



# Simple pleasures

A tropical retreat that's pleasing guests without compromising the environment by Kristen Watts



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With many people expecting luxury tropical getaways to offer five-star air-conditioned comfort, it was always going to be a risky proposition to build an environmentally-friendly bed and breakfast in the outskirts of Broome.

But when Paradigm Architects were approached to design such a place, despite the extreme weather conditions and remote location, Fiona Hogg had no hesitation in accepting the challenge.

“The people who built Coco Eco were incredibly brave,” she says. “Especially since they did not have a contractor and they were owner-builders. But this is the kind of work we specialise in and we are really

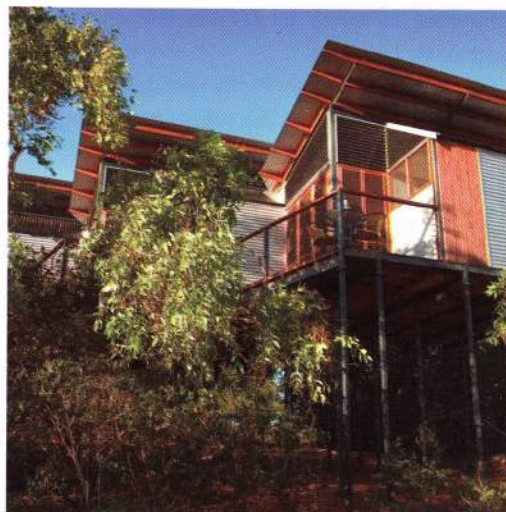
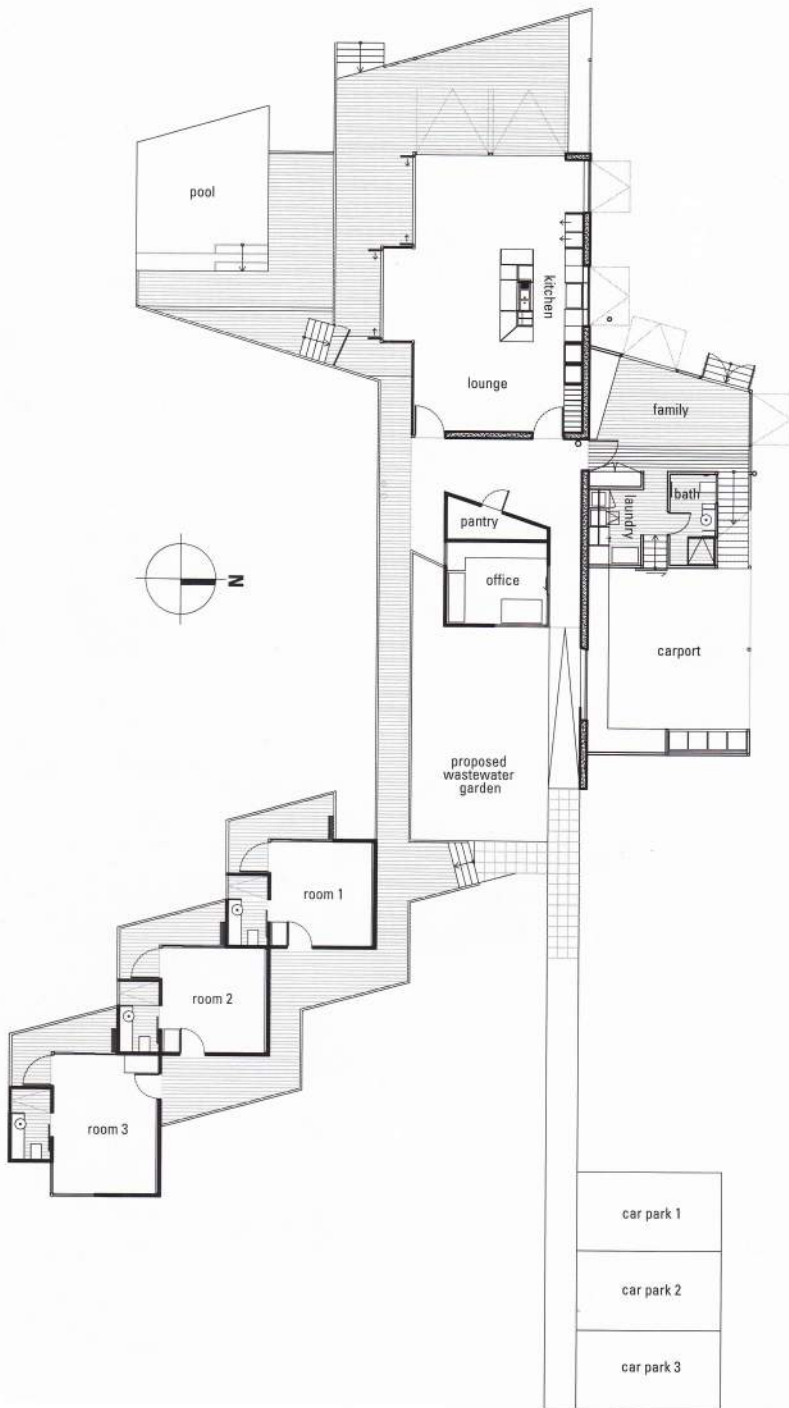
committed to trying to develop environmentally sustainable buildings.”

