

# Inside

Ecologically responsible actions in the home can involve making a choice, changing something, leaving something as it or forming a new habit. All of these actions are motivated by an inquisitive approach to the way you live and the products you interact with. Nobody knows really how much harm is being done to humans by the assumption that available products on the market are safe to have in your home. It is worth considering these things. At the other end of the spectrum consider looking into innovations taking place in the way we manufacture products, and seeking out the pioneering companies using processes that are moving towards closed loop manufacturing cycles. Sustainable decisions can be as simple as opening a window or as complex as comparing the embodied energy in diverse products. These four topics explore some of these ideas.

## one

Energy-efficient lighting need not be expensive or complicated. When renovating or building consider that a single pendant light in the centre of each room, supplemented by table and standard lamps for atmosphere and task lighting, sufficed for many generations before us. LED strip lighting is an excellent way to provide task lighting under cabinets in kitchens and utility rooms.

Most of us have adjusted by now to the harsher light temperature of CFL and LED lighting compared to the warm tungsten light provided by incandescent globes. However, if it still seems like your house is lit up like the inside of a refrigerator you could effectively use shades to soften and diffuse the light. Look for warm-toned or textured shades made of materials such as coloured or opaque glass, warm-toned fabrics and woven, perforated or slatted materials like ceramics, timber and cane. These will act to diffuse the way the light is distributed, adding warmth and softening the overall effect.

## two

Of all of our furnishings our beds are the place with which we have the most contact. Beds can be full of harmful chemicals, either added to mattresses in the case of flame-retardants and anti-bacterial agents, or contained in the fabric components such as insecticides and pesticides. Mattresses and bedding also harbour dust mites, a common source of allergic aggravation. Natural latex mattresses are a good option as they are made from the sap from the *Hevea brasiliensis* (rubber) tree. Latex is naturally anti-bacterial, anti-fungal and hypoallergenic. Look for mattresses with organic covers in bamboo or cotton. Opt for slatted bed frames, which allow circulation under and around the mattress and turn the mattress regularly. Latex mattresses can last 20-25 years, are naturally warmer than spring mattresses and have excellent elasticity.

## three

As summer approaches it is time to begin passively cooling your home by active management. On very hot, still days this means keeping the interior cool by sealing and shading it from the outdoors. If you are out of the house in the day then keep your curtains and blinds shut. On hot days with a cooling breeze opening opposing windows and clerestory or second-floor windows encourages cross flow and passive stack ventilation. Most importantly, leave your windows open overnight to ventilate accumulated warm air from the home (this is especially important if your home has interior thermal mass). Try to think of your home as a ship to be managed throughout the day. Over the seasons these simple actions can make the world of difference to your comfort.

## four

There are an increasing number of surface products on the Australian market that are manufactured using composite recycled materials. They are made using post-industrial waste such as cork, stone, paper and glass, bound together with non-toxic binders to create a durable surface. The environmental benefits of these products are threefold. 1. They use fewer resources by making use of a waste product. 2. They divert waste from landfill. 3. They are sometimes able to be recycled again at the end of their use. As a bonus, many companies producing these goods also have a high environmental standard for their manufacturing processes. The best companies offer a take-back guarantee to recycle the product at the end of its use. Look for composite recycled products for use as floors, vertical surfaces and benches.

[ecobycosentino.com/australia](http://ecobycosentino.com/australia) (75% recycled materials)

[comcork.com.au](http://comcork.com.au) (70% recycled cork)

[fibonaccistone.com.au](http://fibonaccistone.com.au) (70% recycled stone)

[paperock.com.au](http://paperock.com.au) (60% recycled paper)

[kliptech.com-ecotop](http://kliptech.com-ecotop) (50% recycled paper)

[quarella.com.au-creastone](http://quarella.com.au-creastone)

