

By Design

DESIGN TRENDS 2026



CALA

ISSUE 17 | MARCH 2026

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Become an Accredited Building Designer

Why Accreditation Matters for Building Designers

In today's regulated building industry, achieving full accreditation isn't just a milestone – it's a necessity. Accreditation empowers building designers to align with the latest laws, codes, and best practices, ensuring they remain competitive in a challenging built environment.

The Building Designers Association of Australia (BDAA) is dedicated to supporting building designers on this journey by streamlining the accreditation process. We've modernised our systems, removed outdated documents, and refined the application process to make accreditation simpler, faster, and more accessible than ever.

What Does Accreditation Mean for You?

Accreditation is more than a title – it's a formal recognition of your expertise, issued by state or federal authorities. It demonstrates your ability to meet industry standards and deliver exceptional results for your clients. In Tasmania, Queensland, and Victoria, building designers are required to be licensed or registered to comply with state-specific regulations. Accreditation provides the proof of competency and quality that both regulators and clients demand.

Accreditation Is a Mark of Excellence

For building designers, accreditation isn't just about compliance; it's about earning the trust of your clients. It assures them that their projects are in the hands of a skilled professional who is committed to delivering outstanding results. Every accredited building designer helps raise the bar for the industry, guaranteeing the quality of homes and businesses across Australia.

Editor's Note

Design in 2026 is becoming more exacting.

Across this issue, projects share a quieter kind of confidence, less driven by statement and more by resolution. Spaces are not getting bigger, but they are working harder. Volume replaces area. Light replaces excess. Plans are tighter, sections more considered, and every element carries greater weight.

What's shifting is where design effort is focused.

Kitchens are treated as architecture, not joinery. Roofs conceal, reveal, and organise space. Garages disappear to give the street back its hierarchy. Small decisions, junctions, alignments, thresholds, are no longer background moves. They are the project.

There is also a growing clarity in how buildings relate to their context. Density is handled with precision rather than disguise. Additions defer where they need to, and assert where it matters. Inside and outside are no longer separate conditions, but part of a continuous spatial idea.

This is a move away from accumulation and toward intent.

The work in this edition suggests that the next phase of design is not about doing more, but about resolving more, with discipline, clarity, and control.



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and Energise Tomorrow Through Today's Sustainable Building Designs



Why Choose an ABSA Accredited Thermal Performance Assessor

The Leader in the Energy Assessor Accreditation Industry since 2006, ABSA is a part of the BDAA which is a nationally based not-for-profit member organisation that provides information, accreditation, support and advocacy for professionals to promote and foster building sustainability in Australia.

As one of its functions, ABSA accredits HERS assessors (also called Residential Building Thermal Performance assessors) under the Federal Government's Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme (NatHERS) protocols. ABSA aims to provide all its members with a high level of professionalism and support. Why do we count accreditation as one of our chief functions and missions? Because the Australian government cares about accreditation. Homeowners care about accreditation. And, above all, our assessors care about accreditation.

As of 11 November 2019 all NatHERS Accredited Assessors must hold a Certificate IV in Home Energy Efficiency and Sustainability (Thermal Performance Assessment) (CPP41119). As the nation and world have come to realise that sustainability and thermal conservation are essential to the survival of the built environment, both designers and homeowners are insisting on more sustainable, ecoefficient designs. In order to expedite the accreditation process, ABSA has set out the steps that will need to be fulfilled in order to gain accreditation.

ABSA Accredited Assessors are recognised as the best in the industry undertaking regular auditing and continuous formal and informal training ensuring that the ABSA accredited assessors are held in the highest regard.



Let's work together to sustain and energise the future!

Professional Development. Made Practical.

The BDAA CPD Academy is the official Continuing Professional Development platform of the Building Designers Association of Australia.

Designed for building designers and energy assessors, the Academy provides access to high-quality, industry-relevant learning that supports compliance, professional growth, and ongoing capability development.

With flexible, accessible CPD content, the BDAA CPD Academy helps professionals stay informed, up to date with industry standards, and confident in meeting their CPD requirements, all in one trusted place.

Learn smarter. Stay compliant. Build your future.

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1 hour course:
What to Expect
From a NatHERS
Audit

1 CPD Point



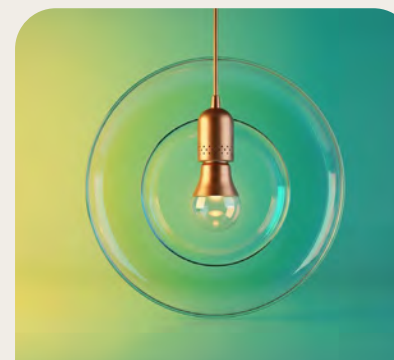
1 hour course:
Livable Housing
Design/ NCC
Mandatory Provisions
(NCC 2022) with NCC
2025 Preview Context

1 CPD Point



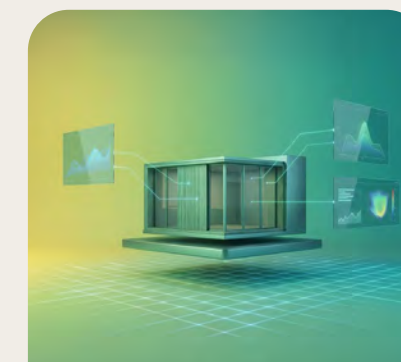
1 hour course:
Thermal Zoning
Strategies for
Optimal Efficiency

1 CPD Point



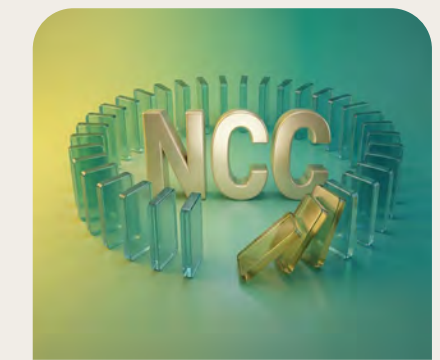
1 hour course:
Integrating Daylight
and Electric Lighting
Systems

1 CPD Point



1 hour course:
AI and Computational
Design in
Architecture

1 CPD Point



1 hour course:
NCC 2025 Pipeline
Protection/ Managing
Live Project Risk
During the Transition

1 CPD Point

Old meets new:

A Modern Heritage extension done right



When asked about the challenges his Modern Heritage extension faced from the outset, homeowner Stuart Hillen pinpoints the major one clearly. “There’s a heritage overlay on our street, and this meant the facade and the original cottage had to stay the same from an external perspective.” This reality became the starting point for Hillen’s renovation and extension on his property in Williamstown.

Designed by Kate Vernon Architects and built by Ultra Builders, this project celebrates the charm of a double-fronted Victorian while adding a contemporary rear addition.

For Vernon, the design was about balance. “We wanted to make the most out of the original charm that the heritage house brought to the project, while adding new spaces for the young family to enjoy and grow into.”



A bold new rear form with modern lines

Vernon wanted the extension to feel overtly contemporary. “We didn’t want to clad the new addition in weatherboards, or have it look too similar to the old part of the house.” she says, explaining that this is where [Hardie™ Oblique™ Cladding](#) became the hero material for the extension. “The cladding was a great choice to achieve a painted timber-look cladding that we could use vertically for a subtle point of difference.”

The boards did more than deliver a modern facade; they also created a visual relationship with the home’s heritage skin.

“The rhythm of the 300mm wide vertical boards achieves a similar pattern of the 150mm wide horizontal weatherboards on the original house, but again it provides a subtle difference between the old and new.”



