

A smaller building footprint

Reduce waste and save the environmental – and a little money too, writes Robyn Willis

The war on waste has escalated in recent years, with more of us taking care with what we buy and considering how we dispose of it. The decision by supermarkets Coles and Woolworths to ban single use plastic bags more than a year ago is said to have stopped 1.7 billion and three billion bags respectively ending up in landfill.

Efforts have also focused on fast fashion to stop cheaply made clothing going to landfill.

Lesser known is the impact of building and demolition waste on the environment. According to the energy.gov.au website, about 35 per cent or seven million tonnes of waste from building and construction goes into landfill each year. With our thirst for building and renovating apparently unquenchable, it's worth thinking through your next building project, and ways to minimise waste production in the first place.

And that starts with how big you want your project to be.

Architect Matt Elkan says many of us could do well with less without losing out on lifestyle.

"We often have discussions with clients saying they want to keep costs under control so they may be looking at using cheaper tiles, which might save them a few thousand dollars," he says.

"But really, they want to save more like \$300,000 and you do that by building less. We should be looking at smaller, more flexible spaces rather than one-off, single purpose rooms."

In terms of energy expended in delivering product – known as embodied energy – aluminium is the worst offender, while timber is the least damaging.

"Timber holds carbon in the structure of it but the process of refining aluminium pumps it out into the atmosphere," Matt says.

More: mattelkanarchitect.com.au; mrwaller.com

Main picture: Anson Smart



build



waste



design

If you're searching for materials that are kinder to the environment, architect Matt Elkan (his work is pictured above) says you should start by looking closer to home, reducing the amount of energy expended to import materials. Often there is a better, more beautiful product on our doorstep.

"There is a massive trend towards American oak at the moment which I don't understand," Matt says. "I was at a building seminar where the woman representing Tasmanian hardwoods explained that the worst of Australian hardwoods are five times stronger than the best American timbers."

Australia also has a wide range of local stone, including limestone, granite, marble and sandstone in a range of colours.

While we have red, yellow and green bins for sorting out domestic waste, there's no equivalent in the building industry. On most residential building sites, a single skip bin ends up being the depository for everything from broken tiles and discarded floorboards to old handbasins and window frames.

Matt says while every development application requires a waste management plan, often it is not policed. "I always submit the plan but I have never had anyone check it, not a planner or a certifier – and builders know that," he says.

In the end, it comes down to the cost of sorting rubbish and delivering it to the appropriate waste management centre.

Recycled timber can bring unique beauty to a building project, like this one by designer Andrew Waller using recycled timber. Timber is one of the easiest materials to recycle but there can be a surprising amount of waste from offcuts. You can also reduce waste on materials by working with them to size.

"A lot of materials like come in sheets of 2.4m by 1.2m," Matt says. "If you are building cupboards 700mm deep, there will be 500mm wasted but if you make them 600mm deep, you can get two from one sheet."

Picture: Anson Smart



NEW TRICKS

Designer Andrew Waller used a variety of robust recycled and reclaimed materials in this warehouse conversion in the inner west, including stainless steel benchtops salvaged from a commercial kitchen, old timber sash windows and industrial pendant lights, reducing the environmental impact of the build.

WINTER WONDER

❄️ OVER 30 DESIGNS TO CHOOSE FROM

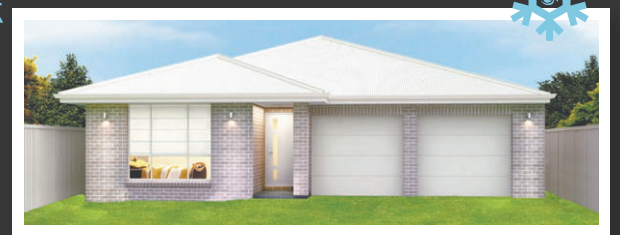
❄️ PRICED FROM \$222,222 TO \$233,333

❄️ PACKAGES INCLUDE:

- ❄️ Standard Site Costs
- ❄️ Standard BASIX
- ❄️ Standard statutory fees & charges
- ❄️ Genesis Indulgence inclusions

❄️ HURRY OFFER MUST END 31 JULY 2019

beechwoodhomes.com.au/winterwonder



Beechwood

(02) 9765 0299

Visit www.beechwoodhomes.com.au/winterwonder for more details. Promotion is available for tenders requested by July 31, 2019. Cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Package prices are based within the Sydney area. Classic 1 and Classic 3 façades are included in the promotion price. Other façades are available on request and will incur additional costs. Landscaping, driveway, fences, letterbox, external light fixtures or window coverings are not included in advertised prices. The content provided is correct at time of printing and supersedes all previous versions published. Conditions Apply. Beechwood Homes (NSW) Pty Limited, ABN 50132370104, BL 207765C. BWH0179HP-270719