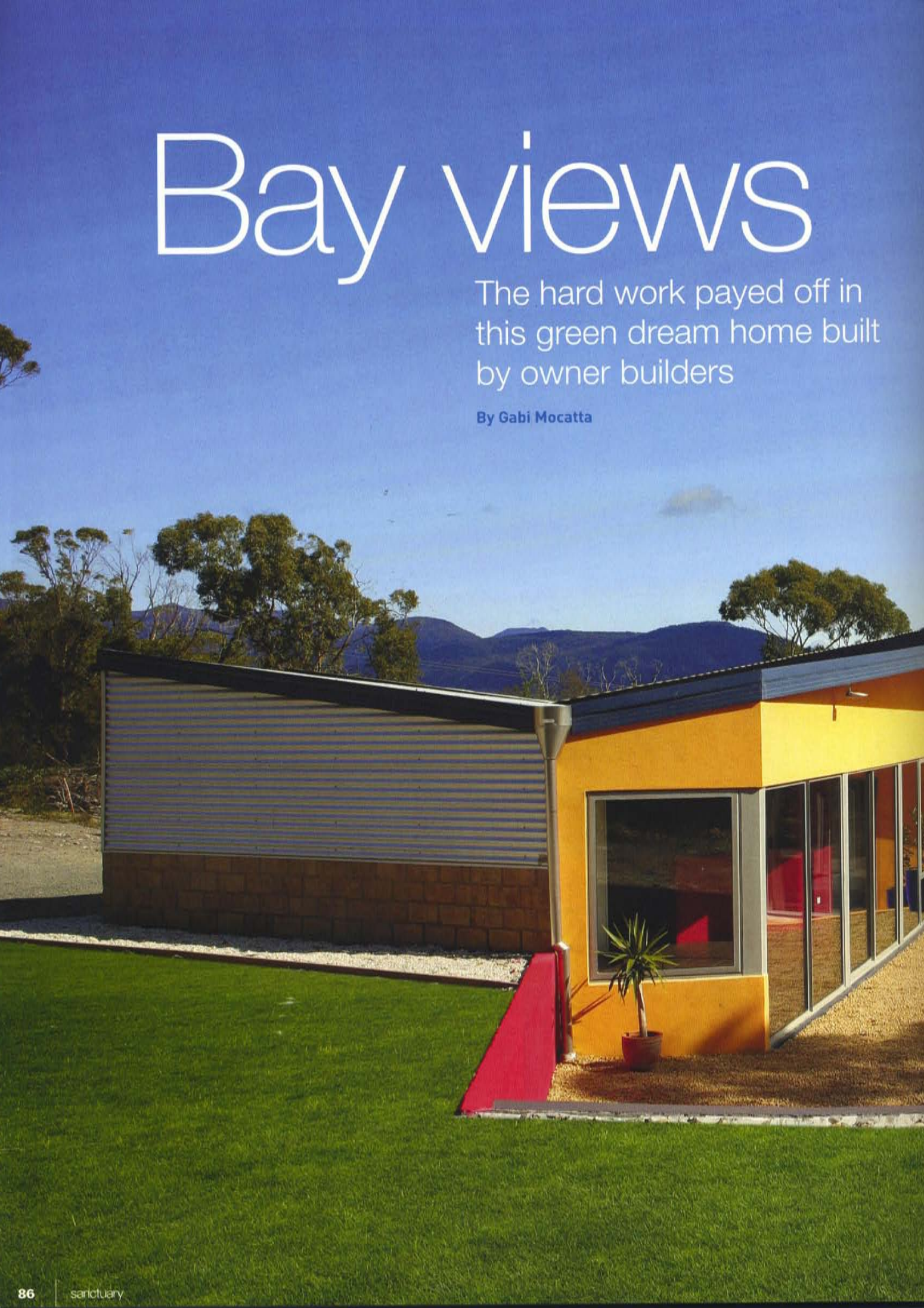
Bay views

The hard work payed off in this green dream home built by owner builders

By Gabi Mocatta





“Mike was the artist who designed what I had to try and paint. My challenge – as a first time builder – was to get things to a standard that would live up to his vision”

> **"We lived for the first three years with only a small electric heater... When we had snow on the ground outside, it was 14 degrees in here"**