Built for renovation realities

From the builder, Modern Heritage renovations demand equal parts experience and humility, “you never fully know what’s behind the walls until you open them up” says Ultra Builders Managing Director Damien Rinaldi.

On a project like this, where the extension is wrapped in vertical boards, getting the cladding straight and installed correctly were critical.

“The most important factor was a plumb frame,” he says. “Following that, we had to make sure all battens were installed well, level and spaced correctly.”

They used [Hardie™ Structural Batten](#) for a speedy installation and long-lasting performance, Rinaldi saying the product was “easy to install and work with, enabling reduced labour time”.

Rinaldi also touched on the role of ventilation and drainage in modern facade systems: “The castellations and slope on the battens ensure airflow and prevent any water pooling, making the product durable and compliant with NCC [National Construction Code].”



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Find the inspiration

All the information needed to create your own winning designs in By Design



Two Homes, One Address

The brief called for a high end duplex. What was delivered feels more like two freestanding houses that happen to share a boundary. Each residence contains four bedrooms, a master suite, a home office, a lift, a pool, a roof deck, and generous open plan living areas flowing to a northern alfresco zone. On paper, the accommodation schedule reads like a wish list. In built form, it reads as architecture.

The site presented a common Sunshine Coast challenge: a favourable northern rear aspect but limited street frontage. The response was a plan that pushes living spaces toward the back of the site and stacks service areas toward the front, creating deep, light filled interiors without sacrificing the street presence. Individual entries and separate driveways ensure each home reads as its own address, with spatial planning that minimises overlooking between the two.





Internally, double height voids and precast concrete walls give the homes a sense of scale that compact duplex sites rarely achieve.

The arched openings that give the project its name are more than decorative. They modulate the transition between spaces, framing views and compressing sightlines in a way that makes the progression through the house feel choreographed rather than accidental. You move from an intimate entry into an expansive living volume, and the shift feels deliberate.

The material palette balances weight with lightness. Exposed concrete and stone ground the interiors, while timber ceilings and louvre screens introduce warmth and permeability. Large sliding doors dissolve the northern wall, extending each living area into a covered alfresco space and pool terrace beyond. The outdoor rooms are not afterthoughts. They are as carefully resolved as anything inside.

Privacy between the two residences has been handled through orientation and level changes rather than fence heights and screen walls. The result is a development that feels generous and open, not defensive.



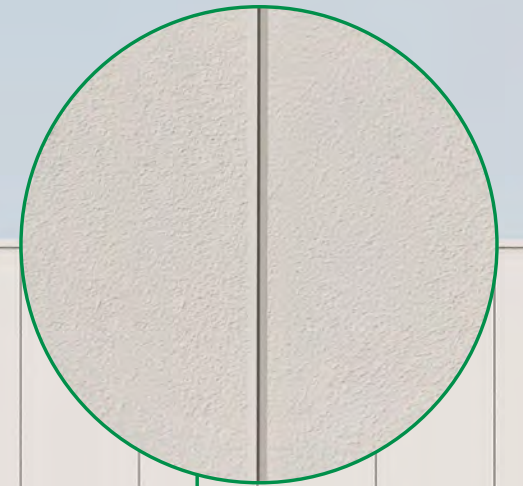
The arched openings modulate the transition between spaces, framing views and compressing sightlines in a way that feels choreographed rather than accidental.



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The Garage Door Is Disappearing

And No One Is Missing It



For decades, the garage door was the largest single element on the front facade of an Australian home. It dominated the streetscape. It dictated the proportions of the ground floor. And in many cases, it was the first and only thing a visitor noticed about the building.

That dominance is ending. Across some of the most considered residential projects in the country, designers are making deliberate moves to eliminate, conceal, or radically rethink the garage door as a design element. The result is a quiet revolution in how Australian homes present themselves to the street.

The most common strategy is simple removal. Carports are replacing garages in projects where the climate allows it, turning the covered car space into a lighter, more permeable structure that reads as landscape rather than infrastructure.

At least ten recent award calibre projects have made this shift, treating the carport as an architectural element—a slatted timber screen, a cantilevered roof plane, a colonnade—rather than a utilitarian afterthought.



Where garages remain, they are being pushed underground. Basement garages, once the preserve of multi million dollar builds, are appearing in projects across a broader range of budgets. The trade off is excavation cost, but the gain is significant: the entire ground floor facade is liberated for windows, entries, and garden walls. The car disappears from the street presentation entirely.

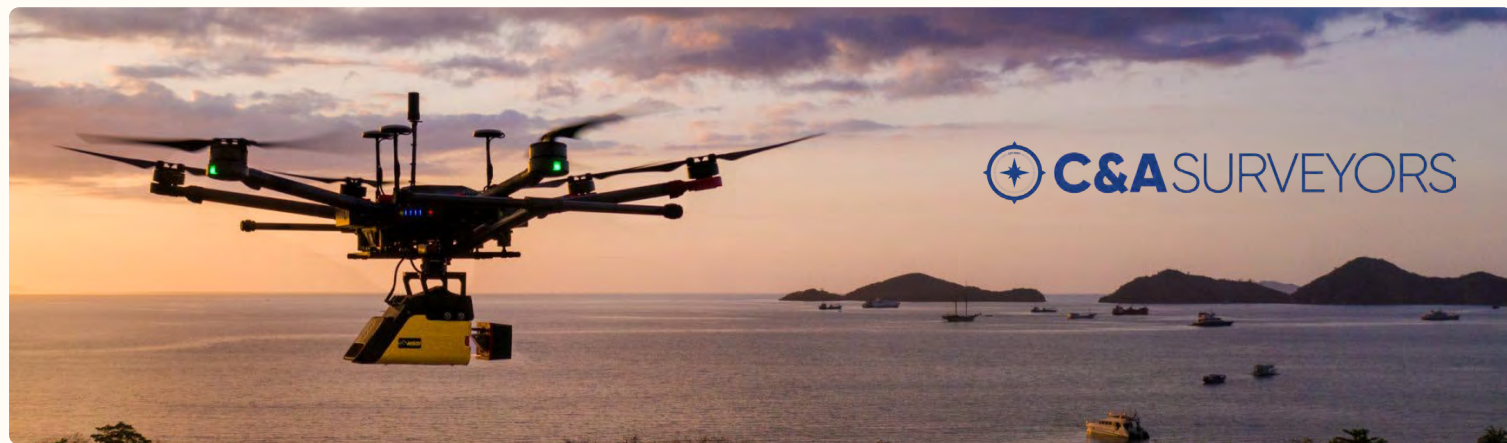
The third approach is concealment. Garage doors finished in the same cladding as the rest of the facade, with no visible tracks, handles, or frames, so the door reads as wall when closed. Sectional doors with flush panel profiles and colour matched finishes are making this achievable at a reasonable cost. The garage is there, but it has been designed to be invisible.

Globally, the trend is moving further still. In the United States and Europe, garage doors are becoming colour statements: deep navy, forest green, champagne metallics, and matte charcoal finishes that treat the door as a deliberate design element rather than something to hide. The garage door as feature wall is an idea Australian designers have barely touched, and it represents an opportunity for practices willing to think beyond the standard Colorbond sectional.

For building designers, the disappearing garage opens a fundamental question about street presentation. If the car is no longer the hero of the facade, what takes its place? The answer, in the best projects, is the entry, the garden, and the human experience of arriving at a home.



