



New boy on the block

TO tour Steve Nafte's new-millennium home in Dianella is to take a peek into the future of home building in WA.

Everywhere you look there are innovative construction techniques, design concepts with a new twist, and practical ideas for family living.

It's not surprising, therefore, that the property has earned Steve the MBA 2003 Award for Best New Builder.

Home to Steve, his wife Sharma and their teenage children Kevin, Tali and Seth, this house is all about thinking things through before the first brick is laid.

It was built as a showcase for Steve's construction and design talents but when it was finished in November the family, who moved to Perth from Johannesburg four years ago, couldn't resist moving in.

"It just works so well for a family," said Sharma. "It's the design and finishes and the small aspects that make the difference."

A prestige builder in South Africa, Steve has incorporated many of his trademark ideas into his first Perth project, working with architect John Kannis of John Kannis and Associates to finetune his plans.

He has also given careful consideration to the orientation of the block and the fact that there is parkland on two sides.

One of the key decisions was to place the house as close as possible to the western boundary of the block. "I didn't want bedrooms that looked out on to boundary walls," Steve said.

Instead, he has turned on its head the traditional notion of bedrooms off one side of a passageway.

He has put the passageway against the outside wall and given it numerous small high windows to filter the summer sun while still letting in plenty of light. All three of the bedrooms leading off the passageway have then been designed with large sliding doors so that they open out on to the east-facing garden and pool.

Each bedroom has its own internet connection and there are two bathrooms in the teenagers' wing which means Tali doesn't have to share with her brothers. The bedroom area is linked to the main living areas by a comfortable family room.

The kitchen is the perfect food preparation area for budding chefs. It is spacious, sleek and stylish with

stainless-steel appliances, beautifully finished tasmanian oak cabinets and granite benchtops.

The messy washing-up duties are relegated to a combined scullery and laundry hidden behind a sliding tasmanian oak door. There is also a large butler's pantry reached directly from the garage.

"Only the best features are on display, making the house look great," said Steve. "The domestic paraphernalia is cleared away but everything is still functional."

Solid timber sliding doors – which disappear into a cavity in the internal walls – mean the main living areas and alfresco dining area can become one, accommodating a sit-down dinner for 50 people.

Even the wide, polished timber staircase leading to the second-storey master suite and guest room has been given a design overhaul. The risers are smaller but the treads are wider and bigger, giving enough space for two people to walk side by side.

The master bedroom has a north-south aspect with sliding glass doors and a balcony on these two sides. On warm summer nights, the doors can be opened so that a cooling breeze drifts across the room. Cable balustrades and glass ensure that none of the view across neighbouring parkland to the city beyond is lost.

A large walk-in robe creates a sound buffer between the bedroom and the sumptuous bathroom, which has been divided into two areas – one with a state-of-the-art steam shower and the other with corner spa bath, giving a view to the parkland below.

Outside, the house has a bold facade which blends effortlessly with the streetscape. A security gate leads to a small courtyard where Steve's custom-designed wall fountain makes a tranquil entry statement.

A sliding glass entry door gives separate access to the home office where Steve's desk looks directly on to the courtyard and water feature.

Strong colours, natural neutrals, bold South African artefacts and family photos throughout the home reflect the Nafte's down-to-earth approach to family living.

Both practical and beautiful, this home is not only a sign of things to come in home building but an indication of what we can continue to expect from Perth's best new builder.