

Graeme Hawley
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Mr Dave Lawrence

Dear Dave,

Now that winter is just about over and we have experienced a summer and a winter, I thought I would let you know how our house has performed.

During the summer, on high 30^o and low 40^o days, it was fantastic to walk into a 25^o house that, by comparison to outside, felt like a cool-room. The only time it got above 25^o was when we were moving in and had the doors open a lot of the day. We found that with the double-glazing, the best way to keep cool during the day was to keep everything shut and then open the clerestory louvres in the evening to allow any hot air that had accumulated below the high point of the ceiling to escape.

The eaves work perfectly – they started to let the sun creep in through the north windows just before the nights started to get cool and by the time the nights got very cold during the winter we were getting full sun on the floor and mass wall during the day. The coldest it got inside without supplemental heating was 16^o first thing in the morning, when it was at or near freezing outside. If the builder had put the wall insulation on the correct side of the wall cavity, I suspect it would have stayed a couple of degrees warmer, however it just took the wearing of a dressing-gown or other layer of clothing in the mornings to stay comfortably warm – we found that this temperature was not unpleasant. On the odd occasion we decided to have a fire during the evening (when it had been overcast for a number of days and we did not get the benefit of having the sun warm the house), the temperature rose several degrees very quickly and meant higher temperatures in the morning. Once we decide what sort of window coverings to get and accumulate the funds to get them all done at the same time, I imagine that closing the curtains after the sun has gone will help to maintain an even higher temperature. Using the ceiling fans, which use about the same power as a compact fluorescent light bulb on low speed, on their reverse setting makes the heat from the fire considerably more effective, as it was prevented from accumulating above our heads. The fans are a nice touch and the type we chose are a very stylish addition to the house.

As we approach the spring equinox, there is only a small amount of sun getting inside and by the time it gets really hot here the sun will be once again excluded, so the height, angles and sizes of the eaves so far are perfect for our climate which, as you know, is very hot in summer and cold enough to get frosts for several weeks during winter.

The layout of the house is working perfectly and the kitchen, which could probably be considered the centrepiece of the house, is excellent to work in and looks great. The three-way bathroom is also working extremely well.

I would like to thank you for the time and effort you put into the design over what ended up being quite a long period; it was a pleasure to work with you. Your knowledge of the design features required to make the house perform thermally the way we wanted was invaluable, but it was also pleasing that you were flexible and always open to other ideas. After having had a house (which we did not end up building) designed previously by an architect in Canberra, I also found your rates very reasonable. I would be happy to recommend you to any future potential clients and in fact show people around the house if they wish to see things actually working.