Designer of this project: Samuel Kassis



SURVEYING TRENDS FOR BETTER DESIGN

If you've ever had a project stall because site data didn't match reality, you'll want to know about two surveying technologies reshaping residential design: **3D laser scanning & UAV (drone) surveys**. Once reserved for high-end builds, both are now within reach, and designers are catching on.

3D laser scanning: the new baseline for existing conditions
A few years ago, utilising a 3D scan felt like overkill for residential projects. In 2026, it's becoming standard practice, particularly for renovations, heritage work, and anything involving tight tolerances.

The shift isn't just about accuracy, it's about workflow. A detailed 3D model at project outset reduces back-and-forth with consultants, minimises RFIs and provides a reliable reference when disputes arise. **One scan,**

shared across the project team, keeps everyone working from the same truth.

UAV surveys: context without compromise

Drones have become essential for capturing what ground-based surveys often miss - neighbouring rooflines, site context and topography across large or sloping blocks. What's changed in 2026 is accessibility. For designers preparing shadow diagrams or working with challenging terrain, aerial data provides the broader picture without the hassle of negotiating access to adjoining properties.

The bottom line

For designers, the value is: **better data in, fewer problems out.**

Using these surveys early reduces redrafts, RFIs, and return site visits. When councils push back or disputes arise, your digital model



is your insurance.

In 2026, these tools have moved from cutting-edge to common sense. The question isn't whether you can afford to use them; it's whether you can afford not to.



BDAA CASE STUDY WITH JOHN HATCH

Elevating Survey Accuracy And Design Efficiency

Before working with C&A Surveyors, John Hatch's practice relied on traditional survey deliverables that often lacked the level of detail required for fast, confident design decisions. Manual interpretation, additional site visits, and delays in receiving information impacted early concept development and client presentations.

C&A Surveyors introduced a new level of precision and efficiency by delivering surveys in REVIT, DWG, and PDF formats, alongside comprehensive title information, site photography, and project relevant data.

"C&A Surveyors have elevated the standard of surveying services, offering a level of detail that was previously unavailable to my practice."

Faster Response, Stronger Confidence

Responsiveness has been a defining factor in John's experience, including receiving a detailed fee proposal within minutes of requesting a survey. Clear communication around timelines and deliverables has removed uncertainty and improved project planning.

"The organisational structure of

C&A Surveyors is very efficient from receipt of fee proposal to delivery."

A Real Impact on Workflow

With accurate digital surveys available early, John's practice can:

- Develop faster concept designs with greater accuracy
- Reduce repeat site visits
- Minimise redesigns and unexpected issues
- Present high quality 3D visualisations to clients and consultants earlier

"It puts us ahead of the game. We can create faster design concepts with a greater level of detail."

Accuracy That Supports Better Design

John highlights the precision of C&A's survey models as a key differentiator, noting:

"The detail survey plans are very accurate and achieve a level of detail not achievable with conventional survey equipment."

Enabling Better Collaboration

The clarity of documentation assists collaboration with engineers, builders, certifiers, and councils, enabling smoother approvals and more informed design decisions from the outset.



"It enables us to present clear and accurate 3D renderings to clients, consultants and councils at an early stage."

A Partner Designers Can Trust

John recommends C&A Surveyors to designers working on complex or time sensitive projects, describing the team as responsive, easy to work with, and passionate about delivering results.

"C&A Surveyors deliver a unique service ideal for my practice."





PLUS OUR \$200 OFFER FOR NEW BDAA MEMBERS

We're running a member-exclusive offer for new BDAA members. For \$200, we'll give you a 4 surveys - the **Contour, 3D, Internal Floor Plan and UAV - valued at \$4,200** - for \$200, and we'll donate 100% to the Sydney Children's Hospital Foundation. For more information, [click here](#).

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Kitchens Without Gaps

The new generation of kitchens is being designed as fully resolved volumes, not fitted rooms. A subtle but significant shift is happening in kitchen design. The negative space is disappearing.



In many recent kitchens, ceiling geometry is driving the layout. Angled roof forms are followed precisely by cabinetry.

Where once cabinetry stopped short of ceilings, leaving bulkheads, shadow lines, and dust ledges, designers are now treating the kitchen as a complete spatial composition. Joinery rises to meet rooflines. Panels align with window heads. Storage walls read as architectural planes rather than furniture placed against plasterboard.

This is not about maximalism. It is about resolution.

In many recent kitchens, ceiling geometry is driving the layout. Angled roof forms are followed precisely by cabinetry. Clerestory glazing is integrated into storage runs. Overhead cupboards are either eliminated entirely or extended decisively to create clean vertical terminations. The result is a room that feels carved rather than fitted.

Plan logic is evolving as well.

Instead of relying solely on the island as the organising device, kitchens are being structured around layered zones. A working wall. A concealed preparation zone. A walk in pantry that absorbs visual noise. Secondary benches that double as study desks or servery thresholds. Circulation paths are tightened and clarified.



The kitchen is becoming spatial infrastructure.

In smaller renovations, the shift is even more telling. Removing overhead cupboards has allowed walls to breathe, but storage has not been sacrificed. It has been consolidated. Entire walls are given over to full height cabinetry, allowing the rest of the room to remain visually calm. What looks simple is in fact highly planned.

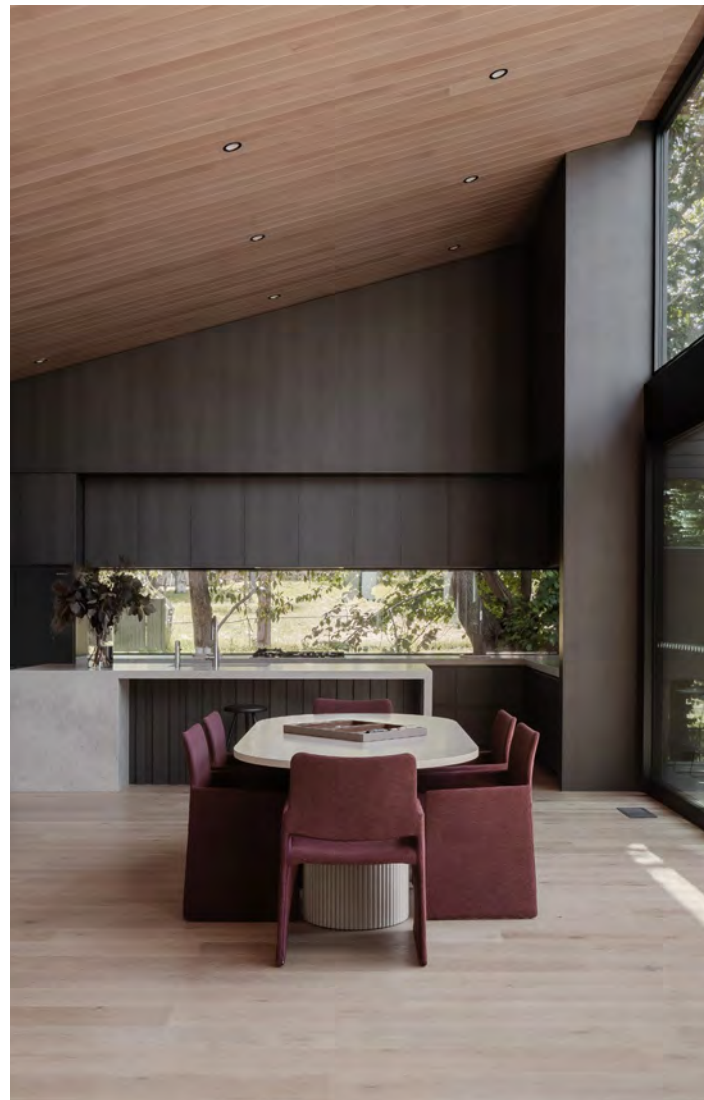
Material continuity reinforces this sense of completeness. Timber linings run uninterrupted across ceiling and walls. Stone wraps down island ends. Tiled surfaces are detailed flush to adjacent joinery. The junctions are quiet. The intent is deliberate.

