

MASTER BUILDERS

ROMINA DE SANTIS, technical adviser at Master Builders WA, answers your questions about home building



Rooms like the kitchen and living room should face north, as this is where a lot of people spend the most time.



THE QUESTION

There is so much written about designing a home to be more energy efficient, but I am more interested in natural comfort. We were just lucky with our home, as the living room windows face north. It is where the dog curls up for a nap. What makes it so liveable? Is it just because it faces north?

THE ANSWER

Good design considers the orientation of the block and positions the home correctly for maximum benefits to both enhance the comfort of occupants and reduce heating and cooling costs. The right house on the right block reduces the internal temperature range experienced through summer and winter. Much is said about facing north and the north sun, but there are some basic facts about north that you need to understand to maximise the benefits.

Firstly, you can have too many windows on the north side. It is recommended that only 50 per cent of north-facing areas be glazed, and glazing must be shaded to control summer sun and window treatments installed internally to reduce heat loss in winter.

Shading is necessary over your north-facing window to protect the windows from direct summer sun and allow the winter sun to enter the building and heat up the space. Do not over-shade, as you will lose the benefit of the warmth in winter. Consider a solar pergola that is angled to block summer sun, and allow winter sun to filter to the building. This may be covered by a deciduous vine or clear roof sheeting.

You need thermal mass to absorb the heat

during the day in winter for it to be released at night. Concrete slabs are a great thermal mass, as are masonry internal walls. These also trap heat in the summer, so by installing shading and window treatments you reduce the heat stored in the thermal mass of your home.

Insulation is a must, and not only in the roof. Walls and floors can also be insulated to improve the thermal performance of your home. Cavity brick may also include cavity insulation, or consider reverse-brick veneer (light, framed external walls and masonry internal walls) for north, east and west-facing elevations.

Designers and builders now incorporate a number of sound sustainability principles based on lot orientation, size, materials selection and innovative products and practices that result in a lesser carbon footprint for the build and the use of the building. More ideas are available on a number of great websites, including www.yourhome.gov.au.

For more information about building, visit the Master Builders A-Z Building Information Directory at www.mbawa.com. If you have any questions about home building or purchase issues, email romina@mbawa.com

KIMBERLEY-PILBARA CELEBRATES BEST BUILDERS

Each year, Master Builders provides builders in the Kimberley-Pilbara region with the opportunity to showcase their best homes and commercial projects. Master Builders director Michael McLean reports on this year's winners.

FOR those of you who haven't visited Broome, it is about 2200km north of Perth and only a 2.5-hour direct flight by QantasLink. It is a beautiful coastal town steeped in history and comprising a diverse range of industries and businesses. Although Broome's stable population may be less than 15,000, it tends to treble during the winter months as tourists flock to the warmer climate, which the Kimberley is renowned for.

Broome provided an idyllic setting for the 2018 Master Builders Bankwest Building Excellence Awards on Saturday June 16, held under the stars at Zanders at Cable Beach.

The Kimberley-Pilbara regions comprise 931,413sqkm of land, which is by far the largest area of our five regional awards. Entries this year were received from Kununurra, Exmouth, Derby, Karratha, Onslow and Broome.

Although entries were less than usual this year due to the downturn in the local and state economy, the quality of workmanship was as high as ever, according to our chief regional judge Charlie Baggetta.

Mr Baggetta commented that the local trades were doing a great job for the builders, with the quality of tiling, polished concrete and painting being of an exceptionally high standard. Multi-residential developments were becoming more popular, especially for the rental market. Several of the commercial projects were rated very highly, which will continue to enhance the standard of living in some of these remote areas.

There's a lot happening and planned for Broome to boost its economy, such as:

Four direct flights from Singapore.

State Government funding over the next 12 months to assist Qantas to provide discounted airfares from Perth to Broome.

Roebuck Estate Developments has contracted three local builders to build four affordable new homes to stimulate the new housing market.

The ongoing servicing of the offshore gas industry via 16 helicopters based in Broome.

In addition to this, the 2018-19 State Budget allocated funds to complete 90km of unsealed road from Broome to Cape Leveque and an upgrade to boating facilities at Broome's Town Beach, as well as an upgrade to the Port of Broome to enable the cruise ship industry to grow.

The winner of this year's Best Country Home Award was Broome Builders for a magnificent home in Broome. The best regional commercial project was the Red Earth Arts Precinct in Karratha, built by Doric Contractors.

Other award-winning builders and projects were:

AWARDS	BUILDER
Contract Homes	
\$300,000-\$350,000	Connolly Homes
\$350,000-\$400,000	Connolly Homes
\$450,000-\$500,000	Connolly Homes
\$500,000-\$650,000	Broome Builders
\$650,000-\$850,000	Buildmore Constructions
Over \$1 million	Broome Builders
Multi-Residential Developments	
Under \$1 million	MGC Building & Maintenance
\$1-\$2.5 million	Pindan Contracting
Commercial/Industrial Projects	
\$1-\$2.5 million	Pindan Contracting for eight-Bed Renal Hostel, Kununurra
\$2.5-\$6.5 million	H&M Tracey Construction for St Mary's Kindergarten, Broome
\$6.5-\$15 million	Ri-Con Contractors for Broome Aboriginal Short Stay
Over \$15 million	Doric Contractors for Red Earth Arts Precinct, Karratha
Alterations/Additions	Ri-Con Contractors for Eco Camping Facilities, Emma Gorge
Civil Engineering	Firm Construction for Ningaloo Centre, Exmouth
Residential Alterations and Additions	
Under \$100,000	Broome Builders
\$100,000-\$200,000	Broome Builders

Congratulations to all entrants for the pride displayed by their construction teams and for the quality of the projects entered. Finally, a big thank you to each of our alliance partners for their commitment to showcasing building excellence in our industry.