



## Smart Homes, Smarter Environments

Careful design combined with the right products make for smart homes and smarter environments – this underpins the design philosophy of builder and designer, Matthew Earl of Rossmark Pty Ltd.

A passionate advocate of environmentally sustainable building design and construction, Matthew has exemplified these principles not only in his family home in Caringbah, NSW, but in the many home extension projects he has undertaken for his clients.

“We are a fourth generation family business of builders, and have been extending homes since 1975, primarily in the St. George and Sutherland areas in the southern outskirts of Sydney. We undertake 15-17 projects a year, and are differentiated by being a builder who also designs homes and extensions using environmentally sustainable building principles,” said Matthew who is an accredited GreenSmart professional.

He added, “At Rossmark, we believe the shaping of space is also the shaping of life, and therefore we design and build highly customised solutions that take into account the needs, wants, age structure, personality of the family, orientation and location. We then design and recommend a solution to our clients that suits their lifestyles, is easy to care for, helps the environment by being energy and water efficient, while reducing the long-term running costs of these homes.”

Matthew and his team at Rossmark adopt a holistic approach to the design and construction of homes and extensions. In applying ‘green’ features and passive design principles to moderate the climate within the home, they maximise the comfort of its occupants, while reducing the reliance on artificial heating and cooling systems.

A recently completed project in Caringbah is an excellent example of many of these principles. The home’s northerly orientation and design optimise the use of the sun as a heating source during winter, using its natural energy flows to charge the home and maintain thermal comfort. The home also features eaves and louvres that combine to provide natural light and ventilation to the living area, while keeping out the harsh summer sun.

“Insulation is another important feature in the design and construction of any environmentally sustainable home because it keeps a home warmer in winter and cooler in summer and reduces heating and cooling costs,” commented Matthew. He has installed CSR’s Bradford Gold™ in the walls and ceilings of his home, and Bradford’s acoustic insulation, SoundScreen™ 2.0 (75mm), in the internal walls of wet areas and the main living area to minimise the penetration of noise and create ‘quiet zones’ within the home. In addition, he has installed SoundScreen under the box gutter which has reduced external noise such as rain falling on the gutter.

Fans (with a reverse switch to generate warm air during winter) are the preferred form of artificial movement of air in our projects. “It is a common misperception among people that fans cost a lot to operate when they are one of the most cost-effective artificial forms available,” added Matthew.

Other ‘smart’ features of the Caringbah project include solar access controls which enable the home to be heated by solar radiation, energy-efficient fluorescent lights, sub-floor heating, a solar hot water system, thickened glass doors and windows (for thermal and acoustic benefits) and an underground water tank that powers the toilets and laundry.

“We are living in an age where there is a strong move towards the design and construction of environmentally sustainable homes. Such homes are not substantially more expensive than conventional homes, have a higher re-sale value and enjoy low running costs. What’s more, you can’t put a real value on how such homes are helping our environment,” said Matthew.

Matthew’s clients vouch for Rossmark’s quality design and construction and customer care. Rossmark was supported by its customers to win the ‘2004 and 2005 Australian Achiever Awards for Customer Service and Relation’ achieving customer ratings of 99.36% in both years.

Said Rossmark’s customer, Roman and Alicia Wereszcynski from Menai, “Rossmark have designed and built our home’s first floor addition to include three bedrooms, a bathroom and a separate toilet. They have also renovated the ground floor level to open up to a lovely northern aspect which now contains a living room, meal area and new kitchen with a timber staircase. We are very happy with the quality, calibre of staff and the co-ordination of the extension and renovation carried out by them. They were very professional and helpful from the enquiry stage to the final execution, and kept us informed throughout the process. Everything happened when Rossmark said it would, and the final result is just wonderful. Overall, we are highly impressed and will recommend them to others.”

Peter and Linda of Earlwood commented, "Matthew and his team designed and constructed a very comfortable and aesthetically pleasing first floor addition to our home on time and within budget whilst addressing our very specific requirements regarding sustainability and safety. Their communication, project management and responsiveness was excellent."

Interested in environmentally sustainable construction or design help for a home extension project? Matthew Earl and his team at Rossmark Pty Ltd can be reached at 02 9525 5588.

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**For more information or to arrange interviews with Bradford's  
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