

MODERN GREEN HOMES

# Sanctuary

ISSUE  
72

Award-winning off-grid home in ochre tones; Canberra duplex rejigged for light; green getaways; True Zero Carbon Challenge winners; garden experiments and more

*Celebrating*

**20** YEARS

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# sanctuary

Two decades of  
sustainable living with style



## We're celebrating 20 years of *Sanctuary*: bringing you the best in Australian sustainable design since our very first issue back in 2005.

The idea to launch a new, environmentally focused architecture magazine was the result of a tipping point in conversations about climate change early in the new millennium, founding editor Donna Luckman says. "Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth* came out around this time, and in Australia we were in the middle of the millennium drought," she recalls. "We knew people were going to be more interested in sustainability and energy in housing, and there was nothing actually filling that niche in the market."

Originally taglined 'Sustainable living with style', the magazine's mission was to showcase beautiful eco-friendly homes and provide practical advice on the design strategies, materials and systems needed to achieve them. Two decades, 72 issues, seven editors, four redesigns, almost 550 house profiles (I counted!) and around 500 expert articles later, *Sanctuary* is still doing just that – in spades. It remains the only non-profit residential design publication in the country, respected and valued for its expert, independent information.

Sustainability fundamentals were covered off early. For example, articles on water saving, windows and glazing, the importance of orientation for passive solar performance, and harnessing renewable energy all featured in the first issue, low-VOC paints came in issue 5, and reclaimed timber in issue 8. Our first article advocating building smaller homes was in issue 9. All these basics have of course been revisited often over the years, as ideas change and technology advances.

Time and again, we've been at the forefront when it comes to addressing emerging sustainability topics. Our first foray into the benefits of prefab construction was in issue 9, life cycle analysis first appeared in issue 13, and design for deconstruction and

reuse in issue 15. An exploration of the Passive House standard for high-performance buildings featured way back in issue 17, in 2011. Issue 25 saw articles on the now-hot topics of hemp masonry and universal design. And *Sanctuary* has advocated for and documented important developments in areas like minimum energy ratings for homes – from 5 Stars to, eventually, the new 7-Star minimum – and the transition away from gas as a household fuel. Given the current editorial requirement for new homes in *Sanctuary* to be all-electric, and a strong preference for renovations to include gas abolishment, it's strange to look back and note that in the early issues gas appliances were common. The first article on the benefits and challenges of going off gas at home appeared in issue 30, ten years ago, in line with Renew's leading research on household fuels at the time.

My own connection with *Sanctuary* began very early on; I recall reading about musician Xavier Rudd's strawbale home back in issue 7, borrowed from my local library. A year later in 2010, looking to do something with my passion for sustainable design, I jumped at the chance to join editor Verity Campbell as editorial assistant on the magazine. Fifteen years on, I've researched and penned many articles, commissioned dozens more, sourced hundreds of images, and helped edit and polish nearly 60 issues – since 2019, as managing editor.

To mark our anniversary, we got in touch with some of *Sanctuary's* stalwarts – all people who've been involved with the magazine in various capacities since the early days – and asked about what they love about it, what they've noticed changing in the sustainability world over the years, and where they'd like to see *Sanctuary* go next.

**Left** Current managing editor Anna Cumming with a now-rare copy of the first issue of *Sanctuary*, published in December 2005. The cover featured Judith and David Phillips' house overlooking the sea in Port Fairy, Victoria. Designed by Sunpower Design, the house included many sustainability features that were ahead of their time in 2004 when it was completed. Image: Marnie Hawson



**Donna Luckman**  
*Founding editor*

Back in the early 2000s, at *Renew* (then the Alternative Technology Association) we could see that a growing number of people were wanting to make their homes more sustainable. The uptake of solar was increasing, and there was greater awareness of energy efficiency to reduce bills and make homes more comfortable. The millennium drought brought home the finite nature of our resources and the effects of a changing climate.

At that time I was the editor of *Renew* magazine, and our readership was expanding beyond DIY enthusiasts and early adopters of renewable energy technologies. We aimed to balance the diverse needs of our readers, some of

whom found the articles too technical; there was also a call for more 'house stories'. We didn't want to change *Renew's* unique appeal, so the idea for a sister magazine focusing on homes was conceived.

We weren't the only ones thinking about how to provide quality, independent information to cater to this growing interest from Australian households. We had partnered with the federal government's Your Home project team for several years, and they shared our vision of inspiring more Australians beyond the 'alternative lifestylers'. With the support of Your Home, we developed the concept of *Sanctuary* magazine, which initially had the working title of *Scape*.

The hardest part of starting a new magazine wasn't going through the trademark process or even getting advertisers on board for a product that didn't yet exist. It was deciding on a name! We held focus groups, mocked up covers, and researched other magazines, but ultimately, *Sanctuary* was the name that resonated. Our homes are our sanctuaries, and so is our planet.

