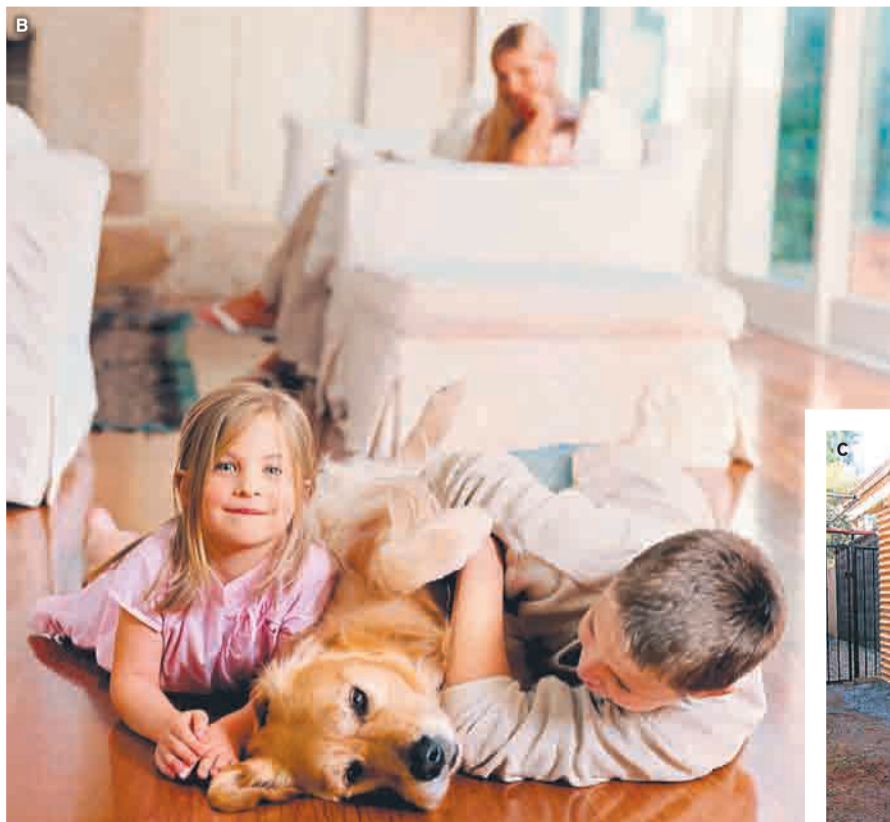


Blueprint for the future

Sustainability factors, indoor-outdoor living and plenty of natural lighting are set to play a big part in properties for the next decade



A For flexible lifestyle, choose a seamless indoor-outdoor design **B** Floorboards in the living area provide a more activity-friendly space **C** Government subsidies make water tanks more accessible to homeowners



Building and renovating has always been big business and never more so than in land-hungry Sydney. And despite the concerns about interest rates and job security that many homeowners face, it is an exciting time to be talking about new building work. How our homes will look now and into the future is being shaped by a number of growing factors. Head of the Master Builders Association for NSW Brian Seidler says environmental sustainability has come to the fore and will drive house design for a long time. "The major trend for us in the building



industry will be sustainability," he says. "At a national level under the Building Code of Australia, they are moving towards a six-star rating that has all sorts of implications for how buildings will be in the future." With features such as rainwater tanks and greywater systems becoming commonplace for new and renovated homes, Brian says more attention will be paid to materials such as glazing and eaves to protect and control the amount of sun entering the house. As passive-solar design elements such as cross ventilation and north-facing windows become de rigeur, Brian says more attention may be paid to things such as paint colours. "We understand with the six-star rating in the future, the colours of roofs and [exterior] walls may be regulated so that darker colours may not be allowed in hotter climates, because they attract heat," he says. However, he expects more expensive additions such as photovoltaic cells and solar hot-water systems will only be taken up if they are supported by government subsidies. "Water tanks, PV cells and the like are all dependent on [government] subsidies. If those subsidies are totally removed, it is pretty prohibitive," says Brian. Executive director of the Housing Industry Association Graham Wolfe agrees that sustainability will be one of the →



A Designs that incorporate orientation for cross ventilation will save money in the long run **B** Louvre windows increase airflow
C More bathrooms make life easier
D Photovoltaic solar panels will reduce heating costs



strongest drivers in building into the future. “People want to make a contribution and where a designer or builder explains that for a little extra in price there is a significant contribution, they are keen,” he says.