For building designers and architects, the implication is clear. The kitchen can no longer be resolved at the joinery documentation stage alone. It must be considered in section from the outset.

*Ceiling heights,
window placement,
structural beams,
and ventilation
strategy all shape
how resolved the
final volume will feel.*

For energy assessors, this trend also carries weight. Full height joinery can support thermal performance when integrated thoughtfully. Clerestory windows positioned above cabinetry influence daylight penetration and passive gain. Even the decision to remove overhead cupboards alters air movement and light distribution.

The kitchen is no longer a room that contains cabinets. It is an architectural volume that happens to cook. And in 2026, that difference matters.



CASE STUDY THE IMPOSSIBLE



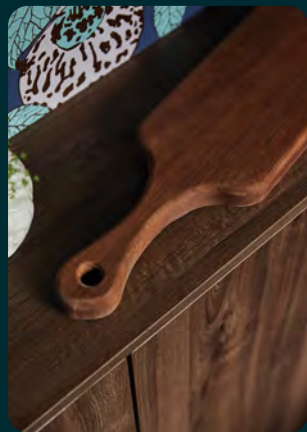
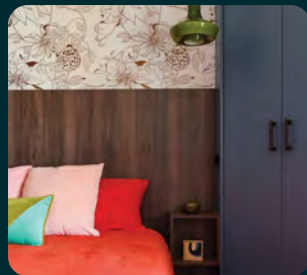
A design approach built on a small footprint – from reuse and repurpose to materials chosen for more than one life.

Featured on Grand Designs Australia, the project reflects a deliberate choice: **to build less, consume less and rely less – while achieving more.**


The ambition was clear: Going off-grid, generate enough energy and water for a three-person household, prioritise recycled materials and keep sustainable building process accessible.

The result is an off-grid home in the middle of Sydney – proof that limits can fuel higher ambition, and that collaboration and transparency can deliver buildings that perform without harm.

Circularity became central to the interior specification, leading Laura to discover, through ForestOne, the cabinet and panel ranges of EGGER.



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Healthy Building

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Copilot ✨

What are the upfront emissions of this product? 07:38 AM

The upfront emission of this product is 2.52 KgCO2eq/m2 (Embodied GHG/CO2 per unit of product) or 2.52 kg CO2-eq/m2 (Total GWP (A1-A3)). 07:38 AM

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Circular Use & Reuse

5 products

Products with documented recycled or closed loop verified data

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ForestOne, a recognised industry leader in responsibly sourced timber and decorative panels, supplies certified EGGER ranges in Australia – fully structured and accessible within the Evitat platform.

Curves & Contours:

The Graceful Flow of Curves

Straight lines and sharp angles have long dominated architecture, but the future of design is taking a softer, more fluid approach. Curved walls and sweeping contours are quickly emerging as a defining trend in contemporary architecture, offering homes and commercial projects a sense of elegance, calm, and timeless sophistication.



For architects and designers seeking to stay ahead of the curve, this style is more than a passing fad; it's an opportunity to rethink how buildings connect with people and their surroundings.

Curves introduce movement and harmony into spaces. They soften façades, create natural flow between indoor and outdoor areas, and add a sculptural quality that instantly elevates any design. From rounded corners that ease transitions to entire curved exterior walls that embrace organic forms, this approach celebrates fluidity while rejecting the rigidity of box-like construction. Designers are turning to curved profiles not just for aesthetics, but for the way they enhance light, shadow, and the overall emotional feel of a space.

This is where Weathertex becomes a powerful design partner. Known for its versatility, natural timber look, and ease of installation, Weathertex cladding can be applied seamlessly to curved walls.

Architects and builders are using Weathertex to achieve flowing façades that feel innovative yet grounded in natural warmth.



The flexibility of the product means it can bend and adapt to creative visions, transforming ambitious designs into practical realities without compromising on style or sustainability.

To achieve these fluid forms, Weathertex offers profiles perfectly suited to curved applications. The Selflok range of weatherboards is ideal for achieving a continuous, seamless flow along curved walls, delivering a striking horizontal expression.



When designing with curves, it's important to consider the minimum bending radius that each profile can accommodate.

For larger, panelised looks, Weathergroove panels are the go-to choice, offering bold vertical grooves that wrap beautifully around curves for a contemporary finish. Each profile not only enhances the sculptural quality of the wall but also retains Weathertex's hallmark natural timber aesthetic.

When designing with curves, it's important to consider the minimum bending radius that each profile can accommodate. Weathertex weatherboards and panels each have specific radius requirements, ensuring that the product performs at its best while achieving the intended architectural look.



These technical details are readily available for specifiers and builders, providing confidence when planning and executing curved designs.

Importantly, Weathertex brings environmental credibility to the trend. With a negative carbon footprint, toxin-free composition, and locally sourced Australian hardwood, it ensures that beautiful, sculptural design is also environmentally responsible.

This alignment between form and function resonates strongly with today's design professionals who are tasked with balancing aesthetics, performance, and sustainability.

We are seeing curves and contours influence a variety of projects from high-end residential builds to urban developments that want to stand apart with architectural flair. Whether it's a bold, sweeping feature wall clad in Weathertex or subtle curved accents that soften a façade, the result is always memorable.

As design conversations shift towards organic forms and natural connections, curved architecture is set to define the coming years. With Weathertex, architects and designers can confidently embrace this movement, knowing they have a cladding solution that bends with imagination while delivering sustainable, stylish results.

Curves are in and Weathertex makes them effortless. For detailed profile information and minimum radius requirements, visit weathertex.com.au



We are seeing curves and contours influence a variety of projects from high-end residential builds to urban developments that want to stand apart with architectural flair.



Weathergroove 75 Natural (stained)



All Weathertex products are Global GreenTag™ certified!

Every product earns GreenRate Level A, Platinum Product Health Declaration and Platinum or Gold Life Cycle Analysis ratings, with full Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) showing low carbon impact and ingredient transparency.

These rigorous, third-party certifications prove Weathertex cladding is eco-friendly, healthy and transparent; making it the responsible choice for greener building.



Explore our sustainable third party accreditations online. Visit weathertex.com.au to create the look you want, *naturally.*

Where the Land Gathers

It began as a machinery shed on eleven hundred acres of open farmland, perched above a gorge in the Southern Highlands. The brief was modest: convert the shed into a rustic function space. The site had other ideas.



Caoura Cliffs sits fully exposed on a windswept escarpment near Tallong, NSW. A landscape that is equal parts dramatic and unforgiving. The Southern Highlands climate swings between scorching summers and biting winters, and the site offers no shelter from either. Any building here has to earn its place.

What emerged is something far more assured than the original brief suggested. The agricultural bones of the structure remain legible: the pitched roofline, the generous proportions, the directness of a building designed to work. But a full height glazed facade has been introduced along the escarpment edge, transforming the interior into a space that is as much about the view as it is about the occasion. Stand inside and the gorge unfolds through floor to ceiling glass, the horizon line sitting at eye level. Paper lanterns drift beneath a timber lined ceiling. There is a stillness to it that belies the building's commercial purpose.