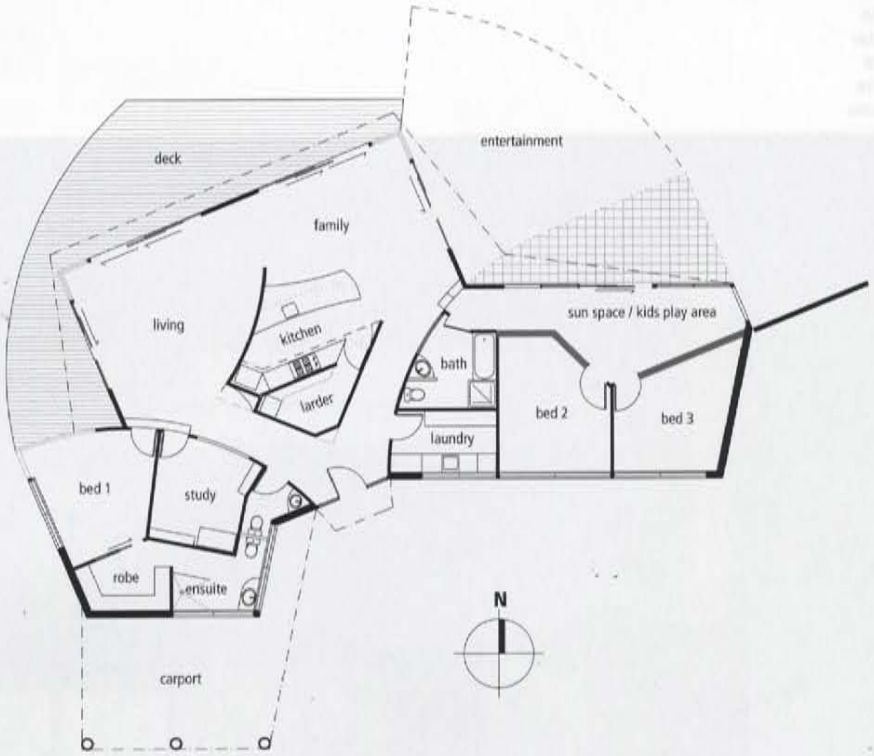


Views over to Geilston Bay from the deck are sublime, and the huge double-glazed windows help the winter warmth from the northerly aspect stay in the home

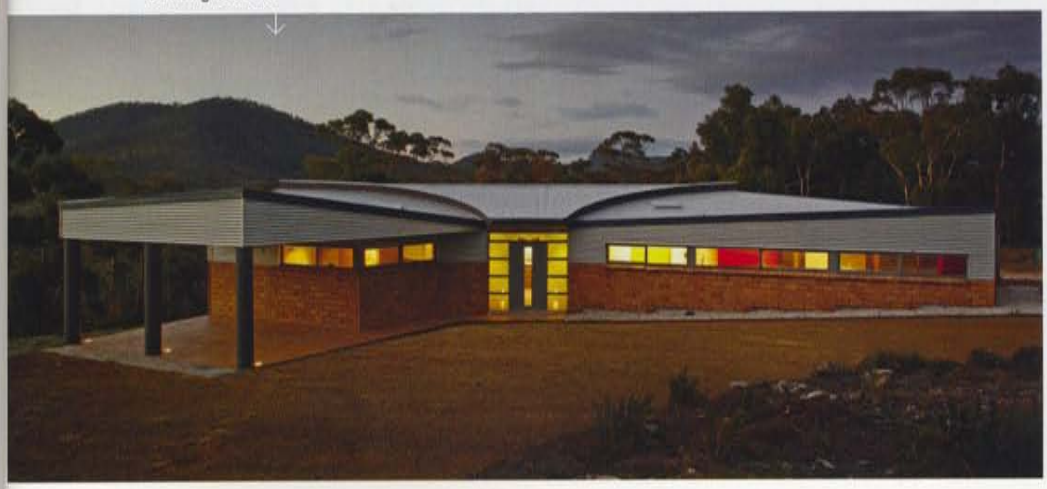
When you build a house with your own hands, it's something you live and breathe for months, or even years, on end. You know every detail – each decision, measurement, inspiration or mistake – and you remember the whole process from design to completion. Such is the experience of owner-builders Steve and Karina Dine, who built their home in the northern reaches of Hobart, overlooking Geilston Bay.

