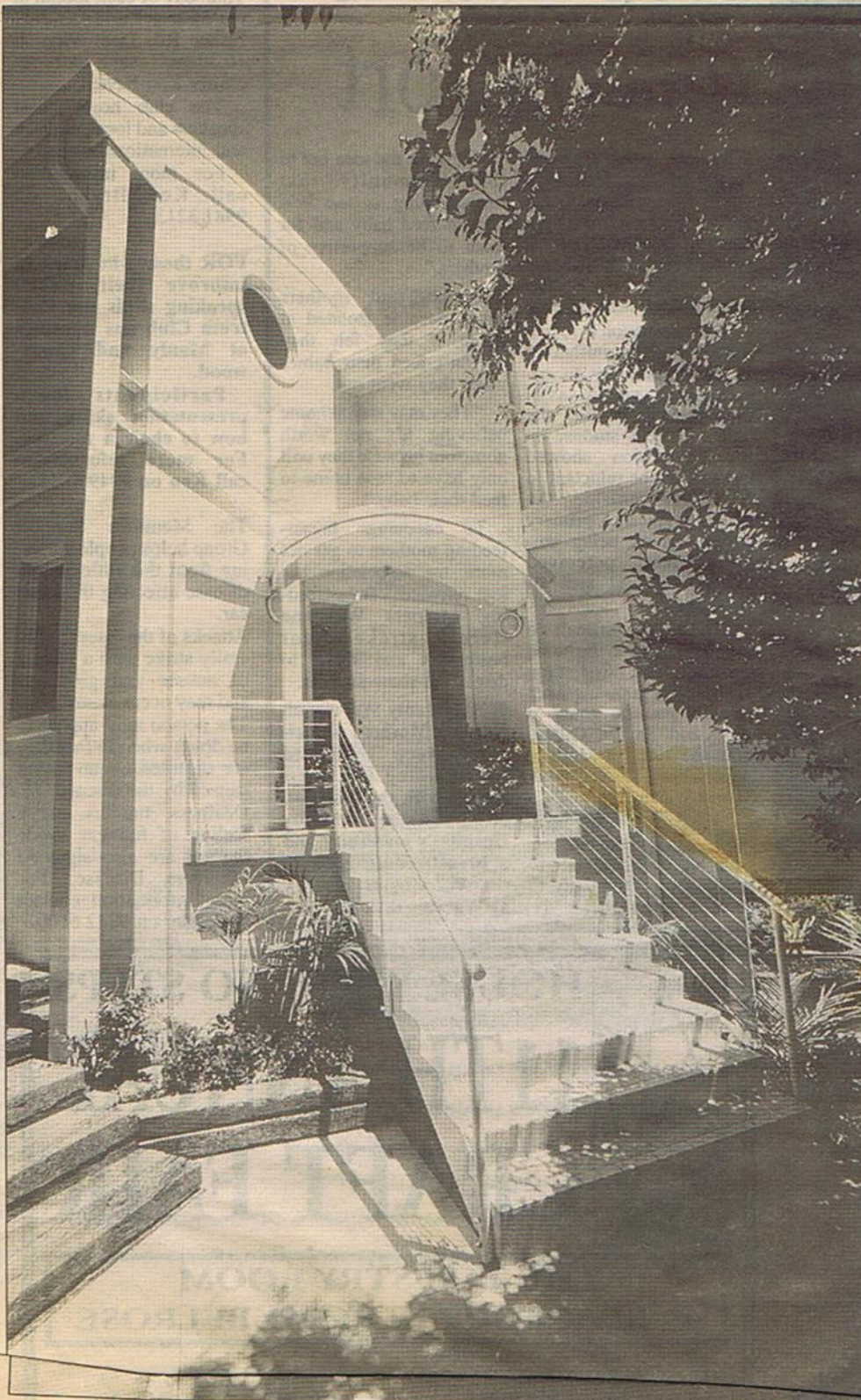


YOUR PLACE



This Balgowlah home has achieved the top energy rating status

Smarter ways to energise your home

by LYNSEY HUGHES

IN recent years, the energy rating system used on our whitegoods has become an invaluable factor in deciding which appliances will grace our laundries and kitchens.

So imagine the convenience of rating the whole home and being able to assess its annual energy bills with a simple star count.

This is the potential for the State Government initiative Energy Smart which, by promoting and enforcing Environmentally Sustainable Development, aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, cut home power bills considerably and allow for more home comfort year round.

With both Manly and Ku-ring-gai councils participating, Warringah and Pittwater are currently in the process of implementing policies that will see a National Housing Energy Rating System being used for residential construction. This will affect the design of all new homes and substantial renovations.

And achieving the NatHERS 3.5-star energy rating can be simple and cost effective, as Avalon-based building designer Peter Downes

touches paper and includes energy saving principles in the initial design of the house such as having north-facing living areas on the plan and allowing solar access (keeping it out in winter, and retaining it in summer), the cost can be as little as \$1000 (for decent insulation) per house," Peter said.

In practice, in the ACT for over three years, the Energy Smart initiative has proven to have an enormous impact in the resale value of houses, with National Housing Energy Rating System stars valued at approximately \$20,000 each.

And the returns are already being reaped by one recently completed project in Balgowlah. This innovative alteration in Lower Beach St, designed by Peter Downes, incorporates several simple and cost effective energy saving principles to ensure that the necessary NatHERS 3.5 star energy rating could be easily achieved.

These include north-facing living areas with suitable roof overhangs to the windows and glass door for shading in summer, adequate insulation to the roof and all external walls,

and careful location of the few west facing windows to ensure solar protection by existing vegetation.

According to energy consultant Max Mosher, who performed the required energy audit, houses which achieve the necessary rating will be substantially cheaper to heat and cool – air conditioning will not be needed – and vastly more comfortable to live in all year round.

The owners will also enjoy peace of mind in the knowledge that their home is producing less greenhouse gas emissions than average. As 25 per cent of all greenhouse gasses in Sydney are produced by the housing industry, this is a worthy individual contribution.

The Building Designers Association, of which both Peter and Max are members, adopted ESD principles several years ago in an attempt to counteract the ever-increasing tendency of modern residences to be high producers of greenhouse gases.

For further information on building design, Peter Downes can be contacted on 9973 3312. And the Energy Smart Info Centre can be contacted on 1300 138 638.

"If a designer has the energy rating in mind before pen