

Shade and ventilation



Sustainable design and build

When you compare Tasmania with other parts of the developed world, its reputation as a cold place is not really deserved. In reality, Tasmania has a mild climate and it's really the poor quality of our housing that can make winters here feel long and unpleasant.

Tasmania's summers can be hot and it's important that any home built to make the best of winter sunshine is protected from the risk of overheating in summer.

Classic passive solar houses often rely on a simple, broad roof overhang to prevent the summer sun from penetrating the large north-facing windows that are such an asset in winter. Although this can work in Tasmania, it's often not the best or only solution.

Tasmania's mild maritime climate can be unpredictable, and cold snaps in summer or warm spells in winter are not uncommon.

Simply relying on the sun's entirely predictable position in the sky to control the temperature of your home in an unpredictable climate may not always be the best solution, particularly for smaller houses where the building's 'surface to volume ratio' may be quite large.

Movable screens, blinds or pergolas are often useful additions to the north side of a house in Tasmania. They allow the occupants to choose how much sunshine enters the house from day to day rather than simply relying on seasonal changes in the sun's path.

Deciduous vines or deciduous trees, though useful in the design of gardens, are not so useful when it comes to entry of optimal sunshine levels to houses in Tasmania. Leaves appear far too early in a climate where, as late as November, some sun is welcome in living areas, then often aren't shed early



enough to compensate for an early cold snap in Autumn.

Ensuring the house has adequate thermal mass will help to buffer a well designed home in an erratic climate; too much mass, however, may become a liability unless the building is well ventilated and able to dump accumulated heat in summer.

It's essential that any house intended to provide a comfortable and healthy environment for its occupants can be well ventilated. Good ventilation, particularly at night, has an important part to play in keeping homes cool and healthy in summertime.

Fresh air currents within the house should provide 'cross flow' ventilation or, if there is a second level or a set of high, clerestory windows, then stale air may be vented from these upper windows and cooler air drawn in to the lower level to replace it.

Designing a house so that it's not only warm in winter but also well ventilated is not too difficult. Tasmania is reputed to have the cleanest air in the world, and with a little thought, there is no need to keep it out.

For free advice about these important issues, call us today on (03) 6227 9633.