



KERRYN McHARDY & MURRAY FITZGERALD

(DARREN HOWE)

One look was all it took to lure this family to Valley Lake

Kerryn McHardy was astounded by the sheer beauty of Valley Lake when she discovered it last year.

Her son had suggested it as a new destination for his driving licence hours and Kerryn says she knew she wanted to live there as soon as she saw Valley Lake's sheer basalt cliff face, lake and parklands.

"I have always lived on this side of the city, with the last 20 years or so in Ascot Vale and Maribyrnong, and I couldn't believe how secluded, peaceful and beautiful Valley Lake is and, at the same time, how close it is to everything – city, airport, freeways, schools and shops. You would never know that you are five minutes from the Calder Freeway. You are in another world."

Kerryn and partner Murray Fitzgerald immediately visited the 48-hectare estate and inspected a new house built and designed by Ballard Building.

"We drove down and loved the first house we saw – the finish, the architecture, attention to detail, the kitchen," Murray says.

"We would have bought it but unfortunately it had just sold. Builder Blake Ballard told us to visit the Valley Lake land sales centre and to find a block we liked. He works closely with his father Gary, who is an architect, and he said that together they could easily design and build a house to suit the site we chose."

FOR THE LOVE OF THE LAKE

Kerryn says they found another block in the same street but had to move quickly because blocks were selling fast.

"We were so impressed with Blake and Gary's work that we went straight back to them and got a quote and went ahead. I have never settled for a single quote before, but we loved the design and quality of the houses they had built."

"There were no issues building on a sloping block because Blake had so much experience. We have a four-metre drop from the street and that gives us incredible views and an amazing house design."

A little over a year later, Kerryn and Murray have moved into their new house overlooking Niddrie lake and Valley Lake's spectacular 30-metre high basalt cliff face. With them are Kerryn's son, Tom, and Murray's daughter Amelia and son Byron.

Their four-bedroom home has all the features they were looking for, including a living room wall integrating a large screen and fireplace, north-facing outdoor living area and another shady spot to escape summer's heat and a four-metre plus length of island bench for family members and friends to gather around.

The couple say they couldn't be happier with their decision. Murray can jump on his motorbike and get to work at Melbourne



MURRAY, KERRYN & BYRON ENJOY THE BOARDWALK

Airport in less than 15 minutes while Kerryn has a 10-minute drive to Glenbervie or Strathmore stations with a 17-minute train trip to her city office.

Schools within walking distance include Rosehill Secondary College, Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School, Essendon Keilor College and Keilor Heights Primary.

Byron has "my park" five steps across the

road. He kicks a football or flies a kite with his dad and can enjoy a wide range of playground equipment. The whole family loves the half basketball court and they're planning summer barbecues there.

Kerryn gets up at 6am several mornings a week to walk the 4.2-kilometre Steele Creek Trail with a friend. Murray, a fitness trainer in his spare time, regularly runs along the

cliff tops and does several circuits of the stairs.

"You feel like you're living in the country here, not 15 minutes from the city. I love getting up and walking and seeing the lake, the cliff and the parklands and hearing the birds," Kerryn says.

For shopping, the family is spoilt for choice with Keilor Road, Westfield Airport West and Essendon Fields all 10 minutes or less away and Highpoint and Moonee Ponds within 15 minutes. Kerryn says when they need to go to the supermarket they have five Safeways, three Aldis, four Coles and LaManna Direct to choose from.

Eating out is also easy with a fantastic range of cafés and restaurants a few minutes away in Keilor and Mount Alexander roads.

Murray's mother lives in Geelong and, with direct access to the Western Ring Road, he says he can get to her place in 55 minutes.

"Because we are right on the ring road next to the Calder Freeway, we are on the doorstep to everything. We can also cycle into the city along the Steele Creek and Maribyrnong River trails. We can drive to the city in 15 minutes. It is all about location and lifestyle here," he says.

LIZ McLACHLAN

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NEXT WEEK \ JULY 8
Part of a growing community

UNIQUE

Unique. It's the one word that truly sums up Valley Lake.

That's because it's a breathtaking place unlike any other. A private haven that's both secluded and tranquil. Positioned within moments to the picturesque Niddrie Lake boardwalk and the 4.2km Steele Creek walking and cycling trail.

You'll also love having the convenience of Highpoint Shopping Centre and Essendon Fields within a short, 15 minute drive, and some of Melbourne's leading public and private schools even closer. This idyllic spot has every aspect covered, so consider the lifestyle benefits now, and enjoy them for years to come.

Stage 7B selling quickly, so don't delay.

Visit the Land Sales and Information Centre at 45 Valley Lake Boulevard, Keilor East, or call 131 852. www.myvalleylake.com.au