

Pioneer country



The home, below, is wrapped around a courtyard that maximises the winter sun for indoor warmth and doubles as a cooling breeze trap in summer.

HERITAGE listing seems appropriate for a big, rambling pioneer-style homestead at Dandaragan.

But it is, in fact, the latest in passive solar concepts and shows how effective it can be with homes paying respect to our colonial past.

Owners Peter and Anne Isbister had lived in a 100-year-old farmhouse on their property — one that had been added to over time to create a complex rather than a conventional residence. They gave their brief to architects Baverstock Murphy and Associates.

Their solution was a new homestead wrapping

itself round a big atrium courtyard that maximises the winter sunlight for indoor warmth and doubles as a breeze-trap for the cool south-westerlies of summer. All the features of the pioneer homestead are there but the stables attached to the atrium are now for the horseless carriages.

The residence has classical verandas on all sides except the northern elevations where louvred pergolas let in the winter sunlight but completely shut it out in summer. One detail not immediately apparent is the clerestory glazing tucked in above the skillion verandas, allowing natural light to play on the high ceilings without any heat intake.

Obvious pioneer touches include the mud-coloured render to the exterior that harmonises with the reddish-brown farm soil. Veranda posts are recycled rough-sawn timber.

The timber window frames and corrugated roof have been painted light colours to reflect the summer heat and the ceiling's double insulation includes two-way reflective aluminium foil.

Wings create well-defined zones that include a guests' wing, private quarters and a meeting place for all in the general living areas. And, of course, it has a country kitchen, where the chef and friends can all pitch in and help on social occasions.

With farms there is no restriction on where the homestead can be sited, and orientated for best solar benefits. At Dandaragan it has gone to the most picturesque setting, exploiting an outlook down a valley and across to the bush hills.

An appropriate adjunct for country living is a greenhouse in winter, converting to a ventilated, fly-wire enclosure for summer. Technically it is a solarium with a clear glass, ventilated roof, where a timber, louvred ceiling lets in all the winter sun and provides solid shade in summer.



comforts

The warmth accumulated here in winter is drawn indoors to enhance the comfort of major living areas. Windows to these rooms also allow the winter sun to penetrate up to 4m indoors, where floors soak up the warmth by day to radiate it back into the spaces at night.

The homestead is at the end of a long winding driveway. After you first glimpse it in the distance, it seems to magically appear from behind a bush hill. The parking area relates to the main entry and the foyer introduces the 3.5m-high ceilings to all main areas.

A major roof hip here incorporates a clerestory detail to softly illuminate this foyer, and this space flows through to an 8m x 7m great room that has the big family sitting and dining areas. The 45deg angle treatment here introduces a reverse bay window that effectively funnels in the winter warmth from the solarium and also gives access to a private court.

The dining area for all occasions can easily take a table setting expanded to ten or 12. Informal meals are enjoyed with the chef in the country kitchen.

There is a generous, walk-through pantry that can be loaded from the utility room. Workers com-

ing in from the fields also use this room and its related bathroom to clean up before going into the main spaces of the homestead.

Another rural touch is the link from the big garage to an essential storeroom, before proceeding through to the foyer. Convenient here also is a generous office set up to cater for the electronic age.

The master suite has an enormous bedroom at 6m x 5m, yet it still has a comfortable scale with that 3.5m-high ceiling. Off it is a dressing room which in turn gives access to the en suite that has a dual basin vanity cupboard, enclosed shower and a door to a private toilet.

The big homestead is not open for inspection but details of the planning and passive solar benefits can be discussed with the architects on 9474 2770.

Frank Platell

The spacious country-style kitchen provides plenty of room for the cook's family and friends to pitch in and help.

