

“Luxury clifftop elegance” by Laura Phillips New Homes section of The West Australian December 8, 2007

A holiday hideaway that uses innovative design and quality workmanship is the HIA-ANZ WA Housing Awards 2007 Home of the Year. Laura Phillips reports.

WA's 2007 HIA – ANZ WA Home of the Year is a luxury holiday hideaway perched on the clifftops at Cowaramup. The 490 sqm house, located on a secluded 40 ha site where occupants have unspoilt views of the rugged coastline, is a shining example of understated elegance, innovative design and quality workmanship.

The home was built by Grandwood Homes and designed by Ed Eames of Eames and Associates. Interior colours and textures, chosen to complement the natural surroundings were selected by MMA Interiors. Mr Eames said the clients' brief was for a luxurious spacious home which took advantage of the views of Cowaramup Bay and the coastline. “It had to sit low and fit into the landscape because it is a high-profile nature reserve,” he said. “A few of the design objectives of my own were to create outdoor spaces that would be sheltered from the south-west wind, which down there is very important, and to build a roof form that was responsive to the landscape, so we kept it very low and linear.”

The home's stunning location posed some design challenges.

“Dealing with the wind racing straight up from the ocean is always a challenge, but when it's on the edge of a hill it's even more of a challenge,” he said. “So we've got up to 16mm armoured glass, and a concrete roof in parts. While it is air-conditioned we rely quite a lot on cross-ventilation and shading, a passive climate design rather than just pumping energy in”.

The building was completed in May after around two years of construction worth more than \$2 million.

Grandwood Homes general manager David Marks said the home officially known as Incognito needed to have a “resort feel” to cater to the executive rental market. The idea was for groups to be able to share the home while allowing for individual privacy. “It has been designed with four bedrooms, all with ensuites,” he said. “Because it's in the South-West and that's a unique area for its rugged beauty, the house features a lot of stone, timber – and because it's in such a magnificent location on the clifftops of Cowaramup and it looks out to the Indian Ocean – all of the western side of the house is glass.”

A camel-coloured render combines with Klip-lok sheet roof in Merlin Grey to give an understated external appearance. The simplicity is offset by locally sourced feature stone, lots of bronze glass windows, a red bitumen driveway and cedar eaves to the carport, porch and terraces.

The entry area, which is almost in the middle of the house on the eastern side, has a pitched, timber lined ceiling and a Travertine marble and pebble feature panel in the tiled flooring. From the entry visitors proceed into a big foyer. Mr Marks said the idea was for the eye to be drawn to the striking fireplace in the living area and the Indian Ocean in the background from the moment people stepped foot in the home. "From that foyer you can either go forward toward the fireplace which will take you into the large central (living) area with the glass roof over it, or you can go left up to a well appointed master suite with the luxury of a spa, full-height tiling and a big dressing room," he said.

To the left, the remaining bedrooms come off a long gallery. The ensuites all have twin vanities with 40mm Quantum quartz tops and light walnut veneer cabinets, and frameless pivot doors to the shower and a toilet. There is also a powder room, a paved courtyard, terraces and a spa room big enough for a three-car garage. The latter has a peaked timber-lined ceiling, a stone feature wall and rows of glass bi-folds allowing views of the ocean from the spa.

On the western side of the home is the open-plan living area where the double-sided fireplace with local granite tapers upwards, exiting the glass roof at more than 4.5m above floor level.

The kitchen has a stainless-steel double electric oven, induction cooktop and curved canopy range hood. There are 40mm square edge granite benchtops, a granite splashback and timber veneer cabinets. Adjacent to the kitchen is a big family room, with living and dining on the other side of the central fireplace. Next to the kitchen is a meals area.

"A home of exceptional construction, detailing and quality. A masterpiece deserving of the title Custom Built Home of the Year." Judges comments.