After establishing *Sanctuary*, I served as the managing editor for the first five issues before passing the baton to Verity Campbell and Michael Day, who took it to the next level. It has been amazing

to see *Sanctuary* grow and to witness the quality and diversity of sustainable homes across Australia, New Zealand, and occasionally further afield. Initially, it was challenging to find enough green homes to feature in each issue, ensuring they represented a range of building types and budgets and were located across the country. Today, there are more high-quality, sustainable homes out there than ever before, with high energy ratings, eco-friendly materials and efficient, all-electric operation. Additionally, homeowners and designers are embracing holistic elements such as biophilic design, healthy homes, and integration of gardens, as well as embodied energy and life cycle considerations.

In the editorial of the first issue I celebrated "the leading practitioners of sustainable house design and their cutting-edge ideas" that featured in the following pages. I still celebrate those designers, but I also celebrate that their cutting-edge ideas have been embraced by more and more practitioners and homeowners, and are now becoming the norm, not the exception. *Sanctuary*, along with the advocacy work of *Renew*, has helped thousands of Australians create more climate-resilient homes and lighten our impact on the planet.



**Far left** One of the most popular early covers was issue 8, published in 2009. It features architect Max Pritchard's Bridge House, a modest home made spectacular by its novel location spanning a gully among magnificent gum trees in Ashbourne, south of Adelaide. Profiled in issue 8 as a new build, the house was revisited in issue 50. Cover image: Sam Noonan **Left** 'Period piece' was Donna Luckman's favourite article from the first issue. "Architect David Oppenheim transformed a single old house into two townhouses – an inspiring example of urban infill, flexible design, and future-focused living for growing families," she says. "But what made it truly special was spending the day with David during the photoshoot, sharing hours of conversation. Though David is no longer with us, his generosity, knowledge, and spirit reflect the best of the pioneers in the sustainable design sector."





**Rachael Bernstone**  
*Contributing writer*

I still remember the day I discovered *Sanctuary* issue 1 in the newsagent in the Todd Mall in Alice Springs, where I lived at the time. I was drawn in by the tagline, ‘Sustainable living with style’, because it was unlike all the other magazines.

I seized it eagerly and took it home to devour every page. Inside, the featured homes revealed the magazine’s ethos of promoting sustainable and accessible housing – tying in beautifully with the themes of my Churchill Fellowship, completed two years prior. So I emailed Donna, the editor back then, and asked if I could write for future issues. She commissioned two stories for issue 2, and since then I’ve contributed more than 80

house profiles, for nearly every issue. The thing I love most about writing for *Sanctuary* is that I learn something new every time I write a story. I’ve written about houses in locations as far-flung as Darwin, Tasmania, New Zealand and Denmark (Western Australia, not Europe). I’ve loved hearing about how different climates shape design and building responses, and how the owners themselves often bring so much knowledge and inspiration to their projects.

One of my most memorable stories was about the JB House in issue 46 (see below). The owners had seen a house by their architects, Reddog, in a magazine fully 10 years before making first contact. To me, this showed the power of a dream, and how it’s possible to bring your dreams to life, even if it takes a long time.

Another thing I really love about the magazine is the connections I’ve made over the years, with architects, designers, builders and consultants. I first interviewed Jenny Edwards of Light House ArchiScience for a story in issue 40, and we’ve since met in person and become friends. Similarly, I interviewed Ian Sercombe for the first time for issue 25, then again for a story in issue 69; it was then that we discovered that he’d also designed my sister’s holiday house,

proving that it’s a small world after all. The biggest change I’ve observed over the past 20 years is the rise and rise of sustainable homes. Building a sustainable house was a very niche activity when *Sanctuary* launched – we really were reporting from the fringes of the building industry, back in those early days – but now it’s definitely heading towards the mainstream. I find it so encouraging that more people are engaging with these important topics and making informed decisions about how to create homes that are healthy, efficient, comfortable and delightful, and that also help to reduce our impact on the planet.

The key themes that drew me towards issue 1 when I spotted it on the newsstand in Alice Springs are still very evident today, even as editors have changed and definitions of sustainability have evolved, and I’m really glad to have been part of the journey so far.

I hope that *Sanctuary* continues to thrive, and that more Australians are able to access affordable and sustainable design smarts in their homes, because we’ll all be better off when everyone has access to quality housing.

