

ATA member profile

Edna the Eco House: a tale of two owners



After visiting it on Sustainable House Day, ATA members Jim and Kate bought their Stirling eco home from Jason and Susan, also ATA members, who had built the house 15 years earlier. Anna Cumming has a chat to them about a match made on SHD.

JASON Garrod and Susan Greenwood got interested in sustainable living “waaaay back” around the time of the 1970s oil crisis, and they’ve been members of the ATA since the 1980s. After owner-building a rammed earth home in McLaren Flat, SA, and then doing a major green renovation when they moved to Mt Barker, in 2001 the couple bought a 2000m² block of steeply sloping land in Stirling in the Adelaide Hills, and built the timber and rammed earth cottage now dubbed ‘Edna the Eco House’ by its new owners.

Designed to be as sustainable, healthy and energy efficient as possible, the three-bedroom house has plenty of north glazing, lots of thermal mass and extensive use of recycled timber. Fittings and finishes were chosen to minimise off-gassing. In addition, the couple were early adopters of domestic solar PV, installing 1.8kW of amorphous panels and even a small battery: “it cut in when there was a blackout,” explains Jason, “and importantly it was enough to run the water pump in case of bushfire.” The house is also within easy walking distance of Stirling town centre and public transport, and Jason’s medical practice was at the end of the street, minimising the need for car use.

Susan and Jason opened the house for what was then called Solar House Day in 2003 and 2004, then a decade later decided to open again for Sustainable House Day to share with visitors what changes they’d made and things they’d do differently now. By this stage they were designing their next home in Willunga, and planning to sell the Stirling house.

It was at the 2016 event that Jim and Kate Webb discovered the house. Originally from the UK and Sydney, they’d settled in the



↑ Edna the Eco House in the Adelaide Hills has been home to two sets of ATA members. Jason Garrod and Susan Greenwood (centre photo) built it in 2001-2002, and today it’s home to Kate and Jim Webb and their family.

hills in 2015 and were freezing in their rental house. “We were thinking of building our own sustainable home, and had started to make some headway, but when we went to SHD for some inspiration, we ended up buying Jason and Susan’s house!” says Jim. “Buying land so close to town is expensive and challenging; when Jason and Susan announced they were selling, we thought ‘oh, wow!’ because it ticked so many of our boxes.”

Kate and Jim moved in a year ago with their young kids Iris and Tommy, and love the place. “There are lots of clever design features. In winter it’s like a greenhouse, it really warms up with the big north-facing windows—and the eaves keep the sun out in summer. There are vines for shade, 50,000 litres of rainwater storage, and solar installed when the house was built, that still all works perfectly today. We’re benefitting from Jason and Susan’s conscientiousness and attention to detail.”

Jim and Kate have been ATA members since picking up a copy of *ReNew* in a newsagent a couple of years ago. “We joined because we’re trying to be sustainably minded and leave as small a footprint as

possible. Moving into this house is a big step in the right direction for us.”

Jim works as an electrical engineer in the railway industry, and has recently been inspired by electric vehicles. “I’m starting to get interested in EV charge points and the related technology and infrastructure,” he says, “and maybe getting more involved with the EV industry in the future.”

Incidentally, Jason is also interested in electric vehicles. He’s a member of the Australian Electric Vehicle Association and drives a Lancer he converted to run on batteries. A retired teacher, Susan’s interest is in permaculture. In Willunga, her productive garden is as important as the eco credentials of the house; they call the property Footprint Garden Farm. “We’re growing as much of our own food as we can, as healthily as possible,” says Jason. “We hope to educate people in climate resilience. That’s where we’re going next.” *

Footprint Garden Farm will be open on Sustainable House Day 2018. Visit www.sustainablehouseday.com for information.