

Sanctuary

MODERN GREEN HOMES

ISSUE
70

VOLUME BUILD
SPECIAL

Sustainable House Day sneak peek; greener project home tips;
lush backyard retreat; diving into natural swimming pools and more

Isabel & Elsie

A pair of homes
designed to nurture

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WIN

A stay at award-winning,
sustainable HV.Hotel,
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Offer open to Australian residents. Details page 79

WORDS

Jacinta Cleary

DESIGNER & BUILDER

Sherridon Homes

PROJECT TYPE

New volume build

LOCATION

Bendigo, VIC
(Dja Dja Wurrung and
Taungurung Country)

SIZE

House 115m²
Land 453m²

ENERGY RATING

7.5 Stars



Adapting a volume build for sustainability

Above right Yasmin is planning a modest home on her block in a new housing estate in Bendigo, Central Victoria.

Choosing a volume build doesn't always mean sticking with the standard plan. Yasmin had a clear vision for her new home: take a typical design and make it more energy-efficient, comfortable and future-proof.

Having built a project home in Central Victoria over a decade ago, Yasmin knew what she'd do differently next time. "I regretted not upgrading to double glazing," she says. "As a single parent I was so worried about debt that I didn't ask for upgrades, which let me down in a cold climate." This time, with experience and careful planning, she's making smarter, energy-conscious decisions.

On a Bendigo housing estate, Yasmin is building a modified version of Sherridon Homes' 'Oslo' design – a compact 115-square-metre home designed for a minimum 7-Star energy rating. Though she would have preferred a truly tiny home for its affordability and efficiency, Yasmin's new house was subject to the

estate's minimum 120-square-metre build size; her slightly smaller modified Oslo needed special permission and, happily, was approved as a good fit for the neighbourhood. Built on a 453-square-metre block with the street to the south-west, it will leave space for a native front garden to attract birds and butterflies, and a backyard food forest that will help with passive cooling in summer.

To secure a reduced-rate Eco Plus loan from Bank Australia, Yasmin's home needed to achieve a 7.5-Star energy rating and include at least a 3.5-kilowatt solar system. (Fortunately, the builder's package already includes the solar system, along with a sign-on deal for higher ceilings that will allow space for ceiling fans.) Yasmin made a few strategic upgrades during the design stage to nudge the home closer to its 7.5-Star goal. Ceiling insulation was boosted to R6, awning windows replace the standard sliding version for improved airtightness, and low-e coatings on all

double-glazed windows further reduce unwanted heat transfer. As the energy rating is only formally assessed after contract signing, Sherridon Homes agreed to waive the administration fee for any last-minute changes needed to hit 7.5 Stars, meaning Yasmin would only have to cover any extra material costs. Happily, though, the target was reached with a couple of tiny tweaks and no further financial outlay.

Yasmin's decisions align with passive solar design principles to maximise comfort year-round. "I've picked the plan that best suits the block and what I'm hoping to achieve. North-facing living space was high on my list," she says. The rear of the house faces north-east, ensuring sun-filled living spaces in winter. The standard Oslo plan has been flipped to put the bedrooms on the east and the garage and utility spaces on the west, with no west-facing windows – a plus for reducing summer heat gain. Other energy-efficient upgrades include extra eaves for shading, R2.7 wall insulation, and double glazing on all windows and sliding doors. An internal door between the living room and hallway will help zone heated

areas in winter. Yasmin also swapped the standard gas hot water system for an energy-efficient heat pump and the gas cooktop for induction; the house will now be all-electric.

Beyond energy efficiency, Yasmin considered accessibility for future needs. A ramp for level-access entry from the garage, walk-in showers, and reinforced walls for future grab rails already align with Victoria's new mandatory standards. The kitchen was changed to a U-shape for functionality. She specified a wall oven to reduce bending, which required a change to the cabinetry. "I even moved the sink under the window because I wanted to wash dishes and look out at the garden, to have the joy of that connection to nature." Other small, thoughtful changes – like an external door in the laundry for direct backyard access – make the home practical and adaptable as she ages.

Working with Sherridon Homes has been collaborative and flexible, Yasmin reports – a welcome contrast to a past experience with a different volume builder who found changes "too hard". She says, "This time it's been a simple case of 'just ask and we'll let you know,'" with

Sherridon providing quotes for requested changes and Yasmin deciding whether to go ahead. For example, she requested a sliding door to the east side of the living room to catch the winter sun and access a future outdoor living area. "They gave me options, and time to decide whether I definitely wanted the door."

"One reason I choose a volume builder was the cost certainty. I had a ballpark figure before I committed a cent, and I could get quotes for upgrades," she goes on. "If I spend a bit more now, it'll save me money in the long term, and make the house more comfortable and liveable. Affordability is still front of mind for me as a single-income household." The upgrades – focused on energy efficiency and comfort – make up about 10 per cent of the final \$325,000 contract cost (the figure excludes landscaping and fencing).

"If I stay for the long term, all these decisions will pay off with energy savings and comfort. Even if I sell in five years I'll probably benefit from a higher selling price, or simply know I've done my part for the environment, by building a better quality home." **S**

FLOOR PLAN

