

The owners of a Subiaco character house have seen the light and experienced drastic power-bill cuts since a solar passive re-design. INGRID JACOBSON reports.

GENTLE sunlight now floods the previously gloomy kitchen where Carmen Lawrence once did her cooking.

And in place of her old, rickety veranda on which she no doubt escaped from the political hustle and bustle, a solar pergola provides refuge from the sun.

Since buying the exquisite 1920s house four years ago, Anne and Tom Marshall have infused light into the home once owned by the controversial former Labor premier.

Back then it was the classic character home with a fascinating mix of art nouveau and art deco features but little natural light.

"We loved the house's architecture but hated the fact that it was so dark," Mrs Marshall said.

"The sitting room was in permanent shadows, the kitchen was dingy and the whole place was agonisingly cold in winter."

The couple — she's a lawyer, he's a geologist — had left behind a modern house in Leeming for a more cosmopolitan lifestyle in Subiaco.

It was only after Mr Marshall became interested in permaculture that they started exploring the use of a solar passive design in their planned extension.

But when they went in search of an architect, they discovered that nobody wanted to do it.

Although developed in modern home design, the concept was considered difficult to apply to old homes.

But they persevered in their quest and finally persuaded Perth architect Garry Baverstock to have a go.

Mr Baverstock, known for his visionary work with solar design, initially felt they would need a modern extension if the system was to be used.

But after pleading with him to try his hand at designing one in keeping with the house's heritage, he took it on as a challenge and came up with a winner.

"The house is now light and airy, has no need for air conditioning and didn't cost us any more to do than a traditional extension," Mrs Marshall said.

"And our power bills, thanks to a solar hot-water system, are almost non-existent."

Major changes included gutting the dark kitchen and turning it into a courtyard, allowing light from the west to flood into the main passageway.

A picture window was installed in the master bedroom to let more light in from the spacious extension facing north.

The extension which housed the



◻ LEFT: Anne Marshall relaxes on her veranda under the solar pergola.

◻ BELOW: What was once a dingy kitchen is now a bright passageway leading out to a courtyard.



Brightest change under the sun



◻ A terraced back garden and a shady jacaranda tree make for an idyllic city retreat.

new kitchen was then shaded by a massive pergola covered with cedar slats and clear perspex over a wooden veranda. This allowed the

light to come through but provided shade to keep the rest of the home cool.

Awnings with tiles were built

facing windows on the west to shade the house from the hot late afternoon sun. The tiles were then removed from awnings facing win-

dows on the east and replaced by clear perspex, which filtered early morning sunlight into the master bedroom ensuite.

The Marshalls were lucky in that their house had a north/south aspect which, they were told, was the ideal direction for Perth homes.

But early designers with little regard for sun's patterns had put features such as awnings on the wrong side.

Mrs Marshall said much of the solar passive principle relied on the use of materials which would absorb heat in winter.

Insulation in walls and on the roof was an important factor and the positioning of windows, doors and the extension to capture breezes in summer and improve air flow quality was another.

The final touch was redecorating, the main emphasis being on using light, bright colours to bring out the stunning architecture.