The client's most exacting requirement was invisibility. Not of the building, but of everything that makes it function. No power lines. No water tanks in view. No visible infrastructure of any kind. The entire venue operates off grid: power, water, and waste systems are buried and concealed. Every design decision had to reconcile performance with aesthetics, resilience with refinement.

*Ceiling heights,
window placement,
structural beams,
and ventilation
strategy all shape
how resolved the
final volume will feel.*





The bathrooms push further still: dark green mosaic tile, brass basins, and a level of material richness that most residential projects would envy.

Externally, charred shou sugi ban timber cladding and recycled brickwork anchor the building to its rural setting. The blackened timber reads as shadow against the golden paddock grass, while the recycled brick lends weight and warmth to a structure that could easily feel too sleek for its surroundings.

Inside, the material palette deepens. Engineered timber flooring is laid over concrete. A bar, repurposed from what was originally designated as storage, is fronted in green marble with sand toned brass fittings, set against a wall of recycled brick. A hand painted mural of the gorge wraps one wall, tying the interior to the landscape in a gesture that is personal rather than decorative. The bathrooms push further still: dark green mosaic tile, brass basins, and a level of material richness that most residential projects would envy.

The spatial planning is quietly sophisticated. Large openings and generous circulation allow the venue to scale from an intimate gathering to a full wedding without reconfiguration. Oversized barn doors slide open to extend the interior into the landscape. Accessibility and operational flow have been considered with the same care as the finish schedule.

What makes Caoura Cliffs compelling is not the transformation itself, but the conviction with which it has been executed. Every material has been selected for durability against a harsh climate and for its contribution to a cohesive sensory experience. Nothing is provisional. Nothing is waiting for a later phase.

The land was here first, and the building knows it.

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BlueScope



The High Performance Renovation

Upgrading comfort, light and resilience without increasing floor area. A significant shift is emerging in residential alterations. The ambition is no longer to build bigger. It is to build better.

In this mountain renovation, the original home remained largely within its existing footprint. There was no push for additional bedrooms or expanded living zones. Instead, the design concentrated on recalibrating space, performance, and connection to site.

The attic was removed to create a soaring timber lined ceiling punctuated with skylights. The change is volumetric rather than expansive. Height replaces area. Light replaces enclosure. The spatial impact is dramatic, yet the footprint remains modest.

Designer of this project: Helen Lloyd-Martin

This approach signals a broader cultural pivot. Clients are increasingly valuing thermal comfort, energy independence, and year round usability over sheer scale. Performance upgrades in this project are not peripheral additions. They are embedded in the architectural logic. Northern glazing was increased and recalibrated. High specification double glazing was introduced. Thermal mass was exposed and insulated correctly. A 30 kilowatt photovoltaic array with battery storage supports energy resilience in a remote location. Under slab heating, enhanced insulation, and careful envelope calculation elevate comfort without relying on mechanical cooling.

Importantly, material decisions reinforce durability and landscape sensitivity. Existing Hebel walls were retained for thermal performance and reclad in stone and steel, allowing the building to settle visually into its escarpment setting. Retention becomes strategy, not compromise.

Even adaptability is addressed through widened doors, level thresholds, and accessible circulation. Longevity is embedded quietly within the planning.

Outdoor pavilions and fire elements extend usability into cooler seasons. The home feels expansive, yet its scale is restrained.



The imagery reinforces this shift. Expansive glazing frames the Grose Valley. Timber ceilings amplify warmth. Outdoor pavilions and fire elements extend usability into cooler seasons. The home feels expansive, yet its scale is restrained.

What makes this trend compelling for 2026 is its discipline. The architectural move is not addition. It is subtraction, reorientation, and recalibration.

The future of residential renovation may not lie in extension at all. It may lie in upgrading what already exists into something far more resilient, efficient, and spatially generous than its original form.



Cohesion Begins with the Details

Introducing the New Nero Cabinet Hardware

In contemporary residential design, spaces are no longer treated separately. Kitchens, bathrooms, laundries, and even outdoor areas are designed as one connected story—where every detail contributes to the overall narrative. Yet in practice, maintaining design consistency across multiple zones is often harder than it should be.

When tapware comes from one brand, accessories from another, and cabinet handles are sourced elsewhere, even finishes with the same name can vary in tone, texture, reflectivity, and undertone. These differences may be subtle on their own, but placed side-by-side across adjoining spaces they can become obvious. Over the course of a project, small inconsistencies can accumulate—softening the clarity of the original design intent and creating unnecessary compromises during delivery.

To help address this long-standing industry challenge, Nero proudly introduces the new Cabinet Hardware range—supporting a more cohesive, one-stop approach to specification and procurement.





One-Stop Specification, Reduced Risk

Designers are often required to compare finishes and styles across multiple categories and suppliers. “Brushed Gold” is not always the same brushed gold, and “Gun Metal” can shift in warmth depending on the manufacturer. This creates avoidable risk when selections are made at different times, or when value engineering, substitutions, and supply constraints force changes late in the process.

With Nero Cabinet Hardware now integrated into Nero’s wider product ecosystem, designers can carry a consistent design language and finish palette across key touchpoints—tapware, showers, accessories, and now cabinet hardware.

This improves finish continuity, strengthens visual cohesion, and simplifies decision-making from concept to completion.

A Seamless Extension of Nero’s Design Language

The Cabinet Hardware range continues Nero’s established design DNA, aligning proportions, linework, and overall styling with our tapware collections. It enables kitchens and bathrooms to share the same “metal story”, supports a more unified home aesthetic, and helps create spaces that feel considered and complete.



From Product to System

This launch is more than a category expansion—it’s a step toward systemised design support. By bringing cabinet hardware into the Nero matrix, we help simplify procurement, reduce finish mismatch, and support long-term consistency with reliable product availability.

Nero Cabinet Hardware — where every detail becomes part of the whole.

Nero



Building Behind the Roof

Heritage street presence is preserved while new volume unfolds beyond. In established urban suburbs, the heritage facade is no longer the battleground. It is the anchor.

A clear shift is emerging in high value alterations and additions. Rather than competing with character overlays or exaggerating contrast, designers are retaining the traditional roofline and street elevation almost entirely intact. The familiar form remains visible from the footpath. Continuity is respected. The conversation with the street is maintained.

The transformation happens once you move through the house.

Instead of extending outward in a single plane, new work is often split level, responding to site fall and backyard relationships. Floor heights are carefully calibrated to unlock volume without dramatically increasing perceived bulk. The result is spatial expansion that feels generous internally while remaining measured externally.

In this project, a contemporary rear extension steps with the slope, opening living areas toward the backyard and pool. A gabled master suite references the geometry of the original roof, creating visual continuity while clearly belonging to a different architectural moment. Old and new are aligned through proportion rather than imitation.

One of the most compelling moves is the integration of a view terrace positioned discreetly behind the retained roof form. From the street, it is virtually invisible. From within, it captures expansive city outlooks. Achieving this required refined roof design, low pitched forms, and precise coordination of gutters and drainage to maintain a cohesive silhouette.

The roof becomes more than shelter. It becomes a device for concealment and revelation.



Internally, voids and raked ceilings introduce vertical generosity. Large glazed openings frame skyline and treetops.



Internally, voids and raked ceilings introduce vertical generosity. Large glazed openings frame skyline and treetops. The rear facade embraces openness and light, while the front maintains the language of the original home. This layered approach allows bold spatial experiences without disrupting neighbourhood character.

