

Appy days: flats go high-tech

» **TOBY JOHNSTONE**

Australia's most high-tech apartment comes with a butler who will do your grocery shopping, organise babysitters and wash your car. It's called the iButler.

At the launch of the \$300 million Avantra development in Mascot on Saturday, Sydney buyers were introduced to technology never before seen in Australia.

Whether it be through sophisticated fit-outs or plans for monolithic towers, developers with substantial financial backing from China are changing apartment living as we know it.

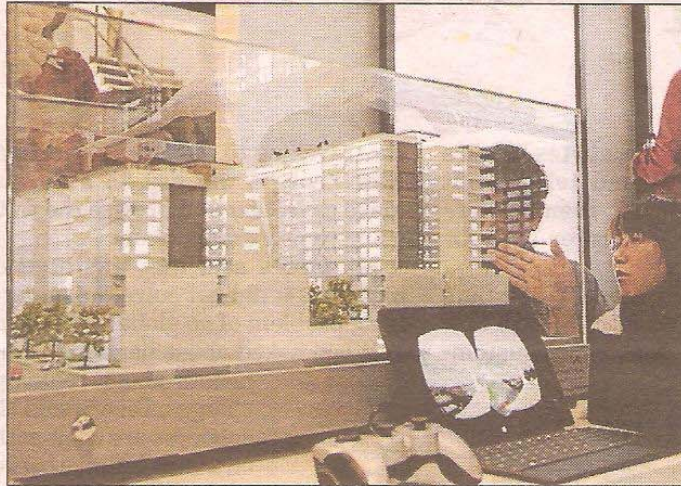
"The technology is ready and there are very powerful platforms through which everything can be done," Steven Yu, managing director of developer Longton, said.

iButler allows Avantra residents to organise their domestic life using an iPhone or the mounted iPad in the apartment.

The app can be used to order groceries and dry cleaning, or to book in service providers such as cleaners, chiropractors and masseuses who are given temporary passcodes to the apartment - all debited to a monthly bill.

Residents of the 309-apartment complex will also use iCommunity - an app that facilitates interactions between neighbours over Twitter and Chinese microblogging site Weibo. It is the modern version of the community notice board with the added money-spinner of classified advertising.

Apartments in Avantra range from \$499,000 for a one-bedroom unit to \$1.49 million for one of the four-bedroom penthouses.



Launch: People visit the display centre for the Mascot project. Photo: Janie Barrett

APARTMENT TRENDS

- ▶ iButler and iCommunity apps to book services and interact with neighbours.
- ▶ Automation software uses iPad to control lights, music and climate.
- ▶ Fingerprint and iris recognition entry.
- ▶ Smart glass that electrically switches from clear to glazed glass. Commonly used in bathrooms and bedrooms.
- ▶ "Swiss Army" studios that use collapsible walls/tables to create six different rooms depending on the occasion.

Last year, the 32-year-old Mr Yu, who moved to Australia from China at the age of 17, launched a project in Mascot called Futra. It was one of the first apartment blocks to replace

keys with fingerprint recognition technology.

"This product is not new to the world; I saw it a few years ago in Hong Kong," said Herman Chow, who bought a two-bedroom apartment in Futra.

"But this is very high-tech stuff that people haven't come across in Australia. It is only now being introduced into the Sydney market," he said.

It is not just technology that is flowing in from China.

A largely state-owned Chinese development company, Greenland Group, is spending \$600 million to build Sydney's tallest residential tower in the middle of the city.

That is on top of the \$110 million it spent to secure the site at 115 Bathurst Street from the Sydney Water Board.

Greenland Group has just launched plans for a \$500,000 display suite at the base of the building.

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