When Steve and Karina first started looking for someone to design their home, they knew exactly what they were after. "We wanted a contemporary passive solar house that would be as environmentally sensitive as it was ageless and timeless," says Steve.

The Dines found Mike Cleaver of Clever Design, and the team soon set to work. The couple arrived at their first meeting with the designer well prepared, with a scrapbook of ideas. "Mike immediately understood the kind of home we wanted," says Steve. The design agreed upon, designer and owner-builder worked in close consultation. "You could say Mike was the artist who designed what I had to try and paint," Steve explains. "My challenge – as a first time builder – was to get things to a standard that would live up to his vision."



The compressed earth bricks on the southern entry side of house are a striking feature



One of the first things Steve and Karina found when building their own home was that the onus is on the owner-builder to source building materials, products and furnishings. And sourcing sustainable building materials, products and furnishings takes extra research. But the ground work paid off as the couple found they had saved thousands of dollars by getting a range of quotes on everything from timber framing to lighting to floor tiles, while fulfilling their brief to build an environmentally friendly home.

Slowly, if sporadically, the house began to take shape in its hilltop forest setting. Steve is a police officer and his shift work allowed him to do plenty of building in his free time, working sometimes with an apprentice builder, but mostly on his own.

The house that emerged is a north facing, two wing design, with three bedrooms and timber framing. The home's bedrooms are arranged around the central living area, so that at bedtime in winter the bedroom doors can be thrown open to let in the heat from the living room.

The home's passive solar design is the greatest reason for its success. The home faces directly north and its eave widths and angles are calculated exactly so that in winter the interior is sun-

Owner builders

Increasing numbers of people are thinking of DIY (do-it-yourself) building. DIY building requires a great deal of determination, time and skills. Although Steve had no formal building training, his experience as a 'high end handyman' had included numerous kitchen renovations and he was the kind of person who enjoys studying the nuts and bolts of how houses are put together. He kitted out his tool supply before setting to work.

According to Karina, "Building is not for the faint hearted. It adds enormous stress to any relationship but the pride and satisfaction in the finished product is much like the pride you have in a child – something you created that has turned out so well." She adds, "I would recommend that anyone contemplating this journey takes photos and writes a journal of the experience. We took pictures of the house throughout the process and have a power point that shows the house springing up from the ground. One of the most rewarding outcomes is to have people admire our house, achieving the wow factor we were after."

More info:
www.theownerbuilder.com.au
www.ownerbuild.com.au

Entry via one of the curved dual ramps. The concealed larder and kitchen are positioned in the heart of the home



washed, while being shaded in the hottest hours of a summer day. A substantial concrete slab floor retains the winter heat from the sun, along with the internal thermal storage walls.

The temperature inside the home is also kept constant by extensive insulation. **The timber stud walls are insulated with rendered polystyrene sheeting. There is also double-thickness polystyrene insulation under the suspended section of the slab together with slab perimeter insulation.** Both walls and roof have fibreglass batt insulation and the home is double-glazed throughout, except for the butt joined corner windows and the windows in the master bedroom which are single glazed with high performance Low E glazing.

With such energy efficiency, the home has had little need for heating. "We lived for the first three years with only a small electric heater," says Karina. "When we had snow on the ground outside, it was 14 degrees in here. Eventually we decided we wanted to keep things cosier on the coldest winter days". They installed a reverse cycle floor-mounted airconditioner in the living room, which is an energy efficient choice for winter heating.

To complete the suite of environmental





Stainless steel work-top benches can be a good environmental choice for their longevity and recyclability

credentials, the home collects its own rainwater, has low-flow water efficient appliances in the kitchen, bathroom and laundry, heats its hot water with solar energy and has an aerobic waste water system that treats kitchen and bathroom waste.

The design was intended to produce a comfortable, liveable family home – and for the owners that's exactly what this house is. "We've had 35 people here for lunch on Christmas day, with people spilling out onto the deck," says Karina. "We also live close to nature here: we have parrots in the trees and wallabies are regular visitors. It's everything you would wish a home to be – as well as being environmentally responsible."

For Steve, building his own home was the dream of a lifetime, and to have been able to make his dream home a sustainable one only enhanced that pleasure. "There's been a great deal of attention to detail over the whole project," says Steve, "and that gives you an end product that you can really be proud of." To know that his home is also being kind to the environment only enhances that sense of satisfaction and achievement.