

A business built on PASSION, PRIDE AND PEOPLE

by Isobel Coleman



Pat and Petrina Ryan don't just build houses. They build dreams, aspirations, memories and relationships. In short, they build real homes.

While Ryan Designer Homes has won more than 40 prestigious awards for their work to date, that's not what drives them. And despite demand for their expertise, they don't plan on changing their philosophy anytime soon.

But there are some changes they will most definitely be taking on board. Known for their amazing high-end designs, they are seeing a shift in the market and this year will be offering design-and-builds from \$350,000.

"Our high-end designs will still continue to be our core business but we also need to respond to changes in the industry," Petrina said.

It's important people know that we are approachable and are not scared to come and see us!"

"With every subdivision now we are seeing changes to requirements and it's very important that we keep changing to meet those requirements," said Pat.

"Our focus is not just on building homes that look good, but designing houses that are liveable. That's at the core of what we do."

That subtle difference between Ryan

Designer Homes and project builders is something Pat and Petrina realised soon after moving to Australia from New Zealand in 1999. And it's a real point of difference.

"We had all these standard plans but we were not comfortable delivering them to people because they didn't really meet their needs or simply were not suitable for the clients land," said Pat.

"When you build a house it should meet all your needs and it should last. We build to the block."

And that means considering how the house looks - but also how it 'looks out'. For example, ensuring the home receives plenty of light and sun in winter. It's when things like that are overlooked, Pat and Petrina believe, that people sell up and look for a new home as light in a home is essential to feeling good.

"If a house has good bones, it can be adapted over time to suit the owner's needs. Houses without good bones end up being bulldozed and rebuilt," Pat said.

Pat and Petrina 'do business' well. They listen to clients, and to the industry, and they learn. In just the same way they refuse to get too big - because they don't want to lose that connection, that integrity, they have built a formidable team around them.

"Probably the two biggest things we have learned over time are that communication is paramount, and staff must have ownership of their job. Train

them well and don't stand over them," said Petrina.

"We have built up a very strong team over the years, a collaborative team. We focused on setting up a team able to deliver any product. And when we get a job we sit down as a team to discuss it."

Some members of the team have been with Pat and Petrina for 15 years, which is always a sign of a good business. Indeed, they still have the same bobcat driver and electrician who worked on their first job when they arrived in 1999.

And while they don't have a 'role model' as such, they continue to learn from others in the industry, meeting with other builders through various organisations. They describe it as a 'group of knowledge'.

It's a two-way street.

"We are getting to the point in our business, and in the construction industry, where we are putting back," said Pat.

For example, Pat is currently Chairman of the Sunshine Coast/Wide Bay Housing Industry Association committee and a representative on the Regional Executive committee. Petrina serves on the Master Builders committee for the Sunshine Coast region and, in 2012, was awarded the Master Builders Sunshine Coast Women in Building award.

Certainly both Pat and Petrina have the credentials! One of eight children, Pat decided to become a builder at the

tender age of three and has stuck to his plan ever since. He is a registered and very experienced builder and is well known with the industry for his commitment to high quality standards and clever, fluid architectural design.

Petrina has worked in the industry alongside Pat for over 20 years, initially purchasing a floundering franchise operation in New Zealand and turning it around to become one of the top building companies in Rotorua.

Both Pat and Petrina believe their location on the Sunshine Coast has a lot to do with their success.

"The coast delivers way above its size as far as awards go generally, so that makes the level of excellence higher. It's not a case of winning, it's about constantly pushing ourselves to raise the bar, to better ourselves, and that's better for our clients."

That focus on being the best you can, and giving back, seems to run in the family.

Sons Josh and Luke set up a business together and they, too, are starting to give back.

"I couldn't be prouder of them. Imend Phones has been going for two-and-a-half years now. They started off just

repairing phones with a small team and now are expanding and have started working with STEPS Group to assist locals and provide employment," said Pat.

Pat says they are all sports fanatics and, it seems, into good deeds, too, having twice built houses in less than 24 hours for fundraisers.

Pat and Petrina believe there are plenty of changes and challenges ahead, here on the Sunshine Coast and generally.

"I think there's going to be a lot of building on the coast and the challenge will be working with smaller sites, and we're happy to see those challenges.

We still have to create liveability, whether it's for a family, a retired couple, whoever," Pat said.

"We're also going to see more solar energy requirements and that's exciting. I don't know how long it will be until we are living off the grid but, in the next 10 to 15 years, we will see significant changes."

Petrina believes that major projects on the coast, such as the new hospital, do create jobs but they will put great pressure on the building industry for sourcing materials.

"Suppliers may have to outsource to find materials, and will have to be totally organised and well managed. We have that in place already so we are prepared," she said.

"We will continue to do what we do, but also offer more for lower budget clients, with homes starting from \$350,000.

"We keep ourselves where we are purposely. It's not our philosophy to keep expanding. We like to keep it so we know all the clients and know what's going on. It's about keeping everyone happy."

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