

Eco McMansion in suburban Perth? A 20 yr ...

Category: [Building Design](#), [Building materials and construction](#), [Energy](#), [Environment](#)

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When I started studying at Murdoch University in the 80's, we looked at a phenomena called the 'greenhouse' effect. With this phenomena, it was predicted that by the year 2000 temperatures would rise beyond what would be expected normally, because of rapidly rising CO2 levels. I remember thinking "I'll be in my 40's then, how will this impact my life and that of others, maybe even my children?". Twenty years on, temperatures have risen as predicted and I turned 40 and have had two kids. But it's not all doom and gloom;) As part of our uni course, we were taken to see a house in Bullcreek which was built in 1983 with passive solar principles and consequently had a remarkably reduced carbon footprint. The course inspired me to want to make a difference in the way I lived and the impact it had on the environment.

And so, more than 20 years later, with the help of my husband, we have created a home that is designed with its impact on our planet and our health in mind. In designing and building our home with Ken Wibberley and Griff Morris (Solar Dwellings) and Wayne Grlusich (Tamar Homes), our vision was to create a space with a light, airy environment that connected with the outdoors, and was sustainable, including low energy and water use.

On a 540 m2 suburban block, the 3 bed, 2 bath house adjoins a parkland on its northern and eastern aspects. The parkland views were taken advantage of by installing on the second floor, an open plan kitchen, dining and lounge area with adjacent alfresco. The study also on this level, commands exquisite views of a majestic ghost gum that shelters the park - a great place for contemplating our next 20 y dream. All bedrooms receive northern light, despite two of them being located on the south side of the house. Cross ventilation, through strategically placed windows and ceiling fans, combined with the use of lined curtains and cellular blinds keep the house cool in summer. The process is reversed in winter when the windows are closed but the curtains opened during the day to allow the sun in to warm the dark, matt tiles of the living areas, slowly releasing their warmth at night. The garden, designed in consultation with Jon Webster (Courtyards by Design) and installed by Nick Sugars (Garden Concepts) is low water use and low maintenance with mainly Australian plants and three vegetable beds. The irrigation system designed and installed by Earth n Water, includes rainwater stored in two tanks (23 000 L in total) that feeds into the house and garden taps. Grey water from the showers, bathroom sinks and laundry then feeds areas of the garden through drip line covered in mulch.

Although the trend in Perth is to build 2 storey 4 bed, 2 bath, 3 WC homes, families and the environment are changing, should our homes too?. We resisted the urge to increase the number of rooms and asked instead which other rooms can we design to serve more than one purpose. The ground floor has a multi-purpose entertainment room that can double as a guest bedroom by closing off with bifold doors. The powder room upstairs has two way access - from the master bedroom as well as from the living area, reducing the need for a third toilet.

We live in a suburb full of McMansions, and ours is too, on one level, but we like to think of it as an Eco McMansion. We hope you are inspired to live a dream that makes a difference too.



Alfresco with view to outdoors and kitchen



Northern living room with view to outdoors



Kitchen with low formaldehyde cupboard interiors, reconstituted granite benchtops, recycled wooden floors



Front garden with veggie beds on left, low water use plants and view to park in the north and west

