

# Lasting impression

An architect builds a winning reputation. By Stephen A Russell



Architect Peter Searle is pretty chuffed. The Fitzroy townhouses he designed have been lauded with the Building Designers Association of Victoria award for best residential design – multi-residential: dual occupancy.

Searle says it's a career milestone he welcomes. "Recognition from my peers means a lot and it's more a statement about overcoming my hearing impairment and succeeding in a world where intelligent design and excellent



communication are at the forefront." Far from his hearing impairment holding him back, Searle now heads up his own design practice, Peter Searle Design, after 20 years' architectural experience. The striking timber-clad townhouses make the most of their small footprint and feature plenty of deft design touches. Searle is a forward-thinker, and sustainability was a big consideration, not only on this project, but in all his work. "Sustainability is one of my foremost criteria for design excellence. The orientations of the residence were planned to capture light and heat and also to maintain privacy." Other green design elements include the use of double-glazing and natural solar heating for the pool, which all increase energy efficiency. Longevity is key for Searle, too. "I want my designs to be visually pleasing, not just now, but also in 20 years when they have aged."



Outdoor space also played its part in maximising the floor plans. "In such a small plot the crossover of indoor and outdoor space is important, with concealable sliding doors giving access to outdoor spaces, and lots of internal glass panels that open up the living spaces." Searle prefers to incorporate design aspects of the existing community into his work. He had to work with the historical setting and council heritage overlay limitations. "Visually I am pedantic to detail, possibly more so because of my hearing," he says. "I used elements of the laneway and surrounding historical houses like bluestone and brick, but also softened the facade with timber and rendered walls. "If you can communicate your vision well then this makes the job much easier and people appreciate that you're making a positive contribution to their environment." ■



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