

OCTOBER 2023 | AUSTRALIA COAST TO COAST

COUNTRY STYLE

ESCAPE THE
EVERYDAY

*love of
the land*

MOTHER EARTH
Four rural women
putting the
environment first

LIGHT TOUCH
THE RISE OF THE
PASSIVE HOUSE

SLOW DOWN
SUSTAINABLE
FASHION TIPS

FOLLOWING THE SEASONS

A homegrown menu from Megalong Restaurant

BEST FOOT FORWARD A WALKING HOLIDAY IN THE BAY OF FIRES

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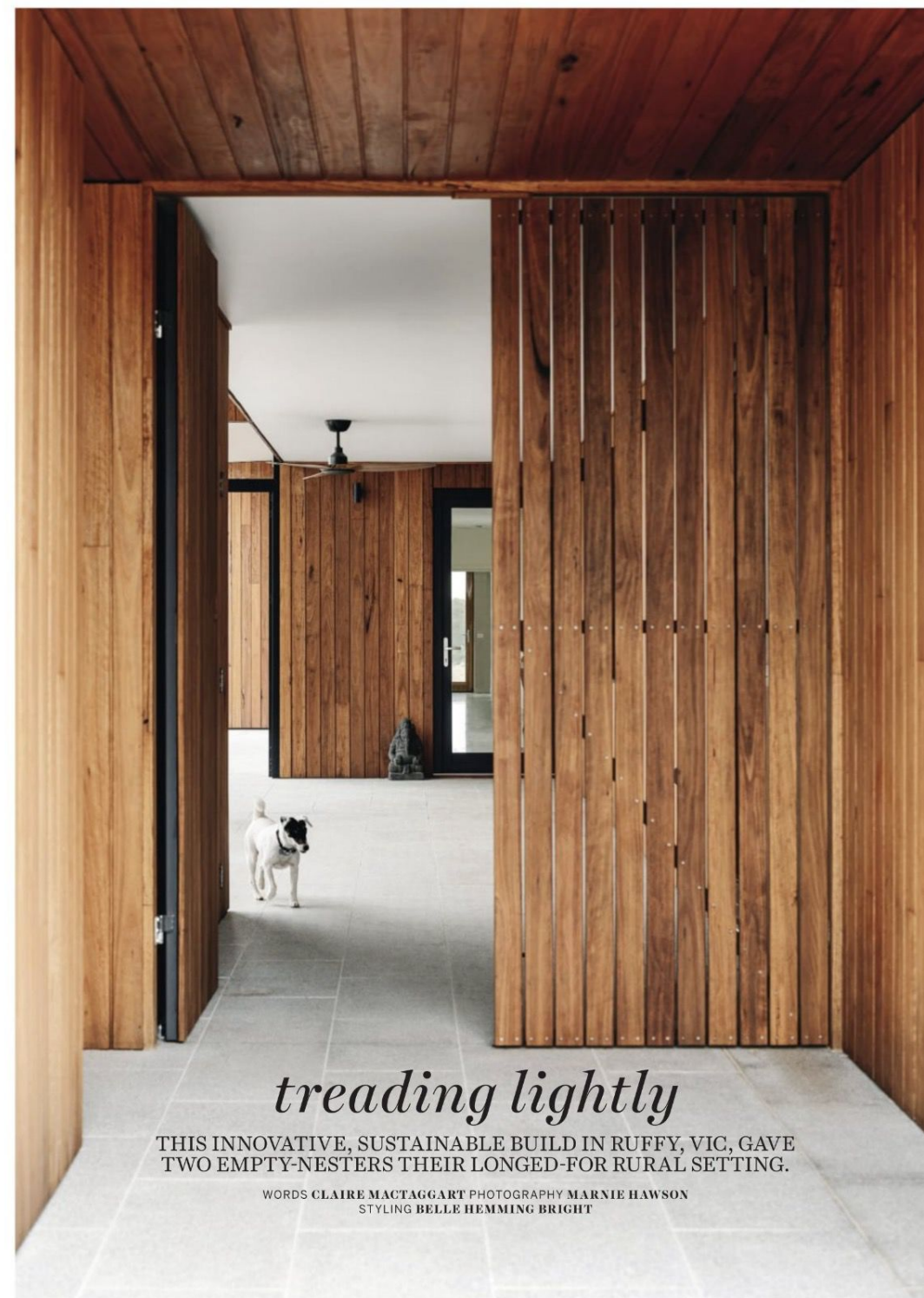
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HOME RUFFY VIC

Energy-efficient LED lights brighten the living and dining area. **FACING PAGE** Pip Carew and Stephen McCredie's pet dog, Rosie, loves exploring the home.



treading lightly

THIS INNOVATIVE, SUSTAINABLE BUILD IN RUFFY, VIC, GAVE TWO EMPTY-NESTERS THEIR LONGED-FOR RURAL SETTING.