Fiona, now based in Perth, worked in Darwin and Cairns for years so the prospect of designing a sustainable building in Broome was not that daunting.

“I knew we could do it, even though many people don't realise that in Broome, as well as the heat, you also have to contend with cool winds coming off the desert, so it can make things tricky.”

“The other issue was that the site, while extremely beautiful, is quite remote. It is further up the coast beyond Cable Beach and set behind a

Simple rooms are set in revegetated bush land and have private balconies and solar hot water



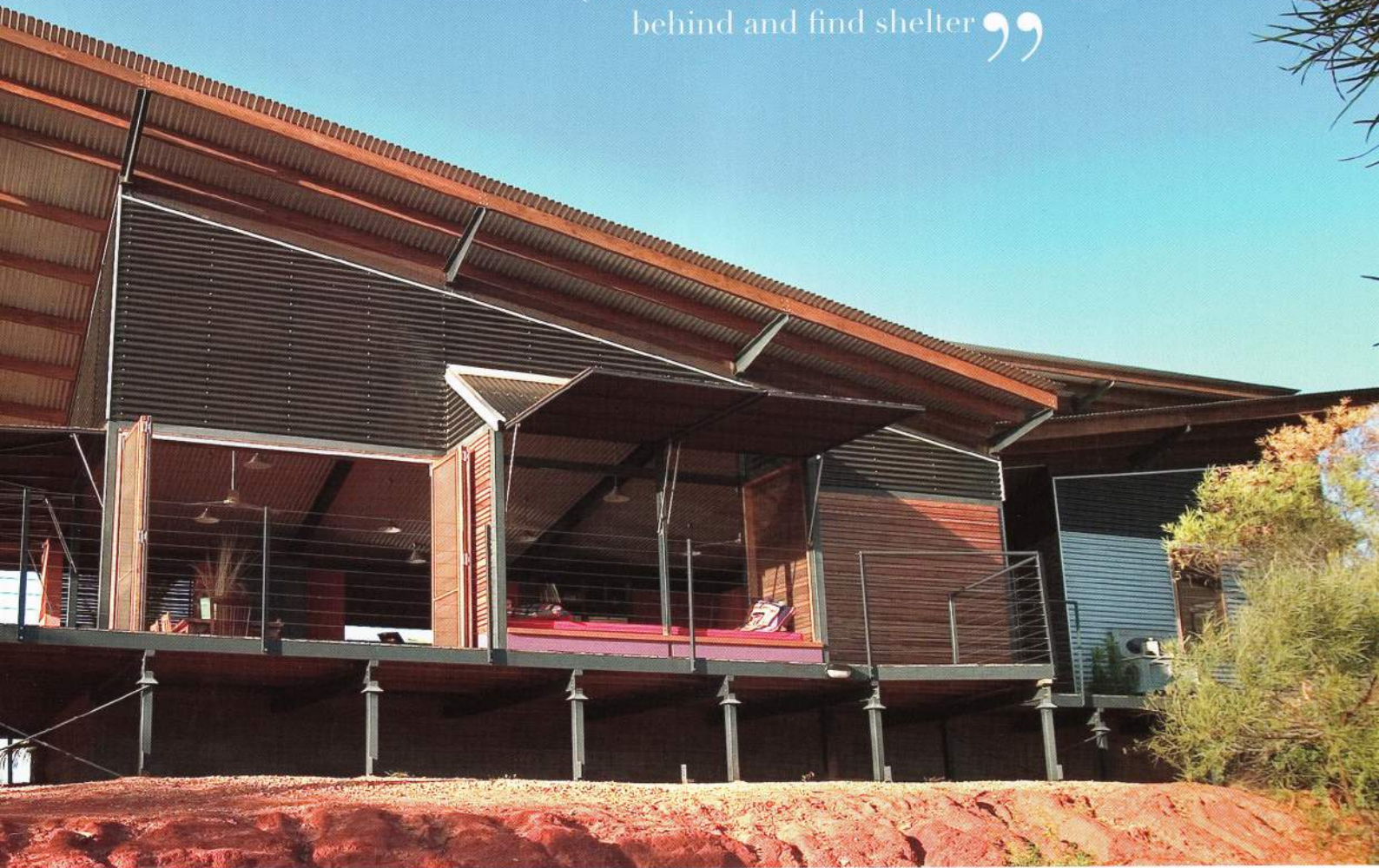
tidal influenced lagoon," she says.

