your new Home

Buyer's Guide Checklist

Before signing a contract and building

Begin with the end of your project in mind and don't commit to an Expert* who does not share your values or enthusiasm for wanting to achieve a comfortable, healthy and sustainable home.

Items to check you have considered BEFORE you sign a contract or build:

- ☐ Will our home be located near places that we visit regularly, such as work or school, shops, friends and family?
- ☐ Is it in a walkable and bike friendly suburb?
- ☐ Will our home suit the local climate and do the main living areas have windows facing close to true north to capture the winter sun?
- ☐ Are the eaves large enough to provide shading from the summer sun, or can they be increased in size to do so?
- ☐ Can the western windows be protected in summer with removable shading?
- ☐ Are openable windows and doors located to get good cross ventilation for summer cooling?
- ☐ Is it a functional and not over-sized floor plan, without wasted space and with plenty of storage?
- ☐ Will our home have a 7 star NatHERS rating or better?
- ☐ Are the living areas facing north and able to be zoned with doors to reduce heating and cooling costs?
- ☐ Is there good insulation in the roof and walls?
- ☐ Have we deleted all downlights in the ceilings that lead to the attic or roof space?
- ☐ Is there some uncovered thermal mass in the living areas?
- ☐ Is there a white or light coloured roof and cladding?
- ☐ Is there an efficient hot water service, and heating and cooling appliance/s?
- ☐ Will the home be sealed well with breathable wall wrap?
- ☐ Have we vented the kitchen cooktop and bathroom showers to the outside?
- ☐ Do we have some unshaded north or west facing roof-space for solar panels?
- ☐ Have we included smart technology management systems to use the solar power for our own needs first?
- ☐ Is there enough space in the yard for a clothes line and to grow some herbs and vegetables?

** The term 'Expert' means the building professionals you are engaging to work with you on your home, such as a Volume/Project Home Building Company, Architect, Designer, Draftsperson, Engineer, etc.*

Conversations to have with your Expert BEFORE you sign a contract:

- ☐ Are we on the same page regarding energy efficiency and sustainability?
- ☐ What sustainable, renewable and non-toxic materials can you recommend?
- ☐ What other sustainable ideas can you recommend?
- ☐ Can you ensure the building will be sealed well and condensation is minimised?
- ☐ How will waste be minimised on site and recycled during construction?
- ☐ Can we gain access to the site during the build? *Note: The rules differ between all states and territories.*

Items to consider including on the plans and in the contract BEFORE the contract is signed:

- ☐ Include stainless steel mesh for termite protection - this reduces chemicals on site.
- ☐ Remove any solid pergolas or verandahs that block winter sun to north facing living rooms, ensure eaves are wide enough to provide shading and add vertical shading to the east and west windows - this helps with passive solar heating and cooling.
- ☐ Include thermal mass inside the home - this helps to moderate the internal temperature.
- ☐ Include wall insulation of R2.5 - this helps to keep your home quieter and more comfortable, plus save you money on energy bills.
- ☐ Include ceiling insulation of R4.0 - this helps to keep your home quieter and more comfortable, plus save you money on energy bills.
- ☐ Improve the wall sarking to a breathable product - this helps to reduce condensation.
- ☐ Include seals around plumbing pipes and electrical wires where they penetrate the sarking/building wrap - this helps to reduce unwanted airflow through your home.
- ☐ Delete all downlights to the attic/roof space - this ensures your home has continuous ceiling insulation.
- ☐ Specify an efficient heat pump hot water service or one powered by solar power (PV) panels - this will save you money on energy bills.
- ☐ Include energy efficient ceiling fans - this will provide you air movement during long hot spells.
- ☐ Vent kitchen and bathroom exhausts to the outside with self-closing blades - this will make sure there are no condensation issues.
- ☐ Include electric induction hotplates - this will avoid you paying two service charges by removing gas appliances.
- ☐ Improve windows to double-glazing with timber or thermally broken frames - this will improve the thermal performance of your home.
- ☐ Select a light coloured roof and cladding - this will help keep your house cool during hot weather.
- ☐ Add doors to open plan living areas - this will reduce the need for you to heat and cool hallways, and reduce your energy bills.
- ☐ Use a natural primer and sealer to treat your burnished or polished concrete floor and use low or no-VOC paints in the rest of the house - this will be better for your health.
- ☐ State that the tops, bottom and sides of the window architraves have to be sealed to ensure air tightness - this will make sure your home is sealed well.
- ☐ Include permeable paving to all paved areas - this allows water to seep into the soil and stay on your site.
- ☐ Include practical smart technology management systems, including one that will direct your PV power to provide for your own needs first (such as hot water supply) before sending any excess back to the electricity grid - this will save on your energy bills.
- ☐ Include an additional appropriately sized power point (15 amp) in your garage to provide for charging an electric vehicle - this will make it cheaper and easier if you or future owners have an electric vehicle.