WORDS CLAIRE MACTAGGART PHOTOGRAPHY MARNIE HAWSON
STYLING BELLE HEMMING BRIGHT

FROM TOP The red gum dining table, made by Nicholas Dattner, is teamed with chairs from B2C Furniture. Artwork is *Mimi* by Daniel Garlingarr; the ideal spot to curl up with a book and a cuppa. FACING PAGE Beautiful hillside views brighten the guest bedroom, which has cosy linen from Morgan & Finch.



LATE LAST YEAR, Stephen McCredie and Pip Carew realised a dream to move to the country. Their plan – conceived two decades ago – became not only an exciting tree change for the Melbourne-based couple as they approached retirement, but also an example of what can be achieved through sustainable design.

The result is an energy-efficient Passivhaus (or Passive House) that sits comfortably in the rugged landscape of Taungurung Country, 168 kilometres north of Melbourne, Victoria.

It began on a road trip in the Christmas holidays of 1999. “Pip and I had a conversation about what we wanted to do for the rest of our lives, once our children had left home,” Stephen recalls. “We passed an olive grove on the Mornington Peninsula and thought, ‘What a lovely thing to do – buy a block of land in the country and grow olives.’ It grew from there.”

Pip, a registered nurse, and Stephen, a barrister, had previously enjoyed camping trips to the country while they raised their now adult children, Tom, Lucy and Hamish. “The idea of having a place to enjoy, walk around and hopefully have a productive future really appealed,” Pip says of their goal to be self-sufficient and grow vegetables and fruit.

So began a search within a two-hour drive of the city, and the following year they settled on a 23-hectare property near Ruffy, surrounded by granite outcrops. “It’s a hidden treasure and we fell in love with the area immediately,” Stephen says. >



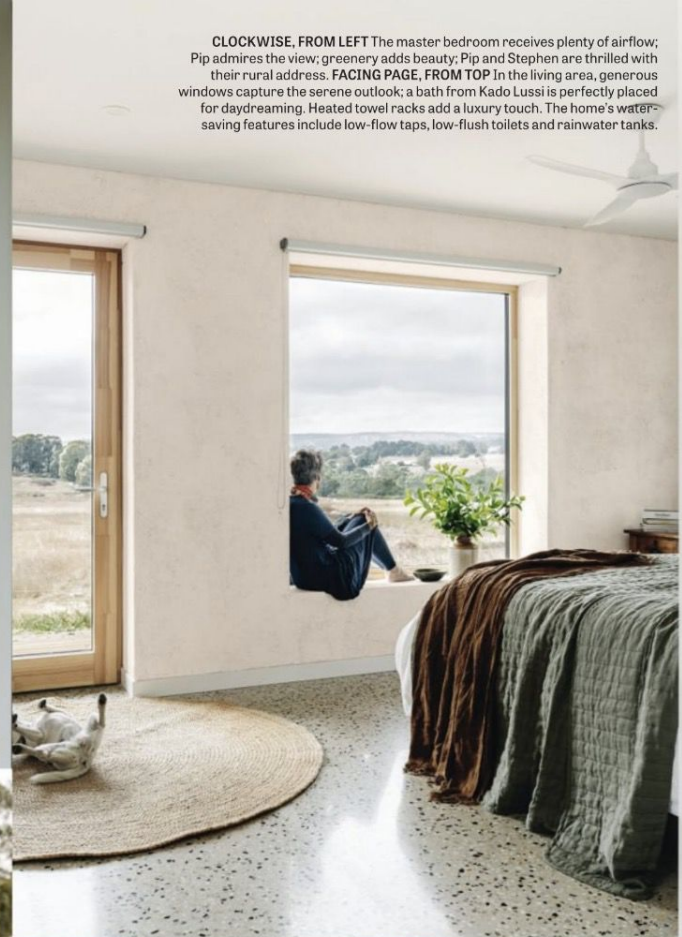
HOME RUFFY VIC

The low-impact house sits quietly in the landscape and offers 360-degree countryside views. Building materials include: Colorbond Shale Grey custom orb metal roofing; blackbutt timber cladding on the walls; Cemintel Barestone Original cement sheet cladding; and lime render internal lining.

“We wanted something compatible with the environment that minimises our carbon footprint.”

