng shui.

Janene Laird, president of the Eltham-based International Feng Shui Association, said better access to English-speaking Chinese masters had helped boost its profile and popularity.

"A properly trained feng shui consultant will assess the external environment, the interior and the occupants of a home or business and give advice," she said.

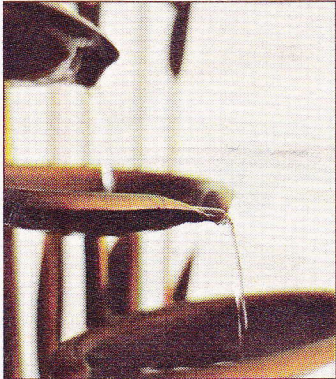
"The benefits of feng shui include better financial prosperity, good health and harmonious relationships."

Central to feng shui is the concept of yin and yang, the flow of positive energy and

the five elements of fire, earth, metal, water and wood. It focuses on how the physical environment affects a person's wellbeing. First developed 6000 years ago it is, in modern times, combined with interior design and architecture.

The landscape that surrounds a building is analysed according to the "four celestial animals" – the red bird, green dragon, white tiger and black tortoise – which are metaphors for trees, hills, buildings and other structures.

The invisible energies that exist inside and outside a building are called "flying stars" and the positioning of desks, beds and other furniture can influence the flow of these energies.



Minding our business

Small business is the lifeblood of small communities, and the Diamond Valley is full of innovative business folk catering to niche markets, with cottage industries and quirky companies cornering weird and wonderful markets. The *Diamond Valley Leader's* Minding Our Business series celebrates the region's unusual and creative businesses – as well as those that simply tickle our fancy.

into play

Advising friends and family on the ancient Chinese art soon snowballed into a small business for the mother of two who now lives in Research.

Ms Lapadula-Merino travels all over Melbourne to advise clients on how to improve the positive energy of their home.

A typical consultation involves touring a home, taking a compass reading, finding out when the home was built and compiling a feng shui chart.

The visit is followed up with a report on the home's positive aspects, "challenging areas" that need fixing and suggestions for improvement.

"Some changes might be more time-consuming or expensive and I always try to recommend the things that are cheapest and easiest," Ms Lapadula-Merino said.

Most homes had "little issues" that could be easily fixed by moving furniture or even moving a rubbish bin away from a door, though some changes were long-term and more expensive.

More details: living-energy.com.au

