



**BUILDING DESIGNER**

Peter Downes

**COMPANY**

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# BUILDING DESIGN

## Building Designer Q&A

**How did you get into designing?** Accidentally. I set up my own design consultancy in the mid 80's specialising in engineering and mining design but because I was listed in the local phone book under 'drafting', I started getting phone calls from people wanting to do minor alterations to their houses. This part of my business gradually grew as the other went from boom to bust, so eventually I started to take it seriously as a potential full time career. I then had a lucky break in the early 90's when a friend of mine offered me the opportunity to design a new house for him overlooking Bilgola Beach. I recognised that this had the potential to be a life changing event so I put a huge effort into coming up with something spectacular. He was very happy with the result and when he sold it a few years later, he used me again to design a new house on the cliff at Warriewood. A few other major projects came my way in this time period so by the end of 90's I had a full time architectural career designing houses on spectacular coastal sites.

**What qualifications do you have?** No architectural qualifications but I passed the first 2 years of a structural engineering course at NSW Uni before deciding to focus on a career as a design draftsman in engineering and mining.

**What is a typical day like for you?** I wake up early and go for surf if it is any good, otherwise some stretching and a walk somewhere interesting. I generally prefer to work in the office in the morning, and use the afternoon for site meetings etc. but this varies a lot. I don't push for too many hours per day as I intend to do this for the rest of my life, and don't want to burn out prematurely.

**What was your first ever project?** My first significant architectural project was the Maas house at Bilgola Beach. My first architectural project was a carport for my parents in the 70's, and I am amazed at where that has led to.

**What has been your favourite project to work on?** Very hard to say as I love them all, but probably the Lees house at Avalon due to use of colour, and the fact that it is owned by one of my best friends and I have spent many happy hours there.

**What projects are you currently working on?** Two new waterfront houses at Church Point, a new house on a headland overlooking Whale Beach, a new house overlooking Bronte Beach, a new house on two hectares of bush at Mona Vale, major alterations and additions to a house overlooking Queenscliff Beach, a new house on the cliff overlooking Bungan Beach, a new house on the

northern edge of Bilgola Plateau with bush, Pittwater and ocean views, major alterations and additions to a houses at Avalon and Newport, both overlooking Pittwater, and a new secondary dwelling on a bush site at Avalon.

**What building do you wish you had designed?** The Sydney Opera House.

**What do you like the most about your job?** The opportunity to meet some really interesting and successful people, many of whom have become close friends.

**What do you like least?** Objecting neighbours.

**What's your favourite material to work with and why?** Corrugated COLORBOND® steel. It is light, flexible, and an Australian icon. It perfectly suits our relaxed and nature dominated lifestyle.

**If you weren't a building designer what would you do instead?** Sculptor.

**How do you relax?** Being outdoors at sunset, often in a kayak on Pittwater.

**Do you have any hobbies?** Surfing, tennis, table tennis, snow skiing, motorbikes and cars, art, music, travelling, dining out, concerts and plays, scrabble, chess, astronomy, kayaking, bush walking.

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**If you would like to feature in our next building designer Q&A, please email [steelinspired@stellar.net.au](mailto:steelinspired@stellar.net.au)**

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