"The site is half original bush and half mangrove farm and the owners, to their credit, wanted to revegetate the site and didn't want to impact on the natural bush land or the water flow. So we had to choose a site to build on that only had a few bits of vegetation and no major trees."

Fiona says the property was built using a mixture of recycled and plantation timbers with a steel portal frame that is cyclone proof. **The building is designed to be opened up during severe storms so that winds move through it, rather than having a destructive effect.**

The building is lightweight construction to minimise heat load and is designed to be opened up to maximise cross-breezes

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“With cyclones you either design a building to be a place that you can bunker down in or you allow it to be opened up and when a really big storm comes through, say every 10 years, you leave it behind and find shelter. The wind and rain goes through it, but the building is still there at the end.”

Fiona says timber louvers were used extensively to minimise the use of glass, because in extreme climates glass tends to increase heat loads. “Timbers are an insulating product and they tend to absorb heat rather than reflect and magnify it,” she says.

“I really like the fact that the main living space

has been designed to be a big veranda. **There is no airconditioning and this big shaded area with a concrete thermal mass really tends to suck all the heat out of the space.** The central area is cool because you get the breeze sweeping over the concrete and it acts like a refrigerator.

“We have maximised the amount of ventilation and shade and kept ceiling heights to a good level. It really does mean it is viable to go without airconditioning even when you need to make guests comfortable.”

The bed and breakfast’s current owners, James and Lynda Hagan, bought the property 18 months

High  
corrugated  
ceilings with  
ceiling fans  
are iconic  
vernacular  
features



ago. James says the remote location provides the perfect getaway for people looking for a space to truly unwind.

"Most of our visitors are couples and they really appreciate the fact that the place is environmentally sustainable and that it is just so peaceful," he says.

"I really love waking up in the morning and seeing the sun hit the back of the dunes and then sitting and having a coffee and listening to the sounds of the waves crashing and the birds chirping. It's just so pleasant.

"Sometimes people can be quite surprised by the

“You can completely relax away from all the mod cons of the rest of society”



Concrete thermal mass in the shaded floor cools the interior and adds a striking visual component

fact that the bush can be very noisy. You've often got birds making a racket and kangaroos thumping past and if you are not prepared for that it can be strange, I guess."

**The fact that the property has been built with limited impact on the environment makes the experience sweeter.** "There is a big green movement in Broome and there are lots of people in town like us who are trying to do all they can to reduce their impact on the planet." That means no airconditioning, as it would be too big a draw on the retreat's solar panels.

"The vast majority of people that stay here are not at all worried by the fact that we don't have airconditioning and that we try to discourage them from using power in their rooms, and that means giving up things like hairdryers."

"All our water is bore water and once we had a power failure and the bore fused. I had to bring in water in 25 litre bottles and give it to our guests, who had just returned from a day at the beach, covered in sand and sunscreen. I had to tell them that they couldn't have a shower and that they just had two bottles of water, one to cook with and the





other to bathe with and they were more than happy with that, so it is amazing what adjustments people are willing to make.”

James reports most visitors come from Sydney and Melbourne or Europe, and the average length of stay is about two to four days. “People really want to be as close to nature as they can without roughing it too much.

“We supply breakfast, so you come here with a bit of food for your other meals and you don’t have to go anywhere for the time you stay. You can completely relax away from all the mod cons of the rest of society,” he says. ←

**Designer:** Paradigm Architects [www.paradigmarchitects.com.au](http://www.paradigmarchitects.com.au)

**Builder:** Owner Builder

**Location:** Broome, WA

**Photography:** Tim Silbert

**Features:** ■ Stand-alone photovoltaic power system

■ 3000L Solahart solar hot water system

■ R2.5 Albany wool batt roof insulation

■ Steel portal frame with large recycled content

■ Light-weight materials to minimise heat load

■ Recycled jarrah and sustainably sourced western red and pacific cedar timber

■ Recycled karri flooring

■ Locally sourced concrete aggregates

■ Minimal glazing – use of timber shutters/ louvres

■ Predominantly fluorescent lighting

■ Cross-ventilation, high ceilings and ceiling fans for cooling

■ Thermal mass for cooling

■ Waste Water Gardens International grey and blackwater treatment systems

■ 4-star WELS-rated Pacific Premier and Fowler toilets

■ Minimum 3-star WELS-rated water fixtures

■ Low-VOC paints

■ Livos floor oils

■ Organoil timber sealing

■ Revegetation of site with native species