

WEEK 2

VALLEY LAKE AND SURROUNDS



DRAMATIC AND STUNNING DESIGNS



(SCOTT McNAUGHTON)

“A LOT OF THE REASON WHY VALLEY LAKE IS SUCH AN ATTRACTIVE AREA IS TO DO WITH THE SLOPING LAND” – BLAKE BALLARD

THE THRILL OF THE HILL

There are advantages to building on a hillside

To one person, a sloping block of land is an opportunity for creative design; to another, it is a costly challenge. There is no denying that building on a slope is more expensive than building on flat land, but the end result is a distinctive house with a commanding presence and many advantages over its flatland neighbours.

The house might cost more initially, but the individual custom design, the character of it and its garden, and the views, will likely mean that it commands a premium price when sold.

There is also an emotional component to living “up high”. The experience of looking out gives a feeling of connection to the world

rather than just the garden – a sense of being connected to the community rather than being limited by fences.

Along with the views, the house will capture the prevailing breezes, a bonus for passive cooling and cross-ventilation.

The appeal for a lot of people is that sloping blocks allow for highly individual and creative designs with interiors that are functional and interesting and capitalise on the changing levels on the block.

The idea of building on more than one level suits the design trend of zoning a house to its occupants and uses. Living areas can be zoned to one level, most likely opening directly

to the outdoor entertainment area and the garden. The main bedroom suite can have its own zone, and the children’s or teenagers’ area is in another distinct zone.

Another advantage is that you might end up with a basement – a useful room that is common in Europe and the US, but rare in Australia.

Dramatic and stunning designs can be built on hillsides. Should you be including a pool, the most luxurious and visually exciting feature you can incorporate is an acrylic window from the water to the living area of the house – an option made easier by a sloping site. Cantilevered decks are dramatic, as are

split levels, which inspire stunning interior design possibilities.

Changes in levels can also create pockets of privacy. For example, the bathroom or bedroom can open to a secret courtyard secluded from the rest of the garden or house.

Interesting gardens can be achieved on sloping blocks and can be either quite formal and structured with terraces and stone walls, or designed as a natural spill of colour and texture down the slope of the land. Mood lighting works well with either style and highlights the contours of the block.

Finding the most appropriate and experienced builder is vital when constructing

nine houses at Valley Lake. Blake, who has been building for about 15 years, started his career in Sydney and has never built on a completely flat block. One house he built in Sydney had 150 steps to the front door.

“A lot of the reason why Valley Lake is such an attractive area is to do with the sloping land. With the houses, it’s to do with the view. You can’t build a view,” he says.

Blake says design options depend largely on the way the land is sloping. If it is sloping from the street down, for example, it is often possible to keep the same ceiling/roof level throughout. This results in the front part of the home having standard 2.7-metre ceiling

what a volume builder can do in terms of flexibility and quality of build and you are getting exactly what you want. It doesn’t cost that much more when you factor in all this.

“We do everything from start to finish and we have the same team of tradespeople working on our jobs,” he says.

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NEXT WEEK \ JULY 1
We talk to Valley Lake residents

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