

# Smart designs

## FRANCES COSWAY

ENERGY costs are rising, and the benefits of a sustainable home are easy to see at bill time.

This is good news for new home builders, who are best positioned to maximise efficiency and save money. Planning a home smartly at the outset can help save you money down the track.

Many sustainable features do not cost anything to integrate into a design, but in some cases they cannot be added later, so it pays to think about them before you build.

For example, your window placement, shading, and how your house is situated on your block can maximise sun exposure in winter and minimise it in summer.

Leveraging the sun for warmth, and breezes and shade for cooling doesn't cost anything. However, you will need advice to ensure the design is fully effective.

Windows are important in terms of placement to maximise and minimise direct sun and breezes.

North-facing windows let in the most light and heat, but should be shaded completely in summer.

East and west-facing windows will have direct morning or afternoon sun. They will cause a house to heat up if not shaded.

For winter, double glazing on all windows is key.

It's also important to think about zoning when you are designing a new home. For example, the ability to close off staircases will save heat or cool air escaping upwards.

Sliding doors in hallways can create zones and allow you to heat or cool part of the home instead of all of it. This can make a big difference to your energy bills.

The trend of large, open spaces that are not able to be closed off can cost you money. Sliding doors can provide the best of both worlds.

The placement of doors in your home is also important, as they allow a breeze to flow freely and cool the house in summer.

**Frances Cosway is the principal of WhitePebble Interiors.**



Windows can help keep your home energy-efficient, or add to your bills.

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### TIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

- Ensure north and west-oriented windows have shading to stop heat entering the home in summer. The goal is to keep the sun off windows, as internal blinds are not enough
- Consult a sustainability expert to maximise energy efficiency for your home at the design stage. They will look at components you probably hadn't thought of, but will make a difference to a home's performance and how much money you save
- Create zones within the home to save heating or cooling the entire house. Aim for doors in hallways and sliding doors for larger rooms, rather than large open plan spaces
- Insulate, insulate, insulate. Go beyond the standards required
- If you aren't installing solar at the build stage, provide the option for it later on by installing a DC conduit

Source: WhitePebble Interiors



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