This reflects a broader metropolitan condition. Planning controls are tightening. Character overlays are expanding. Yet clients continue to seek light filled living, outdoor connection, and elevated views. The response is increasingly sectional rather than decorative.

Designers are thinking in volume rather than facade. The future of character renovation may not lie in contrast for its own sake. It may lie in strategic restraint at the street edge and confident spatial expansion beyond it.

The roofline, once a constraint, is becoming the opportunity.



Nero

Mecca Smart Kitchen Mixer

Bringing Intelligence and Efficiency to Your Kitchen

As demand for smart kitchen solutions continues to grow, Nero has developed the Mecca Smart Kitchen Mixer which delivers a perfect blend of advanced motion-sensing technology and user-focused design. It enhances everyday convenience while making the interaction between people and water more intuitive and intelligent.

Dual Sensor and Mechanical Control

The Mecca Smart Kitchen Mixer features both hands-free sensor and mechanical controls. The sensor mode allows hands-free operation, ideal when your hands are messy or occupied, providing a hygienic and convenient experience. The mechanical control offers precise adjustment of water temperature and flow, giving you full control when needed. This dual system overcomes the limitations of traditional taps, offering greater flexibility and smarter functionality.



Flexible Power Options

The mixer supports both AC and DC power, making it adaptable to different kitchen installations. For kitchens without pre-installed power, the battery-powered (DC) option allows the sensor to work without wiring. In kitchens with power supply, AC provides stable, continuous energy – perfect for busy households and commercial spaces.

Energy-Efficient and Safe

In sensor mode, the Mecca Smart Kitchen Mixer automatically shuts off after 20 seconds, preventing unnecessary water use and enhancing safety, supporting sustainable water practices.



Dual Flow Modes for Versatile Use

- Laminar Flow Mode: Produces a smooth, concentrated stream that minimises splashing – perfect for filling pots, soaking ingredients, or gentle cleaning.
- Spray Mode: Offers a high-pressure stream to easily remove grease and food residues, making cleaning pots and dishes quick and efficient.

Switching between modes is effortless, and the high-efficiency aerator ensures strong water flow while reducing water consumption, combining performance with sustainability.

Modern Aesthetic Design

The Mecca Smart Kitchen Mixer features a sleek, streamlined design, providing a comfortable touch and contemporary look. With seven fashionable finishes available, it easily complements a variety of kitchen styles – from the ultra-modern home and stylish apartments to high-end projects – enhancing both the appearance and functionality of your space.

Nero

Select Nero's Mecca Smart Kitchen Mixer for your next project and enjoy the benefits it has to offer.



A Building That Breathes



The designer and his wife were their own clients, which meant the critique was relentless and the brief non negotiable. The home had to nestle into the Tasmanian east coast landscape without mimicking it. It had to achieve Passive House certification. It had to be built from cross laminated timber as a test case for whether CLT could be economically viable at a single dwelling scale. And it had to feel, above all, like a home rather than a demonstration project.

The geometry draws from the surrounding context: windswept dunes and forested ridgelines translated into angular roof planes and a compact form that deflects the prevailing coastal wind. Externally, corrugated zincalume and charred local hardwood cladding reference the sheds and structures that have long occupied the Tasmanian coastline, while the CLT panels visible inside give the interiors a warmth and solidity that plasterboard cannot replicate.



The Passive House performance is not something you see. It is something you feel. The air is steady. The temperature barely shifts between morning and evening. Condensation, that familiar Tasmanian companion, is absent. Triple glazed windows face east toward the ocean without inviting summertime overheating, and the building's airtight envelope means the mechanical systems do very little actual work. The energy required to heat and cool this home is a fraction of what a conventional dwelling of the same size would demand.

But the building's real achievement is less technical. It is the way the material selections, the CLT ceilings, the hardwood floors, the carefully detailed joinery, make the rigour of Passive House feel effortless. There is no sense of compromise or austerity. The rooms are generous in proportion and considered in their relationship to one another. Ocean views are framed with precision. Light enters from multiple directions, shifting through the day.



The energy required to heat and cool this home is a fraction of what a conventional dwelling of the same size would demand.

This is a home built on principle and lived in with pleasure. That combination is rarer than it should be.

The Passive House performance is not something you see. It is something you feel.




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The Cottage That Grew Up

The original house was built in the late 1800s: a double fronted, single storey Victorian cottage with three bedrooms, one bathroom, a single living area, and no meaningful connection to the outdoors. It was dark, heavily compartmentalised, and lacked a functional kitchen. Its owners, a couple with two young children, saw past all of that. They saw the heritage charm, the desirable inner city location, the proximity to schools. They bought it and called a designer.

The brief was to create as large and functional a family home as possible on a compact 185 square metre site, while restoring and preserving the original facade. An additional bedroom and bathroom were needed upstairs, along with generous open plan living spaces and a strong indoor outdoor connection. On paper, a familiar Melbourne renovation story. In practice, a masterclass in working within constraints.



Designer of this project: Darrin Albert



The heritage overlay demanded that the front of the house remain essentially unchanged. Behind that preserved facade, a two storey addition rises from a footprint that most designers would consider too small for a four bedroom family home. The key to the plan is the site's unusual width of nearly 9.5 metres, which provided enough room for a sensitive side extension without overwhelming the cottage form.

At ground level, the original rooms have been opened and reordered. The compartmentalised layout gives way to flowing spaces that draw light from the north facing rear garden through double glazed steel stacker doors.

A courtyard between old and new provides a light well and ventilation core that prevents the deep plan from feeling dark or compressed.

Upstairs, a children's zone gives the family room to grow. White plantation shutters, elegant wall panelling, and a restrained material palette connect the new work to the character of the original without resorting to pastiche. The energy rating of 6.0 stars demonstrates that heritage renovation and thermal performance are not contradictory goals.

There is a discipline to this kind of project that larger sites do not demand. Every square metre has been accounted for. Every wall does double duty. The result is a home that feels neither cramped nor compromised, which on 185 square metres is a significant achievement.



Every square metre has been accounted for. Every wall does double duty.

Weathergroove 150 Natural (stained)



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Organically Pure:

The Natural Range

In a world where design is shifting towards honesty, authenticity, and sustainability, materials that speak for themselves are in demand. The Weathertex Natural Range is the ultimate expression of this movement; cladding that is left unprimed, uncoated, and unapologetically raw. Made from 100% Australian hardwood, the Natural Range reveals the true character of timber in its purest form, creating façades that are as unique as the homes they protect.





What sets this range apart is the way it evolves over time. Left to weather naturally, each board develops a rich patina; shifting into silvers, greys, and earthy tones that deepen its connection to the landscape. For those seeking a different aesthetic, the Natural products can also be stained to a range of colours, providing flexibility in how the material integrates with each design vision. Whether left raw or stained, no two projects will ever age the same, meaning every façade clad in the Natural Range tells its own story.

The Natural Range is available in both Selflok weatherboards and Weathergroove panels, giving specifiers flexibility to bring their creative vision to life. Horizontal weatherboards evoke timeless tradition with a modern edge, while vertical grooves deliver bold, contemporary rhythm.

Whichever profile you choose, the result is a façade that celebrates natural timber while embracing the clean sophistication of modern design.

Sustainability is embedded in the DNA of Weathertex, and the Natural Range exemplifies this commitment. With a better-than-zero carbon footprint with a composition free from glues, silica, or toxins, it stands as one of the most environmentally responsible cladding choices on the market. Architects and designers can specify confidently, knowing their projects combine aesthetic impact with ecological responsibility.

