

# HOME

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AWARDS  
*house of  
the year*

# Whatever may come

**The builders battled poor weather – and bad parking – to realise this house, writes Robyn Willis**

**F**or builder Jeff Towler, working on this four-bedroom Bronte house was the best of times. But in some way, it was also the worst of times.

With an attention to detail rarely seen on such a big project, the house is a culmination of dedication and hard work for Jeff and his team, which includes sons Dan and Tom, his nephew Casey and apprentice Brody.

But the exposed nature of the battle-axe site, which has commanding views from the Bronte escarpment, presented its own challenges. Architect Richard Cole designed a house using a palette of natural materials, such as timber, stone, brick, zinc and concrete. Lots of concrete.

## STORMY WEATHER

Getting the formwork right was hard enough. And then the rain started.

“We had record rainfall for Sydney that lasted for six to eight weeks during this critical period,” Jeff says.

“We used large tarps to cover the work during the night and when it was raining through the day. Once the rain stopped, we’d uncover the job, dry up any wet areas and continue to work until it started again.”

Jeff says it was not fun.

“It was the worst time of my life,” he says. “We have never experienced anything like it but we are so particular, we work rain, hail or shine to get the job done.”

The two-storey house has a central open-plan living, kitchen and dining area while upstairs, the timber-lined roof appears to float above the wraparound balcony.

## PROJECT

### Owners

A couple with two children

### Builder

Jeff Towler, Jeff Towler Building,  
jefftowlerbuilding.com.au  
Instagram: @jefftowlerbuilding

### Architect

Richard Cole  
richardcolearchitecture.com.au

### The brief

To build an energy-efficient house that takes advantage of the coastal views

### The site

A battle-axe block at the top of an escarpment at Bronte

### Design solution

A new four-bedroom, two-storey home with a double height living space and a canopy roof

### How long did it take?

Two years







*Best in State*



The use of timber, brick and stone ground this house into the landscape.

◆  
**"WE HAD RECORD RAINFALL FOR SYDNEY THAT LASTED FOR SIX TO EIGHT WEEKS"**  
 ◆

The house has been designed to open up or close down to the environment to regulate indoor temperatures and solar panels feed into a 10kW solar battery to supply electricity to the house.  
 The house also has a curved

wall, which was painstakingly crafted in brick.

"We used glazed bricks in the lower ground floor that chipped easily and dry pressed bricks for the higher levels that had very sharp edges that also chipped easily," Jeff says.

"They had to be carefully handled and we rejected many that didn't meet our expectations."

But for a boy from the bush like Jeff, the worst part was not even on site.

"Being from the bush, we're used to parking wherever we like," he says. "In Sydney, it was a nightmare."

