

MEDIA RELEASE

Saturday 5 September 2026

AUSTRALIA'S BEST NEW HOMES
The 2026 Houses Awards Winners

The ultimate family home built around a central, shaded pool, a bathhouse in the bush, an impossible sculptural house built on a rocky outcrop, and a homestead that honours its First Nations history have been named as Australia's best residential projects in this year's Houses Awards. The full list of winning homes can be viewed on the [Houses Awards website](https://housesawards.com.au) (and in the pages below of this media release).

The Houses Awards are the country's premier design awards for residential architecture. They are the prism through which we can evaluate the very latest in Australian home design from the country's top designers. *Houses* magazine editor and Houses Awards jury chair Alexa Kempton explained that privacy, sanctuary and the central role of gardens were common design narratives seen amongst the winning homes.

"Economic and environmental uncertainty is undoubtedly shaping briefs, and many of this year's winners reveal that clients want their homes to be a place of respite, comfort and human connection, a place to unplug from a hyperconnected world, and one that is adaptable to life's changing circumstances," said Kempton.

"The economic realities of the industry are also reflected in the scale of these homes. The awarded projects have been built with restraint and longevity in mind. Rather than building homes that are much larger than occupants need or building to the extremities of the block, architects have instead embraced the surrounding landscapes and minimised the impact of the home on the site."

"Many of these homes also underscore the central role that gardens play in domestic life; centralising landscape and turning in, with private garden views. Several projects are built with strong consideration for the surrounding bushland, becoming places that make occupants feel safe in sprawling landscapes."

The Houses Awards winners for 2026 are:

- Australian House of the Year - **Half Light House by John Ellway (QLD)**
- New House Under 200 Square Metres - **EA House by Bokey Grant (NSW)**
- New House Over 200 Square Metres - **Hislop Hill House by Clare Cousins Architects (VIC)**
- House Alteration and Addition Under 200 Square Metres - **Gore Street House by Olaver Architecture (VIC)**
- House Alteration and Addition Over 200 Square Metres - **Half Light House by John Ellway (QLD)**
- Apartment or Unit - **Apartment on The Loop by Billy Maynard Architects (NSW)**
- Small Project - **Magenta Outhouse by Atelier Marks Gaal (NSW)**
- Sustainability - **Gerroa House by Scale Architecture (NSW)**
- House in a Heritage Context (joint winner) - **Borland Crossman House by Wowowa Architecture (VIC)**
- House in a Heritage Context (joint winner) - **The Homestead Renewal at Wybalenna by Taylor and Hinds Architects with The Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania (TAS)**
- Emerging Architecture Practice - **Billy Maynard Architects (NSW)**

Australian House of the Year and **House Alteration and Addition Over 200 Square Metres** was awarded to **Half Light House by John Ellway** for his ingenious transparent extension to the rear of a Brisbane timber cottage surrounding a central, shaded pool. This is the second time Ellway has taken out the title prize, a testament to his prolific career creating exceptional Queensland homes.

Perched atop a rock escarpment in the NSW Southern Highlands, **EA House by Bokey Grant (winner of New House Under 200 Square Metres)** is a sculptural lookout tower that paradoxically blends into its natural bush surrounds. Humbly sized and connected by bridge to the rock cliff face, EA House has masterfully overcome many technical restraints - flame zone bushfire rating, ecological constraints, energy requirements, geotechnical constraints and access - and does so effortlessly and sculpturally.

Recognised for its malleable design catering to a family with children on the verge of adulthood, **Hislop Hill House by Clare Cousins Architects** is a stunning and modern reflection of the adjacent architecture in the neighbourhood. A masterclass of flexible design, the home accommodates communing, working from home and privacy for an evolving family. It won the **New House Over 200 Square Metres** category.

House Alteration and Addition under 200 square metres winner, **Gore Street House by Olaver Architecture**, reinterprets the inner-city terrace as a calm, light-filled home offering occupants a layered and refined private realm. The jury praised the atmospheric and unexpectedly generous home that demonstrates how well-executed design can achieve richness without excess.

At the top of a 1930s apartment building in Sydney's Elizabeth Bay is the **Apartment or Unit** category winner, **Apartment on the Loop by Billy Maynard Architects**. The playful renovation respects its Art Deco unit heritage and reinvents the space with levity for its family of occupants. The result is a restoration where history and reinterpretation happily coexist.

