



Herald Sun

home

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Strictly speaking

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Growing appeal

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The Casuarina by
Wincrest Homes

Good looking, and smart too

Stylish living with an eco-sensitive design

Easy being green

Luke Middleton proves style and environmentally-friendly features are not poles apart in this Prahran home

Words **Karen Woods** Photography **Chris Groenhout**

Most designers recognise the principles of environmentally aware housing. Yet many fail to apply them in a practical context.

As a result, houses have long been built with soaring glass ceilings that create saunas in summer and take ages

Stay cool

A water feature at the entry helps cool the house (above)

Room with a view

The main bedroom is spacious and inviting (left)

to heat in winter. But, why can't we have both – good looking and eco-friendly homes?

Designer Luke Middleton, of Ecologically Motivated Environments (EME), is proving we can.

Luke is dedicated to creating houses that not only feature stylish design, but embrace conservation and recycling principles, to make them better than 5-star energy rated.

Responding to calls from the Smart Water Fund to develop community water-saving projects, Luke received a grant that enabled him to deliver five new residential projects aimed

at reducing water usage by 60 per cent.

One is a stylish double storey, inner-city house created for fashion designer Faye Officer.

With soft cream and natural timber tones, Faye's home is not only beautiful, but incredibly efficient. And nothing has been sacrificed to make it ecologically sound.

The Prahran house is set back from the street, so as not to impose on neighbouring properties. And the fact it is double storey almost goes unnoticed because of its cleverly stepped roofline.

Radially-cut weatherboards have been used for the exterior. These have been stained so they are easy to care for, requiring no ongoing painting.



When viewed from street-level, the building form has been broken by using a double-height void near the entry.

Providing light to both levels, the space also cools in summer as breeze passes over a water feature and through double-glazed windows.

Even the landscaping has been done with the environment in mind.

"By using permeable surfaces, the water seeps into the ground and this then puts less pressure on stormwater drains, meaning less waste ends up in the bay," Luke says.

"The colours are in the garden, not in the house. It's timeless."

Warm touch

Smaller window panes minimise heat loss in the living room (top)

Lining up

Radially-cut weatherboards line the inside of the house (top right)

Bright ideals

Luke Middleton encourages homeowners to build eco friendly (right)

Water watch

The decked courtyard conceals a 5500-litre tank (far right)

Eco-wise facts

- Water usage for this house is less than 100 litres a person a day. The average usage is 380 litres a person a day.
- Timber used in the house is recycled or from sustainable sources.
- In heavy rain it would take about two hours to fill a 5500-litre tank.
- About 90 per cent of rainwater that falls in urban areas is not collected for re-use.
- A 6/3 dual flush toilet saves up to 10 litres of water a flush compared with old models.
- Tanks can be installed above or below ground, or under an existing house or deck.
- Light fittings used are 37 watt, rather than the standard 50 watt, and fluorescent lighting has been used where possible.

Artwork: Getting Ready by Jenny Watson





The interior has been lined with rendered Hebel, a type of aerated concrete, for insulation.

With minimal overhead lighting, Luke has made washed lighting a feature throughout. He opted for task-specific lighting and used lamps to create ambience.

The kitchen rangehood has been concealed in a lantern-style timber box. Light projects through the finger pulls in the drawers of the kitchen cabinetry, creating an almost sculptural element.

Integrated features - recycling bins, dishwasher, pantry, fridge, bar and bar fridge - make the kitchen unusual.

Recycled oak has been used for the kitchen benchtops, and also as a feature in the timber floors in the open kitchen/dining/lounge area.

The elegant courtyard conceals the greatest water-saving feature of the house, a 5500-litre tank.

"Because the tank was planned from the start of the building process, it wasn't expensive to do; about \$4000 for the tank and pump, including installation," Luke says.

"The tank is filled using run-off from the roof and it is metred so, at any time, we can tell exactly how much water has been saved."

Tank water is used to water the garden, but the system automatically switches to mains water if it dries up.

Operating the tank's pump for one month takes only the power used by an air-conditioner in 30 minutes.

Tank water is also used to flush the toilets because, as Luke says, "you



don't need water of drinking quality to flush toilets or water gardens".

Drip-style showerheads have been installed in the bathroom.

"Aerated tap and shower fittings use a lot less water, but you really don't notice any difference when using them, so there's no reason you wouldn't fit them," Luke says.

"Rather than a basin, we chose to use a wash-plane in the bathrooms. I like to call them a water-watching plane because you really see exactly how much water you're using, and it encourages you to be careful."

Luke encourages homeowners to see

the value of installing a water tank, and particularly how it adds value to the house for resale.

"People sometimes ask how long will it take them to recoup the value of a tank, but it's important to remember the value to the environment is immediate, and maybe that should be enough," he says.

With the assistance of the Smart Water Fund, EME have developed the Urban Water Solutions booklet providing information about how much water can be saved by installing a tank and explaining the options. It also includes a list of specialist installers.

PDF copies can be downloaded from www.emegroup.com.au/urbanwater

Ecologically Motivated Environments can be contacted on 9699 4688.

Hidden story

Standard kitchen items, including the fridge, are concealed (far left)

No sacrifices

Eco-friendly design does not come at the expense of style (above)

Bath time

A drip-style showerhead ensures water is conserved (right)