Outdoor trend

Such concerns spill over into the strongest building trend in recent years towards indoor/outdoor living. Typically, this includes an open-plan kitchen, dining and living area facing on to an alfresco dining space accessed via stacking bi-fold or sliding doors.

Bringing the outdoors in will affect the rest of the house, says Graham.

“A key issue for Sydney in summer will be creating extra ways to provide breezeways,” he says.

“We don’t want a house that is completely open all the time, because in winter it will be very expensive to heat. We will look more to the orientation of the site and design the house to capture the breeze.”

However, the changing nature of families and Sydney’s ever-present affordability problems will also strongly affect the new house and renovation market. Graham says that as children are not leaving home so readily, houses will need to cater for this.

“Families are now accepting that their children are staying home longer,” he says.

“Given the affordability of housing, parents need to consider whether there is a possibility their children will stay at home themselves or even start a family and bring them into the fold.”

He says this might mean more bedrooms or, instead, more bathrooms to offer the existing household more privacy.

For the heart of the house, Michael Kitchener from Kitcheners Kitchens says there will continue to be a greater interest in making it part of a larger living area.

“We are doing a lot of entertaining units to continue the same materials used in the

kitchen into the living area,” he says.

“It is about continuing that furniture throughout, creating the look and feel of what you see in the entertaining area, you see in the kitchen so that you have the thick floating shelves for herbs and spices in the kitchen rather than books.”

Return to stone

Colours will remain neutral for walls and cupboards with flooring continuing in the same material from the kitchen through to the living area.

Although laminate is making a comeback, Michael says at the upper end of the market expect to see a return to stone benchtops such as marble and granite after the dominance of CaesarStone and stainless steel in recent years.

Otherwise, Michael says the biggest changes will be in the things you do not see.

“You don’t see a drawer runner or a hinge, but as the technology improves they enable us to do other things,” he says.

“My favourite supplier is Blum. They have developed a drawer where you touch the front face of it and you can open it.

“It means you can have a handleless kitchen without the need for grooves.”

Whether you’re building a new home or renovating the old one, paying attention to current and future building trends will stand you in good stead. In the following pages we preview the best houses in NSW as awarded by the HIA. Be inspired. ■

Robyn Willis

- **MORE INFORMATION**
- Housing Industry Association**
hia.com.au
- Kitcheners Kitchens**
kitcheners.com.au
- Master Builders Association of NSW**
mbansw.asn.au

MAKING A SMART INVESTMENT

It is all very well to renovate for the future, but you want to be sure you have made the right investment.

Peter Kelaher from buyers’ agents PK Property Search (pkproperty.com.au) gives his advice for those looking to make a return on their investment.

- * Pay attention to natural light and install skylights if needed

- * Install louvres for cross ventilation to create a light and breezy feel

- * Lay floorboards through the living areas and carpet for the bedrooms

- * Install built-ins for the bedrooms

- * Separate toilets and bathrooms are still preferable

- * More than one living space is appealing, especially to families with teenagers looking to entertain everyone at home

- * Bi-fold or large sliding doors on to the backyard are a must for that all-important indoor/outdoor flow

- * Spend on kitchen appliances but save on other materials such as tiles

- * Keep the palette neutral and inject colour with accessories and soft furnishings

- * Go ahead with the renovations. Renovated properties are popular now with buyers looking to have everything done when they move in.