Conjure in your mind a lone, vibrant toilet and shower block in the middle of the grassy hinterlands of NSW. This is **Magenta Outhouse by Atelier Marks Gaal (winner of the Small Project category)**. The project celebrates the ritual of bathing in the rainforest surrounds, and at the same time is a striking architectural form seemingly out of context. The result is a thoroughly modern, glistening take on the traditional outhouse.

The **Sustainability** category was taken out by **Gerroa House by Scale Architecture**. Situated on a steep, windy slope, the timber-clad pavilion is elevated on a steel platform, its recycled ironbark cladding weathering the rugged coastal conditions. Recycled timber, prefabricated elements, passive solar design, a small footprint and a thoughtful ecological repair strategy give this beachside home serious sustainability credentials.

Joint **House in a Heritage Context** winner, **Borland Crossman House by Wowowa Architecture**, is a restoration and adaptive reimagining of a Kevin Borland modernist gem in Melbourne. Adorned in vibrant primary colours, this renovation to a 1970's Australian semi-brutalist brick and timber project is an exemplar of heritage and sustainability.

For too many nations, there is a place where the traumas of history congeal as architecture. For Lutruwita/Tasmania, that place is Wybalenna, site of the colonial internment of Aboriginal Tasmanians (Palawa) – an Australian genocide. **The Homestead Renewal at Wybalenna by Taylor and Hinds Architects with The Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania (TAS)** is such a site of these atrocities, which has been given a thoughtful new life for First Nations people by Taylor and Hinds Architects with The Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania. This is architecture as excavation, a taking away in order to give back, making space for remembrance, reclamation and reoccupation. A worthy joint winner in the **House in a Heritage Context** category.

Billy Maynard Architects was named the winning **Emerging Architecture Practice**, recognising the quality, beauty and distinctiveness of their work. The jury commended their talent, creativity and appreciation of craft at all levels, citing their notable collaborations with local artists.

The winners of this year's Houses Awards were selected by a panel of residential design industry leaders and specialist advisors, who provided expertise in the sustainability and heritage categories. The 2026 jury includes:

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- Andrew Burges, principal, Andrew Burges Architects
- Zuzana Kovar, co-director, Zuzana and Nicholas
- Qianyi Lim, co-director, Sibling Architecture
- Michael Roper, director, Architecture Architecture
- Alexa Kempton, editor, *Houses* magazine, Architecture Media (jury chair)
- Christine Phillips, associate professor, RMIT (heritage advisor)
- Pippa Soccio, senior research scientist in building monitoring, CSIRO (sustainability advisor)

The winners and commendations will be available online from Saturday, 5 September 2026, across Architecture Media's online platforms. A gallery of the winning homes (listed on the following pages) is also on the [Houses Awards website](#).

For further media information, please contact Houses Awards publicist, Adam Valentine:

hello@adamvalentine.com.au 0411 302 769

2026 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



Australian House of the Year
Half Light House by John Ellway (QLD)
Photography: Toby Scott

Jury citation: Located on a ridge in Brisbane's Clayfield, Half Light House is an inspired response to the perennial desire for outdoor living. It finds inventive ways to respond to a common alterations and additions brief – to expand an existing home to better suit family life – turning the dual constraints of a sloped site and western orientation to its advantage, achieving a relaxed and inviting domestic world.

A key component in the brief was a shaded pool, visible from all living areas, and this has informed the organisation of the addition. The pool and deck – archetypal elements of the suburban backyard – have been pulled into the home's centre, bringing the activities of the garden into the building envelope. In an inventive spatial move, the deck is raised to shade the pool below it, enabling both spaces to be used independently. This strategy is well-suited to Brisbane's hilly topography and its stock of elevated houses, which often suffer from a lack of connection to the backyard.

In the addition, kitchen, dining, bedroom and studio spaces are connected by views through the void and between levels, creating a social home that allows the family to remain connected to one another while in distinct zones of the house. Modestly scaled new rooms borrow the outlook and volume of the void so that each space feels simultaneously intimate and expansive. All of this has been realised without compromise to the original cottage, the scale and character of which have been retained and restored. A limited material palette predominantly of timber ensures coherence, but a tonal shift from light to dark signals the transition from old to new.

Operable elements attune the house to changes in season and modes of occupation: external blinds block hot western sun, stacking doors retract to turn the dining room into a wide verandah, and full-height curtains cocoon the bedroom and studio.

