



# Meeting climate change *heard on!*

Last month I mentioned that we need to build more 'future catastrophe-proof' homes, given that the weather in the near future may not be what we were used to, and for which we built homes in the past.

These homes must be purposely designed right from the start, and built to *not just cope* but to actively use the natural elements themselves to keep our homes liveable regardless of what is going on outside.

What do we mean by that?

If the sunshine is going to be hotter for longer, it is imperative our future homes' interior layouts are orientated correctly, so that it works to our home's advantage. It is no longer okay to simply plonk a generically designed house aligned with a block of land and hope for the best. Your kitchen and bedrooms may be on the hottest western side, and your only answer will be a bigger, expensive-to-run air con system that will be a constant drain on your budget.

Solar is a good thing and can offset some of this, but

the best designed homes are ones that rely on the least amount of power, regardless of its source.

Therefore, quality insulation within the envelope of the home is fundamental, and ideally the external surfaces should be light coloured and reflective. We've talked before about employing heat bank walls within the home, to absorb heat slowly during the day, and release it slowly during the night — like concrete or even rammed earth. Open verandas that shade exterior walls from the western sun also add more liveable space and, designed well, can create breezeways for cooling.

Keeping interiors at a moderate temperature year round is a major goal of all your home's 'weather barriers' — walls, windows and roof. The higher pitch the roof, the more opportunity for cooling air — freely available — to circulate above your ceilings. Combine that with extremely effective high-tech heat barriers like Bio phase-change (a thermal regulator), Smart Low E-glassing, heat-deflecting wall cavities and high density insulation batts, you have

an armoury of relatively low cost options for maintaining a comfortable living environment.

Further, it's how the home's living spaces are designed and built that also are a major factor. Not every block of land provides the opportunity for ideal home orientation. Therefore, how the interior is laid out is even more critical. And often it is the little things that make a big difference, like how well a door seals against the outside air, how natural light is allowed for, natural flow of air movement, etc.

More often than not, each of these do not add much to the build cost, but have the potential to significantly reduce the ongoing liveability and maintenance costs.

There is so much more to say on all these aspects, but we trust you see more of the big picture. We look forward to building in the future — it will be exciting, challenging, and very rewarding. If you'd like to know more, let's talk.

— Geoff Gibson

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