

# Inspiration from the environment

## Design Intelligence.

Ideas for consideration when designing and building your new home

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Frank Gehry once said that prior to embarking on a new design project he will tidy his desk, schedule non-essential appointments and other excuses.... Anything to prolong the commencement of the impending design. He would feel a mixed sense of nervousness and excitement, wondering where the inspiration for this presented opportunity will ultimately come from. I am the director of Vibe Design Group, and we tend to feel the same way when we are about to take on a new project.

Our primary source for inspiration is nature, and this is because nature offers a constant source of beauty and balance, whether it be a gnarly tree, a cantilevered rock formation or the imprint on the sand left by a wave, nature is forever presenting items of beauty and inspiration. When one is standing in a natural environment, without being able to pinpoint exactly why, you will feel a sense of contentment and being; and it is this sense that we try to capture in our designs.

Buildings are typically stifled by what people perceive they should, or are expected to look like. It is the role of the designer to imagine a structure that is wholly suited to the terrain and the client's wishes, but refuses influence from the incongruous architecture of the past. For when Australia was first settled, its European settlers knew nothing other than the solid structures they were practiced in building in their homeland, whose cold climates were so different to those experienced in Australia.

The primary purpose of a building is to provide shelter, beyond this the possibilities to how it looks and functions are limitless. No two sites are the same, and no two clients are the same, therefore a design should ultimately reflect the unique qualities of both the land on which it is sited and the individuality of its clients and elements of inspiration can ultimately be found in both.

I am reminded of a home we designed near Sydney's Northern Beaches. Despite its close proximity to the water, the site did not offer a visual appreciation of nearby Freshwater Beach, whose adjacent cliff face offered a source of much inspiration. As part of a comprehensive site analysis, we studied and photographed the cantilevers and crevices of this rock formation and breathed elements into the design, which when combined with water offered the home's occupants an ever awareness of their locality.

Inspiration for another dwelling development on the banks of the Yarra River in Kew was sought by researching the fruitful history of the surrounding area. As discovered, Yarrabend Park is made up of soil types including silurian mudstone & sandstone sediments. The park also features places of historical value, such as Dights Falls featuring an old bluestone water channel and ruins of the mill. All

these elements influenced the way in which colour and built form was integrated into the design. The soft subtle tones of the surrounding vegetation and environs influenced external colour selection and overall building material and design.

Design inspiration is not limited, it can be felt, researched and sought in many different ways and makes every project unique to its environment.

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