At a time when the idea of a dream home is still too often associated with more, this spatially rich and atmospheric house has been achieved with an economy of moves that remind us of the transformative role of the garden in domestic life.

2026 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



New House Under 200 sqm
EA House by Bokey Grant (NSW)
Photography: Clinton Weaver

Jury citation: Situated in the New South Wales Southern Highlands, EA House demonstrates an alternate approach to the lightweight tectonic often adopted for rural and ecologically significant sites. Built from concrete and brickwork, the small-footprint structure is strategically and sensitively positioned on a rock escarpment, minimising impact on flora and fauna. The materiality and positioning further respond to the flame zone bushfire rating and the steep gradient of the land, on a site that had previously been deemed unbuildable. Externally, the house presents a strong and restrained form with elements of whimsy. The entry sequence – via an access bridge that carries all services back to the street – further minimises site disturbance, while allowing occupants to be immersed in the landscape prior to entering the cloistered interior. Internally, the house balances utility in the private upper level with material richness in the public lower level. This meticulously crafted home is an exceptional response to a difficult and significant site, holding multiple lessons for projects of this type.

Commendations:
Bank Street House by Prior Barraclough
House Rara by Berresford Architecture
OK House by Stephen Collier Architects

2026 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



New House Over 200 sqm
Hislop Hill House by Clare Cousins Architects (VIC)
Photography: Tom Ross

Jury citation: Hislop Hill House demonstrates a critically informed response to its middle-suburban context in conjunction with providing flexible spaces for a growing family. While the house's masonry form takes cues from the surrounding postwar brick housing stock, it also suggests an alternative to the more contemporary market-driven and over-scaled infill. A clever square plan with numerous courtyards is deployed to carefully manage privacy and natural ventilation, and to introduce green space beyond its typically peripheral allocation. Two further design decisions challenge convention: the front garden, void of a fence, is generously shared with the street; and the plan works with the topography, rather than against it, employing a series of terraced levels that step down toward Hislop Hill Reserve. Although these moves are not new, their combination in this context reveals a thoughtful and exemplary response. The rigour of the plan and section coupled with refined detailing and a strong connection to landscape illustrate what is possible on a suburban site.

Commendations:
A Courtyard House by Office Mi-Ji
Coopers Shoot by Polly Harbison Design
House in a Garden by Edition Office

2026 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



House Alteration and Addition Under 200 sqm
Gore Street House by Olaver Architecture (VIC)
Photography: Tom Ross

Jury citation: Mastering the terrace house renovation is a rite of passage for architects practising in cities such as Melbourne and Sydney. Common constraints inherent to the terrace include capturing light and air, offering privacy and instilling a sense of generosity within a narrow footprint. Gore Street House, an alteration and addition to an inner-urban terrace in Melbourne's Fitzroy, is a beautifully resolved response to these constraints, offering occupants a calm, layered and refined private realm.

Beyond the front rooms, a surprising inner world is gradually revealed. A double-height courtyard surrounded by glazing draws light into the core of the home, while split levels separate functions, allowing rooms to feel distinct despite their proximity. Circulation becomes an organising device: the stair sits beside the courtyard, set away from the walls, with open treads that disperse light and assist ventilation. The first-floor bedroom is a place of retreat, set back from the glazed courtyard to gift the dining nook a luxuriously tall volume bathed in light. A roof terrace extends the sequence upwards, capturing views beyond the bounds of the home. These skilful moves defy the site's dimensions, finding spatial inventiveness within a small footprint.

Atmospheric and unexpectedly generous, Gore Street House demonstrates how well-executed design can achieve richness without excess.

Commendations:

Giuseppe's House by Whispering Smith
Lilyfield House by Tribe Studio Architects

2026 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



House Alteration and Addition Over 200 sqm
Half Light House by John Ellway (QLD)
Photography: Toby Scott

Jury citation: Half Light House is a deceptively simple but spatially layered renovation of an existing cottage on a ridge in the hills of Clayfield, Brisbane. The design retains the existing front rooms while creating a new central court housing a pool as the locus of a U-shaped sequence of living spaces. The key move is in the resolution of the central court's cross section: recognising that the pool only requires limited headroom above for swimming unlocks a remarkably compact and striking spatial solution. This allows a generous deck to be positioned above the pool, providing a beautifully proportioned outdoor room while opening up views to the rear yard from deep within the interior of the house.

