



Architect Nathalie Curtet has always believed buildings should be in balance with the environment.

Green light for dwellings



MY HOME

Environmentally friendly houses are for everyone, writes MICHELE TYDD.

Green architecture is not entirely new, but rather a reworked concept helped along by a good deal of 21st century wizardry, says French-born Nathalie Curtet.

"European architects have traditionally been trained in green principles like how to site a building and establishing the right orientation for maximum energy conservation, but it had been lost over time through greed and loss of workmanship," she says.

Curtet is one of the few Illawarra architects who is a green-star accredited professional of the Green

SNAPSHOT

- ★ Nathalie Curtet, 49, mother of two teenagers.
- ★ Lives in Bowral "because of its country lifestyle and good place to raise the children".
- ★ Drives a Prius "because it cuts CO₂ emissions by 70 per cent".
- ★ Favourite architects Glenn Murcutt, Peter Stutchbury and Richard LePlastrier.
- ★ If given the chance to design her home she would make it a light timber-framed structure among the rainforest.
- ★ Dislikes McMansions found in suburban sprawl with no place for gardens and trees.

Building Council of Australia.

While studying at the University of Marseille-Luminy in France, Curtet says she became fascinated by the relationship between built form and the land, choice of site and the layer of time.

Well before green became the buzzword, she says she began to develop a design philosophy focused on sustainability.

"It's about integrating design

and looking at all aspects of how a building impacts on the environment and the community," Curtet says.

"It starts with the design and building process and then continues through the life of the building because running costs and maintenance can also become a great leech on energy resources."

Curtet believes that if a building creates an imbalance in

the environment through pollution or the use of non-renewable materials it can be harmful to those living within.

"Studies, for example, have found children in schools where the air quality has not been improved have not been as healthy," she says.

"The rate of environmental damage among sufferers is increasing."

Curtet has worked in the commercial and residential sectors in Illawarra but she has also designed five years ago one of her best projects.

"It looks good but it's not green boxes when it comes to energy consumption," she says.

Curtet says green buildings are not just for those who are environmentally conscious but for all architectural disciplines.

"You can live in a green building and still do a lot of environmental damage. There are many ways to do this sort of thing."