**Right** JB House, a Brisbane renovation and extension by Reddog Architects that featured in issue 46, is one of regular contributing writer Rachael Bernstone’s favourite stories. The project demonstrated how standard 1980s brick housing stock can be renovated to suit a subtropical climate. Images: Christopher Frederick Jones



### JB House

—Specifications—

Credits	Sustainable Features		
<b>DESIGNER</b> Reddog Architects	<b>HOT WATER</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Existing electric hot water.</li></ul>	<b>ACTIVE HEATING &amp; COOLING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ceiling fans in living areas from the sun fans.</li></ul>	<b>LIGHTING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>LED downlights and adjustable spotlights and LED pendant over kitchen from Lumark.</li></ul>
<b>BUILDER</b> Coleman Pty Ltd	<b>PASSIVE DESIGN / HEATING &amp; COOLING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Concrete slab to extensions for thermal mass.</li><li>Steel to maintain passive heating and cooling.</li><li>Northern glazing introduced into the existing building to take full advantage of the northern orientation, including cross ventilation (see need for air conditioning) and an abundance of natural daylight to minimise use of artificial lighting.</li><li>The volume of the extension was expanded vertically to promote breezes and the porching of rooms etc.</li></ul>	<b>BUILDING MATERIALS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Polished and painted concrete slab.</li><li>Brick from PCGT matched to original.</li><li>Australian ply for kitchen cabinetry, staircase and bench.</li><li>Bowl tiles reclaimed from original house.</li></ul>	<b>OTHER ECO FEATURES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Minimal decorative work required, maximal potential of existing building.</li><li>The linear extension connects the street and backland, providing better opportunities for the residents to connect as a family and to the neighbourhood.</li></ul>
<b>PROJECT TYPE</b> Alterations and additions	<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b> Capelton QLD	<b>WINDOWS &amp; GLAZING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Aluminium-framed windows and screens from AHS.</li></ul>	<b>PAINTS, FINISHES &amp; FLOOR COVERINGS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Low VOC paint from Dulux, including on kitchen floor.</li></ul>
<b>COST</b> \$25,000	<b>SIZE</b> Site: 750 sq' House: 270 sq' (original 230 sq') Terrace: 10 sq'		
<b>BUILDING STAR RATING</b> 4.5 Star			
<b>RATER</b> RSP Building Centre			

■ The alteration and addition retained as much of the original brick structure as possible, so it's still possible to imagine what the house was like before, when a driveway ran down the side of the house into a garage. The 'lively old garage' is now a covered open-air terrace; the driveway has become the living room with the car now parked at the front.

■ Sliding doors completely open the house to the front and rear yards and the covered terrace. The internal and external slabs are thermally isolated to help retain an even temperature inside.

■ Although prominent from this aspect, the terrace roof is angled away from the neighbours. Timber slats provide dappled shade from the west.



**Lynette Johnston**  
*Subscriber*

I am a farmer, gardener and interior designer, living on a rural property in the wheatbelt region of Western Australia in a farmhouse that we have been slowly renovating for 25 years. I love design, not so much of things but definitely of residential buildings and the landscapes that nurture them. I am a total magazine-

a-holic and would much rather read a printed copy than read on the computer. I bought *Sanctuary* the very first time I saw it in our local newsagent, which I'm guessing was more than 15 years ago. I have had a subscription for many of those years, and intend to have one as long as the magazine is available.

I absolutely love this magazine. It is one of the few that I read cover to cover. I love the articles about houses, because I like to know why people choose the things they do and how they do it. I really appreciate that the articles provide so much information about materials used, and often why and how. I like finding out about products that help us live more sustainably, and buildings that do the same. I really enjoy *Designers in Profile*, and I find the ads useful too.

I think the major changes in the sustainable homes world over the past 20 years have been the increasing focuses on natural materials, smaller sizes, and

really thoughtful renovations of existing buildings that bring light and the outdoors in. People are starting to build homes that focus on practicality and are tailored to how they actually live their lives, rather than the homogeneous houses promoted by the housing industry. We are also starting to see homes focused on adapting to climate change and using their gardens to help with this.

How would I like to see *Sanctuary* evolve over the next 20 years? Personally I wouldn't change too much, but since you ask ... I would like to see more about buildings adapting to climate change, how to build smaller and more resilient buildings with less impact, and maybe a bit more biophilic architecture for good measure. I would also like to see a bit more about very much needed social housing, and how buildings and gardens can help people live much better lives. Pretty much the path *Sanctuary* is already on, in other words!



**Calan Stanley**  
*Graphic designer*

I remember chatting with Donna in the office of the Alternative Technology Association, as *Renew* was known then, over 20 years ago about a new magazine she was looking to publish. It would be called *Sanctuary*, and it would focus on modern, contemporary, sustainable homes.

Several years later, I was back in their office discussing with Donna and Sarah Robinson (the editor for issues 18-27) the possibility of a redesign, and also of taking

over the layout of the magazine. I'm happy to say I'm still working on *Sanctuary* to this day.

