

HOME LONGLEA VIC

A man-made dam and native garden fit the homeowners' brief for the property.

GOLD STANDARD

TWO RETIREES HAVE HIT THE JACKPOT IN VICTORIA'S GOLDFIELDS WITH A PASSIVHAUS DELIVERING WORLD-CLASS DESIGN.

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PHOTOGRAPHY MARNIE HAWSON STYLING BELLE HEMMING BRIGHT



ENTICED BY BENDIGO'S warm and dry, Mediterranean-like climate, newly retired couple Josephine Raw and Doug Dick left their home of 30 years in nearby Woodend, Victoria, in search of a comfortable, sustainable and social future.

"For Josephine and Doug, the move to Longlea, located just outside of Bendigo, was in part to escape the cold winters in Woodend, but mostly to be closer to friends," says architect Joost van Bree. "Conscious of environmental impacts and rising costs, they came to Bree Architects with the idea of designing and building a PassivHaus."

Adopting the idea with gusto, Joost says the couple's appearance at his practice was serendipitous, offering him the opportunity to delve into a new and improved way of building. "It was timely, as we as a practice were becoming disillusioned with the quality and environmental performance of buildings around us," explains Joost. So, he made a big decision: "I undertook certification through the Box Hill Institute to become a PassivHaus designer."

PassivHaus (or passive house) design has five principles – continuous insulation, airtightness, high-performance windows and doors, a ventilation system and the elimination of thermal bridges – to deliver a home requiring minimal heating and cooling. The benefits include reduced energy bills, clean and filtered air, steady temperatures and low humidity year-round.

"PassivHaus design offers not only energy savings, it also provides the occupants with a comfortable and healthy environment in which to live," says Joost. "The latter two

are often overlooked, but are the most tangible benefits of living in a certified PassivHaus."

Josephine and Doug wholeheartedly agree. "Comfort rates high on the benefits of this type of home," says Doug, 66, a former IT simulation engineering delivery manager, "followed by environmental footprint and wellbeing."

With a history of eagerly embracing new green technology, Doug continues, "We were early adopters of passive solar design back in the late 1980s. A friend's son, who is a PassivHaus certified builder, introduced us to the concept. It just seemed to be a logical next step for us."

The duo dreamed of a light-filled, functional home in their greenfield site – on Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung lands – with a large man-made dam at its centre. "We could have improved the financial benefits by building a home with smaller windows and fewer external corners," says Doug, "but we wanted a home that is visually challenging and in sympathy with environmental considerations."

"We wanted big, open living spaces and large windows to be able to see outside from all rooms, as we envisioned a beautiful native garden," adds Josephine, 65, a former management professional.

From an architectural point of view, the main challenge was to position the building in a way that offered views of the gardens and dam, while maintaining a northerly aspect to maximise solar gain. To achieve this, Joost worked on the PassivHaus Plus Certified project alongside Searle Bros Building Contractors. >



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP The external metal cladding is standing seam Colorbond in Shale Grey; "It's impossible to identify a favourite space – every area of the house provides its own unique feeling," says Josephine; the home's harmonious colour scheme reflects the landscape, with the internal walls coated in Haymes Paint Whitewash 1. **FACING PAGE** Triple-glazed windows feature throughout the house and provide generous views from each room. The external walls and timber cladding are painted in Haymes Paint Monument with accents in Haymes Paint Pale Eucalypt.



Spacious and stylish, the kitchen features Neolith benchtops with Laminex AbsoluteMatte cabinetry in Green Slate, Neff appliances, a Falmec rangehood, and further fitting and appliances by E&S Trading. Joost believes good outcomes result from working with like-minded people. "A considered architectural response, the implementation of the understanding of building physics, and the buy-in and execution from the builder is fundamental to a successful project," he says. "In our experience, mindset is critical, so finding professionals to assist on the PassivHaus journey who share a similar mindset is key."

ABOUT THE HOUSE:

- Searle Bros Building Contractors completed the house build; searlebros.com.au
- Justine Image, from Sentient Design, handled the landscape architect; sentientdesign.com.au
- The triple-glazed windows are by Logikhaus; logikhaus.com.au
- External timber cladding is Weathergroove Ruff Sawn from Weathertex; weathertex.com.au
- PassivHaus certification issued by Detail Green; detailgreen.com.au



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Bathed in soft tones, the bathroom is a calming space. Even the loo boasts countryside views! **FACING PAGE, FROM TOP** “The spatial planning was a key response and the driver for creating connections, both internally and externally, via framed views and solar orientation,” says Joost; the sleek bathroom receives ample natural light.



With construction wrapping up in December 2020, the next task was settling the strong architectural form into the landscape. “The objective was to find a balance between the expansive, long views of an acreage property with the human scale of the house,” explains landscape architect Justine Image. “As is the case with many rural properties, there is no simple front and back; rather all aspects of views to and from the house need to be considered.”

Justine chose irrigated green infrastructure, including grass, shrub and tree plantings, to create a cooler microclimate around the house and to soften the home’s sharp exterior with additional shading elements.

Addressing local climate conditions was also a key focus of the landscaping. “The property is quite exposed to the dominant, hot northern winds of a Bendigo summer,” says Justine. “While there will also be cold southerly winds in winter, the PassivHaus construction and northern glazing will mitigate those effects.”

A life-changing decision for Josephine and Doug, who now have a high-performance, low-energy home close to their friends, this pioneering project was also the start of something special for Bree Architects, who are on a new course as certified PassivHaus designers.

“Climate change and the environment is at the forefront of most people’s minds,” says Joost. “PassivHaus design is a better solution for the built environments in which we live and work. In our view, PassivHaus principles should be applied to every built project.” *CJ*
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