As design trends lean further into earthy palettes, organic textures, and materials that age gracefully, the demand for authentic timber façades continues to rise. Homeowners no longer want surfaces that look the same forever; they want buildings that breathe, shift, and tell a story over time. The Weathertex Natural Range is perfectly positioned to meet this desire, offering raw beauty, unmatched character, and enduring performance.

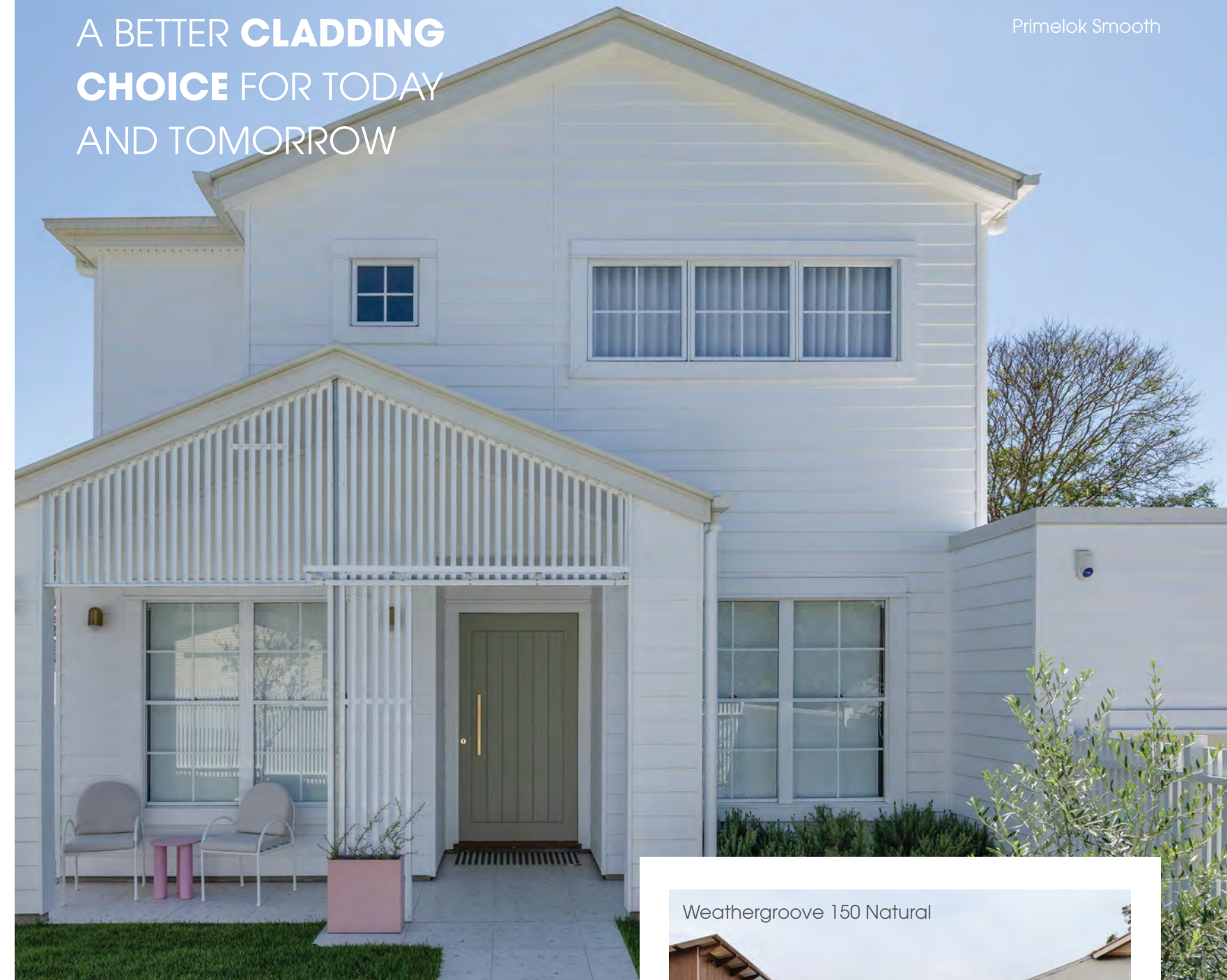


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Where Does Your House End?

Dissolving the Threshold Between In and Out

The bifold door changed Australian residential design. Let's acknowledge that. For two decades it was the gesture that connected kitchen to courtyard, living room to lawn, and every renovation brief in the country to the promise of indoor outdoor living. But something has shifted. The bifold door is no longer the main event. It is the minimum expectation.

The most interesting work being produced in Australian residential design right now treats the outdoors not as a view to be opened to, but as a room to be inhabited. Continuous floor planes that run from interior to exterior without a change in level or material. Ceiling heights that match inside and out, so the covered alfresco zone reads as part of the living space rather than an appendage to it. Flush thresholds so precise that the only indication you have crossed from inside to outside is the temperature of the air on your skin.

At Horizon Haus in southeast Queensland, the rear living area, kitchen, dining, and pool terrace exist as a single spatial experience. The sliding doors, when open, disappear entirely into the wall cavity. There is no frame to step over, no track to negotiate. The floor tile continues, the ceiling continues, and the family moves between cooking, eating, swimming, and lounging without once making a conscious decision to go outside.

Bluejay House on the Sunshine Coast takes this further by organising the entire plan around a northern courtyard. The living spaces wrap the outdoor room on three sides, each with full width openings. The effect is a house that, in good weather, is essentially roofless at its centre. Cross ventilation moves through every room. Light changes constantly. The distinction between built space and garden space becomes a matter of overhead cover, nothing more.

At Cogill Road in Sydney, a comprehensive renovation demolished the existing garage and kitchen to create a new living zone that flows directly into an outdoor entertaining area. The kitchen bench extends through the window line to become the barbecue bench. The pendant lights are rated for exterior use. Even the electrical layout treats inside and outside as a single circuit.

At Cogill Road in Sydney, the kitchen bench extends through the window line to become the barbecue bench.





Globally, this idea has names. "Seamless living" in the European press. "Inside outside" in American shelter magazines. But the Australian version has a quality the others lack. It is casual in a way that feels inherent rather than styled. The connection to outdoors here is not aspirational. It is the way Australians actually live. Bare feet on warm concrete. A conversation that starts at the kitchen island and ends at the fire pit. Dinner plates carried outside because the table out there is simply closer to where everyone already is.

The technical demands of this kind of design are more rigorous than they appear. Floor levels must be coordinated across structural and waterproofing systems. Drainage has to be resolved at the threshold without introducing a step or a channel that interrupts the visual plane. Glazing systems need to handle wind loads, thermal performance, and acoustic requirements while remaining visually minimal. The engineering behind a "seamless" threshold is anything but simple.

For designers, the shift demands a rethinking of where the building envelope actually sits. When the living room and the terrace are the same room, which one gets the energy rating? When the kitchen bench runs through the external wall, where does the waterproofing membrane go? These are not academic questions. They are the details that separate a beautiful concept from a leaking floor.

The Australian climate makes all of this possible. The latitude, the light, the mild winters in most population centres, the cultural willingness to be outside. No other country designs with this degree of permeability, because no other country has the conditions to support it. And yet the best examples do not rely on climate alone. They work in winter too. The covered areas are deep enough to shelter from rain. The heating systems extend outdoors. The furniture is permanent, not seasonal. These are not fair weather rooms. They are rooms, full stop.

The connection to outdoors here is not aspirational. It is the way Australians actually live.

From low-grade to design-grade

For every piece of timber that reaches architecture and design, many others quietly disappear down the value chain.