My partner and I moved from Melbourne to Castlemaine in 2014, relocating and renovating a Victorian-era weatherboard home. *Sanctuary* played a massive part in how we approached our renovation. It helped us decide which materials and appliances to use and where to source them, and inspired the redesign of our floor plan, interior design, and landscaping.

Design matters. It's a process carried out by people, for people – whether it be graphic design, building design, landscape design, product design, or something else. The goal is to respond to the needs of the people using the finished product. Good design is all around us, yet it often goes unnoticed. It is influenced by, and adapts to, our ever-changing times and needs. Good design transforms the world around us – and at the heart of good design is sustainable design.

*Sanctuary* has always focused on and showcased the very best in sustainable design. What Donna and the team set out to do over two decades ago has stood the

test of time and continues to thrive. I'm very proud to have played a small part in that journey. It's an honour and a privilege to work with the team at *Renew*, and I very much look forward to seeing where we go from here.



**Above** Calan Stanley's home in Chewton, Central Victoria, was relocated from Melbourne and renovated. It featured in issue 31 when it was finished. Images: Calan Stanley



**Stephen Whately**  
*Proofreader*

I was invited to proofread *Sanctuary* eleven years ago and leapt at the opportunity, having already enjoyed about five years of proofreading its sister magazine *Renew*.

My biggest challenge has been to focus on proofreading rather than being distracted by all the brilliant ideas, clever floor plans, amazing product innovations and radical new approaches. Too often something captures my interest and I'm soon lost in reverie; it's not uncommon for me to take an hour to proofread just one page, although I admit that my brain is unusually undisciplined. To be clear, I'm a volunteer, so my reveries are entirely self-funded.

Regular readers of *Sanctuary* over

the years will appreciate the inspiring house profiles – whether new builds or renovations, houses or apartments – and the astonishing improvements in appliances and building materials, as well as the insights provided by experts.

But what comes next? With clear signs of climate collapse already occurring all around the world, we must abandon a strategy of incremental improvements towards the cruel hoax of net zero by 2050. Our starting point has to be 2075: what will the world look like then, what challenges will confront us (like food shortages, community breakdown, economic collapse, pandemics) and how might the design of our homes and neighbourhoods help us cope with these challenges? Those homes and neighbourhoods are what we need to be building today.

A central issue: what do we mean by 'sanctuary'? Our home is our sanctuary, a place where we find refuge from the illusory mayhem of the outside world, where we feel safe and can relax. But when times get tough – a bushfire, a flood, a wild storm – an extraordinary thing happens: suddenly, a throng of ordinary people comes to the rescue, as if by magic. Some of them we recognise, but most of them are complete strangers; all of them are from our neighbourhood. It is at that transformative moment that

we realise that our sanctuary extends beyond our home to embrace our whole neighbourhood, when we finally realise that we have far more in common with strangers than social media, politicians and mainstream media would have us believe.

I would go a step further: our sanctuary is in reality the entire planetary ecosystem, the miraculous but delicate web of life that supports all living things – but if we fail to protect it, all hell will break loose.

Well-designed neighbourhoods will play a critical role in fostering community connection and resilience. They will encourage us to stumble into unexpected friendships, laying the foundations for ever-wider networks of cooperation and engaged citizenry. Our homes will actively connect with public space rather than isolate us within fortresses.

I believe *Sanctuary* could play a vital role by publishing regular future-focused articles on innovative ideas and solutions, written by experts in areas as diverse as architecture, economics, town planning, sociology and psychology. We urgently need a comprehensive holistic suite of reforms. Ten or twenty years from now, I'm sure none of us would like to admit to our kids and grandkids that we didn't take action to protect them from the ravages of global heating when the narrow window of opportunity was still ajar.



**Dick Clarke**  
*Building designer  
and expert contributor*

I have always thought of *Sanctuary* as being one of the gems in life: valuable, and beautiful to look at. But that's where that metaphor runs out of legs, because gemstones don't do any more than that, whereas *Sanctuary* carries so much useful information within its beautiful pages. It's hard to nominate a favourite article, because every issue is so content-rich.

I may seem biased due to my role on the board of *Renew*, the not-for-profit publisher of *Sanctuary*, but the reality is that my history with the magazine predates that by nearly 20 years! From the very first issue I have been an enthusiastic reader, occasional contributor, and all-round evangelist. In fact, the reason I joined the *Renew* board was to support the great organisation that is behind the magazine.

I would dearly love to see *Sanctuary* on every coffee table and kitchen bench across the country, thumbled and well-read. I also hope we can swing it to become a member benefit for the professional architecture and design associations. It should also be required reading for the various planning and housing ministers across the country: "Minister, I have put all your appointments on hold until you finish reading the latest issue of *Sanctuary* magazine." "Yes, quite right, thank you. See that I am not disturbed while I devour it."