ABOUT THE HOUSE:

- The building was designed by architect Talina Edwards, Enviroecture; talinaedwards.com.au
- Building: Hedger Constructions; hedgerconstructions.com.au
- Project manager: Charlie Hurrey
- Passivhaus consultant: Alex Slater; sharedspacearchitecture.com.au
- Passivhaus certifier: Detail Green
- Huff'n'Puff SitUp Straw Panel wall system; glassford.com.au
- Logikhaus windows; logikhaus.com.au



CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT The master bedroom receives plenty of airflow; Pip admires the view; greenery adds beauty; Pip and Stephen are thrilled with their rural address. **FACING PAGE, FROM TOP** In the living area, generous windows capture the serene outlook; a bath from Kado Lussi is perfectly placed for daydreaming. Heated towel racks add a luxury touch. The home's water-saving features include low-flow taps, low-flush toilets and rainwater tanks.



One stand-out feature was the Boat Hole waterhole on Hughes Creek, at the bottom of the property, which is home to an array of wildlife, including platypus and mobs of kangaroos.

For two decades, Pip and Stephen balanced their careers and family life in the city with plans to eventually build on their block of land. From the outset, they were mindful of their impact on the environment. "We wanted something sustainable and compatible with the environment that minimises our carbon footprint," Pip explains.

They engaged architect Talina Edwards, who has Passivhaus certification. She designed a dwelling with sustainable materials, including prefabricated straw bale panels called SitUp, made by NSW-based company Huff 'n' Puff Constructions. Building began in February 2022 with Hedger Constructions, who put their lead builder and another staff member through a Passivhaus building course.

Passivhaus certification is based on the principles of airtightness, thermal insulation, controlled ventilation, high-performing windows and thermal bridge-free elements. Triple-glazed windows by Logikhaus help regulate the internal temperature and frame stunning views to nearby Good Morning Billy Hill, as well as eucalypt forest and pastures.

By December 2022, the home was complete – and it has far exceeded their expectations. "The more we live here, the more we are in awe of just how cocooned we are from the elements," Stephen says. "It's a very clever and simple design with a well-insulated living compartment >



HOME RUFFY VIC
The south-east end of the house looks towards the Strathbogie Ranges.

that ensures no draft comes in and out. Passivhaus certification means no more than 0.6 per cent of atmosphere change per hour, so there is virtually no draught. That means you can regulate air through a ventilation and air exchange system.” The temperature inside is stable with a variation of only four to five degrees.

“It’s an incredibly comfortable house to live in,” Pip adds. “We still pinch ourselves; it satisfies our way of living more than we thought it would. We dreamed about it for 20-plus years and it’s a real thrill to finally be here. Our house has now been certified ‘Passive House (Premium)’ with the Passive House Institute. It’s the only premium passive straw bale house in Australia.”

Pip and Stephen enjoy welcoming family and friends for country getaways; visitors are easily accommodated in a cosy adjoining guest wing. Meanwhile, Stephen is in the process of building rock cages and wicking beds for a variety of homegrown vegetables, as well as planting a fruit orchard.

It seems country life suits them both. “I wasn’t sure how I would adapt, but I’ve actually found it very easy and it’s such a calming environment,” Pip explains. “Our community is very friendly and welcoming, and we get produce all the time from our neighbours, who are doing what we want to be doing: growing vegetables and fruit trees and having a self-sufficient lifestyle.”

As for their advice for others wishing to explore the many features of a sustainable house? “If you are building or renovating, Passivhaus technology isn’t just for those with a concern about the environment – it’s also for those who wish to improve quality and comfort in their home,” Stephen explains.

“We’d like people to understand that you’re not compromising – you’re enhancing your living,” Pip adds. “We are all attached to the idea of having things heated and cooled and using fossil fuels, but you don’t need it and can have a comfortable existence without all of that. I would really recommend exploring it.” *CL*



GET THE LOOK

LIGHT IMPACT
CHOOSE DURABLE, TIMELESS
DESIGNS IN LOW-TOX MATERIALS.

PRODUCED BY KATE LINCOLN

- 1 Vivid Gooseneck slimline sink mixer in Chrome, \$281.05, from Phoenix Tapware. 2 Victoria & Albert Corvara bath in Gloss White, \$4960, from Harvey Norman. 3 Leon vessel in Charred, \$119, from McMullin & Co. 4 Lucine Nook rug in Natural, from \$360, from Armadillo. 5 Estelle outdoor dining table, \$1099, from Harvey Norman. 6 Bower cushion in Storm, \$125, from L&M Home. 7 Burton heavy linen throw in Charred, \$246, from L&M Home. 8 Garden to Table watering can, \$49.95, from Robert Gordon. 9 Jonathan extended sofa in Performance Creamy White, \$2799, from Castlery. 10 Wicka Oslo seagrass basket, \$8.95-\$22.95, from Temple & Webster. 11 Redfern External Terrazzo-look tile in Mixed, \$107 per box, from Tile Cloud. 12 Gaudi hardwood dining chair in Rustic Walnut and Green fabric, \$329, from B2C Furniture.