Half Light House also represents an inventive rethink of how to manage the challenges of late afternoon sun. While simultaneously providing control of sun through louvres, the spatial arrangement of the U-shaped living spaces allows filtered light deep into the interior spaces of the house, animated by the low trajectory and warm hues of afternoon sunlight.

Half Light House provides a stunning reminder of how a clear and innovative strategy can create a beautiful, atmospheric sequence of spaces and experiences within a compact and cost-effective approach that retains and re-uses much of the existing house.

Commendations:

Crescent House by Studio Bright
Darlinghurst House by Anthony Gill Architects
House Freddie by Studio Bright
Lane Cove House by Lachlan Seegers Architect
Stuartholme House by Nielsen Jenkins with Michael Lumby

2026 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



Apartment or Unit
Apartment on the Loop by Billy Maynard Architects (NSW)
Photography: Mary Gaudin

Jury citation: Apartment on The Loop demonstrates how a modest renovation can achieve a remarkable transformation through strategic and highly considered interventions. Taking advantage of its top-floor position within the building, the design has introduced new skylights to draw soft natural light from above – an unexpected luxury rarely afforded to apartment living.

With minimal reworking of the existing floor plan, the design works hard to organise and conceal the practical requirements of everyday life. Integrated storage and joinery reduce visual clutter, allowing the apartment to feel more generous and directing attention outward to views of the surrounding bay.

Moments of reflection across the ceiling plane of a bay window amplify natural light and connection to the landscape beyond. A restrained material palette of plywood, refinished timber floors and sanded stainless steel is balanced by joyful flourishes including a custom terrazzo vanity and soft furnishings by local artists.

The outcome is a home that is at once practical, characterful and attuned to its setting, demonstrating the transformative potential of a thoughtful apartment renovation.

Commendations:
103/1 Wilson Avenue, Brunswick by Neometro
Northcote Townhouses by Birthisel Wittingslow Architects, Studio Esteta and Carr

2026 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



Small Project

Magenta Outhouse by Atelier Marks Gaal (NSW)

Photography: Alex Brunton

Jury citation: From a distance, Magenta Outhouse presents an unassuming silhouette, like a small shed or drop toilet adrift in the landscape. If you were to stalk its periphery, its true nature might reveal itself in the delicate fold and tilt of its roof, perched like a shadowy bird of prey: the first clue that something out of the ordinary has landed. A toilet, a shower, a basin and a tub, out here in the middle of a field at the edge of a forest. A place for immersion, in body and in nature.

There is a modest simplicity to Magenta Outhouse that belies its sophistication. Materials appear to have been chosen for their play of light: absorbing, obscuring and reflecting. The toilet and tub are artfully separated despite their proximity, with deck and walls conspiring to force a small spiral of circulation between the two. Be it deck, roof, wall, pipe or basin, each element is clear in its purpose, contributing to an overall composition that is simultaneously relaxed and considered. The jury found this to be a delightful small project, demonstrating the capacity of considered design – even at the smallest scale – to create meaningful human experiences.

Commendations:

Arthur Street Restoration by Architect Guy Edwards

Rows End by Retallack Thompson

2026 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



Sustainability

Gerroa House by Scale Architecture (NSW)

Photography: Tim Clark Studio

Jury citation: Gerroa House is a compelling demonstration of sustainability through sufficiency – challenging the notion that environmental performance is achieved through more technology or larger buildings. Instead, the house is carefully sized at 100 square metres, embodying a philosophy of “just enough” living that reduces material demand, operational energy use and long-term environmental impact from the outset.

The dwelling integrates circular design principles, extensive prefabrication and a high proportion of recycled timber to achieve an exceptionally low embodied carbon footprint. Designed for disassembly and future reuse, the project extends material lifecycles while minimising construction waste. Operationally, it achieves net-zero energy performance through a fully passive design, rooftop solar generation, careful orientation and natural ventilation strategies, eliminating the need for mechanical heating and cooling systems.

What distinguishes this project is its regenerative ambition. The site has been transformed with more than 2,000 native plants, coastal habitat restoration, slope stabilisation and the integration of a productive food forest, so that it is now an active contributor to biodiversity and ecological repair. Occupants are directly connected to the landscape, resource flows and food production, fostering environmental stewardship and a deeper awareness of sustainable living.