The timber industry operates within a clear hierarchy. The best logs become structural or architectural timber. The others are often directed toward pulp and fibre production, bioenergy, and other lower-value commodity uses.

It is an efficient system, but it also means a significant portion of the resource never reaches design.

A new approach, pioneered in Australia, is beginning to expand that system by transforming overlooked timber into architectural-grade material. It draws on the same principles that make recycled timber so valuable, but begins long before a building is ever demolished.

Crafted Hardwoods describes this shift as timber upcycling.



Innovation is unlocking timber resources that once sat outside architecture and building design — and it's happening right here in Australia.

Upcycling at scale

What makes the concept of timber upcycling so powerful is its potential to work at scale. Trees take decades to grow, and increasing supply is not simply a matter of waiting. The opportunity lies in making better use of the timber already being harvested. Upcycling does exactly that, focusing on transforming resources that sit lower in the value chain.

Advances in manufacturing technologies are making this shift possible, enabling timber that once fell outside architectural supply chains to become beautiful and reliable materials ready for today's projects. As a result, a much larger share of the forest resource can now begin to enter architecture and design, allowing a low-carbon material to go even further.

Local materials, local manufacturing

If more of the timber we harvest can become architectural material, an obvious question follows: where should that timber come from?

In Australia, the answer may already be growing. The country grows large volumes of plantation hardwoods, including species such as Shining Gum and Southern Blue Gum, resources that have historically been directed toward pulp or export rather than architectural use. As manufacturing technologies evolve, these plantation timbers are attracting renewed attention for their potential in construction and interiors.

For architects and building designers, this expands access to locally grown timber resources while supporting Australia's manufacturing capability.

Growing trees in a machine. In one day.

What once required large, mature trees grown over decades can now be achieved in a single day using lower-grade and juvenile timber.

The Crafted Hardwoods approach

In practice, a material only becomes viable when aesthetics, availability and buildability align. Timber has always delivered on character and warmth, but architectural hardwood products traditionally depend on a relatively small pool of high-grade logs from mature forests. As a result, supply can be inconsistent, section sizes limited, and designers often constrained by what the available logs can deliver.

Crafted Hardwoods tackles that challenge differently, bringing resources that once sat outside architectural supply chains into practical use. Our process upcycles abundant lower-grade and juvenile timber into large, stable hardwood billets that can be cut and machined much like traditional timber, opening the door to a wide range of architectural applications.

If you are curious about how Crafted Hardwoods can fit into your projects, we'd love to continue the conversation.

Visit us at craftedhardwoods.com



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The Deconstructed Duplex

Dual occupancy is adopting the mindset of two standalone homes. The contemporary dual occupancy is no longer trying to look efficient. It is trying to look independent.

Across recent projects, the traditional mirrored duplex, symmetrical and centrally divided, is giving way to a more deliberate strategy of deconstruction. Mass is broken down. Rooflines step. Materials shift. Entries separate. Driveways split. The building reads less like a divided volume and more like two detached houses sharing a boundary line.

This is not aesthetic indulgence. It is market intelligence embedded in form.

Designer of this project: Samuel Kassis



In projects such as Arches on Saleng, articulation becomes the primary design device. Horizontal banding, layered screening, and planter integrated facades fragment the scale of the building. The effect is psychological separation. Each dwelling claims its own identity, even within a shared structural footprint.

Similarly, the Santa Rosa Duplex, uses stepped rooflines, material variation, and facade modulation to reduce perceived bulk. The strategy is less about decoration and more about recalibrating how density is perceived from the street. The building contributes to the suburban rhythm rather than dominating it.

What is equally telling is what is happening internally. These are not compressed investor layouts. Programs now routinely include four bedrooms, media rooms, butlers pantries, guest suites, and in some cases lifts. Ground floor bedrooms positioned near powder rooms signal multigenerational thinking. Living zones are prioritised to the north wherever possible. Void spaces and glazing strategies enhance light penetration and passive performance.

Each dwelling is being designed as though it stands alone. For building designers and architects, this marks a meaningful shift in approach. The duplex is no longer a yield maximising exercise with a facade applied afterwards. Instead, massing, privacy, orientation, and street presence are resolved at concept stage. Bulk reduction is proactive rather than reactive. Articulation is embedded, not decorative.

The duplex is no longer a yield maximising exercise with a facade applied afterwards. Instead, massing, privacy, orientation, and street presence are resolved at concept stage.



The 2026 signal is clear. Density is being reframed as neighbourhood compatible housing rather than development product.

For energy assessors, this shift has implications as well. Treating each dwelling as an independent thermal envelope encourages clearer zoning, more deliberate solar access strategies, and better performing facades. Separation improves privacy, but it also improves environmental response.

The 2026 signal is clear. Density is being reframed as neighbourhood compatible housing rather than development product. The future duplex does not advertise that it is attached. It behaves like two homes because it has been designed that way from the outset.



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Velocity
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When the Designer Becomes the Client

How building designer Louise Williams brought a Velocity Compass Lift into her family home and why she now specifies them for her clients

When you spend your career helping others shape their homes, your own renovation becomes something of a proving ground. For Louise Williams, a building designer and long-time member of the BDAA, a 22-year family home presented the ideal opportunity to put her professional principles into practice, including a decision that she says she wishes more of her clients would make earlier: installing a home lift.

Louise chose the Velocity Compass Lift, an Australian-made home elevator designed to integrate seamlessly into a residential build rather than feel like a commercial afterthought. For Louise, that distinction mattered. As a designer, she was aware of how a lift could either complement or compromise a home's character. The Compass, with its compact footprint and customisable finishes, offered something different: a product that could be designed into the home, not bolted onto it.

Future-proofing as a design principle

The decision to include a lift was driven as much by forward thinking as by immediate need. Louise recognised that the home she had lived in for over two decades needed to work for the decades ahead for herself, her family, and anyone who might need to move through it with ease. In her professional view, future-proofing is not a luxury; it is simply good design. A lift planned and integrated from the outset of a renovation avoids the far greater disruption of retrofitting one later.

The Velocity Compass is manufactured in Australia and supported by an in-house service team, which gave Louise confidence in its longevity. For a product expected to perform reliably over many years, local manufacturing and dedicated after-sales support are not small considerations.

A lift that reflects the home

What sets Louise's installation apart is the level of considered detail. Working with the Velocity team, she was able to customise the lift to suit the personality of her home rather than settle for a standard configuration. Fluted glass doors, art deco floor tiles, and solid brass antique handles were chosen with the same care she brings to any design brief. Even the external architrave was considered as part of the overall aesthetic.



This level of flexibility is central to what Velocity offers. Finishes, fixtures, and fittings can all be tailored, allowing the lift cabin to read as a natural extension of its surroundings rather than an intrusion. For a building designer, that degree of control is exactly what the process requires.

From client to advocate

Louise credits Velocity's approach throughout the process as a key part of her experience. The team's willingness to guide clients through each decision, from the initial design brief through to installation, reflects the kind of consultative service that builds genuine confidence. It's not simply a product transaction; it is a supported journey.

That experience has informed how Louise now works with her own clients. She recommends Velocity lifts as a matter of course for appropriate projects, particularly those involving multi-storey homes or long-term liveability planning. As both a user and a professional, she brings a perspective that few can offer: she has lived the outcome, not just designed it.

For members considering home lift specifications in their own projects, Louise's story is a useful reference point: thoughtful integration, early planning, and a product designed for Australian homes can make all the difference.

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