Welcome to Your Home

Your Home is your guide to building, buying or renovating a home. It shows how to create a comfortable home with low impact on the environment — economical to run, healthier to live in and adaptable to your changing needs.

Your home is important in so many ways. It’s a place to unwind, relax and spend quality time with family and friends. It’s also likely to be the biggest investment you make. Your decisions about your home have consequences for your future living costs and quality of life. Collectively, such decisions contribute to the bigger picture and can help to create more vibrant, connected and sustainable towns and cities.

In such rapidly changing times, smart investment decisions demand smart thinking about new issues. When you’re planning your renovation or building project it’s easy to focus on the short term, but features that enhance resale value, improve comfort and reduce bills are worth paying for.

Your Home is a comprehensive guide to the design principles and features that add value to your home and reduce its environmental impact. Many of them come at no additional cost. They just require the right ‘know how’ at the right stage of your renovation or building project. Others may add cost but also add lasting value and help to ‘future-proof’ your home against rising energy and water costs.

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Each section in Your Home covers a particular sustainability theme, such as passive design or energy. A sustainable home needs to address all of these themes in tandem. The principles and ideas in each section can be applied to any home. The articles in each section contain advice on practical solutions you can adapt to your budget, climate and lifestyle. As sustainable housing technologies and approaches are evolving all the time, Your Home is periodically updated to keep the information current.
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Who is *Your Home* for?

*Your Home* was written to make the process of creating sustainable homes and renovations easier for a range of different groups. Its content and design were informed by research with homeowners, architects, designers and builders to find out what information they needed most and how they wanted it presented. The starting point for creating *Your Home* was to ask them what they most needed to know to make the process of creating a sustainable home easier.

**For homeowners,** *Your Home* helps explain the process of renovating and building sustainably. Whether you want a general overview or detail on a specific topic, *Your Home* is designed to help you create a sustainable home in the most cost effective way.

**For architects and designers,** *Your Home*’s comprehensive overview of sustainable design principles and strategies includes detailed information on a range of different topics. Use it as a refresher and a design support tool; give it to clients to familiarise them with the options available.

**For builders,** especially the many who play a role in design as well as construction, *Your Home* has relevant design advice. It is also full of useful detail on procurement of materials and products, waste management, and installation of various sustainability products and technologies. Give it to clients to familiarise them with the options available.
Why sustainable design?
Over long periods of time, by trial and error, vernacular building solutions (buildings based on local conditions) evolved, and they all contain elements of sustainable design. We build today for more or less the reason we have always built — to make safe, healthy shelters that protect us from the elements and keep us comfortable. However, cheap accessible fossil energy sources and the proliferation of technology and new materials have encouraged us to solve building problems differently in recent times. Unfortunately, some of these methods may be compromising the ability of our planet to sustain us in the long or even medium term. The new challenge is to use our technology to minimise environmental impact, while continuing to improve the comfort and performance of the homes we create.

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A great majority of Australians currently live in homes that work against the climate, not with it. These homes are too cold or too hot, waste energy and are comparatively expensive to run. Most homes use far more water than necessary, and can be made of materials that damage our health and the environment. Using good design principles can save energy, water and money, while creating a more enjoyable and comfortable home.

How is housing changing?
Housing of the future will need to be adaptable and resilient, helping us to respond to both predicted and unexpected change. It will also need to suit significantly changed demographic patterns and lifestyles, and have minimal environmental impact. Many of the homes we build today will still be in use in 50 years’ time, when climate change, population growth and resource depletion will have created a very different picture.

The move towards ‘positive’ development that has a net positive ecological and social impact might seem like an ambitious goal today. However, progressive parts of the housing industry are working towards this goal and it must be the norm in any scenario for a sustainable future.

Author
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