Commendations:

Gingkin by Incidental Architecture

Tree House by ASA

2026 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



House in a Heritage Context (joint winner)
Borland Crossman House by Wowowa Architecture (VIC)
Photography: Sean Fennessy

Jury citation: Borland Crossman House demonstrates how adaptation can sustain the heritage significance of a modernist home while supporting contemporary family life. Designed by Kevin Borland in 1976–78, the house remains one of the most intact examples of his mature residential work and an important legacy of this Australian postwar architect. Its dramatic roof form, double-height glazed atrium, internal garden and expressive material palette exemplify the architectural language of Borland's 1970s work.

Through careful repairs, upgrades and additions, the new works improve environmental performance, resolve longstanding building issues and accommodate contemporary occupation, while retaining, repairing and extending original brickwork, timber linings, parquet flooring and the celebrated yellow kitchen. The project reflects a deep understanding of Borland's original design approach. Rather than imposing a contemporary overlay, the intervention reveals and strengthens qualities already present. Thermally upgraded glazing retains the articulation of the iconic atrium facade, while the extension of the curved dining bay accommodates contemporary living within Borland's original architectural language. The renewal of the rear balcony and adaptive reuse of the former mechanical room as a study reinforce connections to the internal garden.

The jury applauds a project that balances care, restraint and architectural ambition, ensuring this important work of Australian architecture continues to thrive as a lived and evolving home.

Commendations:
Forsyth Lane by Plus Minus Design
This is Lumeah by Pepper and Well

2026 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



House in a Heritage Context (joint winner)

The Homestead Renewal at Wybalenna by Taylor and Hinds Architects with The Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania (TAS)

Photography: Adam Gibson

Jury citation: At a time when Australia's built environment professions are confronting the legacies of colonial violence, The Homestead at Wybalenna offers a compelling model for engaging with post-settlement heritage and its complex histories.

Constructed in stages from the late nineteenth century, the homestead comprises a Victorian-era farmhouse, brick maid's quarters and kitchen arranged around a brick courtyard, with remedial works focused on a kitchen annex added in the early twentieth century. Set within the former Wybalenna Aboriginal Settlement on Flinders Island, the building occupies a place of profound significance to Palawa people as both an Aboriginal mission and a recognised site of genocide.

Rather than restoring the building to a singular historical moment, the project adopts a carefully considered process of subtraction. The selective removal of accumulated layers reveals deeper histories and strengthens the building's role as a place of truth-telling and healing. Salvaged and repurposed materials reinforce an approach grounded in environmental responsibility and care for Country.

In doing so, the homestead renewal demonstrates how heritage practice can move beyond the conservation of fabric alone to support truth-telling, cultural renewal and healing.

2026 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



Emerging Architecture Practice Billy Maynard Architects (NSW)

Jury citation: Billy Maynard Architects has demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of residential architecture across a range of project types and scales. Whether working on a new house, a renovation or an apartment interior, the practice consistently brings strategic thinking and a high level of craft to the design process.

Since 2022, three of Billy Maynard Architects' projects – House at Flat Rock, Tamarama House and Apartment on the Loop – have been recognised at the Houses Awards. Across this work there is a strong sense of invention and rigour in materiality and detail. The contribution of artists and makers to these projects also demonstrates a strong commitment to collaboration, reflecting practice director Billy Maynard's deep engagement with the arts, including his former role at Naala Badu (Sydney Modern Project at the Art Gallery of New South Wales), where he led the spatial design team responsible for interiors, exhibitions and artist commissions.

Alongside a growing body of residential work, the practice has also contributed to significant cultural project competitions, recently winning the NSW government's design competition for the Contemporary War Memorial in Sydney's Domain. It is evident that this breadth of practice is enriching across project typologies, and the jury looks forward to seeing these complex and collaborative projects realised.

Commendation:
Nuud Studio

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Houses is Australia's leading residential architecture magazine for designers and their clients. Houses presents inspiring residential projects by Australia's best architects and designers. These projects reveal the way that a house, through occupation, becomes a home – the architectural ideas, and the people and products behind them. Houses includes extensive pictorial coverage and engaging stories together with floor plans and detailed lists of the products used. It is the only residential architecture publication to carry endorsements from both the Australian Institute of Architects and the Design Institute of Australia.

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