

EXPERT ADVICE



PLAN BEFORE THE PLAN

Energy efficiency, water use and accessibility issues should be discussed with your builder right at the start

MOST homebuyers think long and hard about their budget when they plan to build a new dwelling, but many may not consider other important issues such as the future health of the occupants or how expensive their home will be to run. Will it be uncomfortable to live in your home without having to run an air conditioner 24/7?

Will it be difficult for elderly or disabled relatives to visit because accessibility has been overlooked? This is why it makes sense to have a residence that considers all forms of accessibility so that you're not forced to leave your home when you age or have to care for a family member with a disability.

PICTURE: KERRIS BERRINGTON

Even considering a simple issue such as how to use water more wisely in your home is also something that is overlooked.

If you leave these design elements off your initial brief, it will be too late or way too expensive to implement them once construction starts. Heating and cooling should be a major priority at the design stage of your home.

In Perth we are in the fortunate position of having a climate that allows us to construct homes that can be heated and cooled naturally – without the costly addition of airconditioners or heaters.

It's possible for Perth homes to operate with room temperatures between 18C and 28C all year round without artificial heating or cooling, and a number of Perth residents already enjoy these benefits with their well-designed homes.

Room orientation, insulation and the location of windows are all vitally

important if you want to control your home's internal temperatures.

One commonly used construction format is to use brick internally and have tiled or concrete floors. The thermal mass of these products enables us to regulate variance in temperatures and avoid big swings.

If brick walls are used inside as well as outside, the use of cavity wall insulation will provide excellent protection.

Another good building system is reverse brick veneer, which has brickwork on the inside to get the benefit of the thermal mass with framed construction on the outside of the building.

Reverse brick veneer, with the proper insulation, can work exceptionally well because the framed walls outside offer protection from the elements.

But it is important to know that insulation has to be installed correctly and in the right locations.

Incorrectly installed insulation will leave a home performing at a much lower level than it should.

Shading devices, such as shade sails, solar pergolas or even deciduous trees located in the right positions can also help with heating and cooling.

Protecting large openings and windows by using low-e glass or window treatments is another way to reduce heat loss or gain.

Having photovoltaic systems or solar panels installed will assist in reducing energy use.

The best time to think about all these issues is often before you even purchase your property.

Speak to a builder to discuss what is possible and how affordable different options are before even looking at getting plans drawn or committing to a design.

GARY WRIGHT, director of Right Homes, says you should aim to build an energy efficient, comfortable and healthy home

For more information about building with Right Homes, phone 9355 0374 or visit www.righthomes.com.au.