



Welcome TO THE SIMPLE LIFE

There are many ways to enjoy the 'golden years' of retirement, whether it's taking part in a new hobby or travelling overseas. For those who are a little more ambitious, adding technology to your home is another way to make the most of your free time.

As members of the 'baby boomer' generation farewell their co-workers and open up their superannuation accounts, they are usually looking forward to a well-deserved break and relaxing retirement.

To make this life more accommodating, one of the easiest options is to embrace the full potential of technology. And I'm not talking about the latest 'whizz bang' gadgets on the market; rather, I'm talking about the systems that can be installed into your home to save time and let you focus on what really matters – enjoying life.

For those who are planning to splurge a slice of their savings on real estate, there is a great opportunity to integrate technology into a renovation or new build. This was the case for a residence on the picturesque Whale Beach, tucked away on the central coast of New South Wales. It was built for a retired but active couple who originally bought an existing home that was located on the top of a hill overlooking the ocean.

The original house was built in 1972 and nestled well into its bush surroundings, but didn't take full advantage of the >



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of technology as well as controlling the different functions.

"The home theatre is located on one of the lower levels of the home, so if they're in the bedroom upstairs, they can walk over to the touch screen and see if the air conditioning is working in the theatres because they want to watch a movie.

"There were also quite a few blinds throughout the home and we have reprogrammed them to create individually-controlled blinds. This gives the owner limitless control over the blinds and increased privacy, which is something important in retirement."

Otherwise you can always look at the very top floor of the home (the owner's suite) which can be operated and secured independently from the main house. It consists of a living space, kitchenette, main bed, study and bathroom that is a welcome retreat for the couple after visitors or grandchildren come calling.

"It's terrific to be able to control our music, lights – everything really – from the one controller," the owner says.

"It's easy to use and our guests have no problem in running the system themselves. The home theatre isn't huge but we don't need it to be. Visitors to the house certainly love it!"

Now that the stressful and demanding job of being a doctor is behind him, the owner and his family can look forward to an enhanced lifestyle that will make their retirement enjoyable.

"When people build a modern home of substance, there is bound to be a lot of technology associated with it. Without an automation system, you will spend half of your life wandering around the house switching things on and off," Frank says.

"With home automation you have a central location where you can control all of those systems and know exactly what is going on – right down to answering the intercom at the front door from any room in the house." ●

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DRESS TO IMPRESS

If you have the luxury of living in a home with spectacular views and stunning architecture, it's important to make sure the impressive interior design isn't compromised with a truckload of wires and flashing lights from your audio visual equipment.

One of the easiest ways to keep your technology discreet and easy to access is through the use of a single infra-red (IR) emitter. This is the component that feeds an IR signal directly to the device you wish to control, whether it's a DVD player or the subwoofer.

It allows you to control all of your equipment from one remote, even if it's in another room, or the emitter can be configured to prevent interference from external IR signals.

This is the perfect choice for those who wish to keep their AV equipment hidden from view in a cabinet or wall unit and still have easy access to it.



Heated floors and sensor taps can all be operated at the touch of a button.
RIGHT: Imagine sitting on the toilet hot asised, while your feet remain warm in the cold of night.



beauty is the floor remains warm into the peak supply periods while utilising cheaper energy rates. From an energy management perspective, this system is in high demand."

Franks says it is rare for multi-million dollar home owners to say no to heated floors, as installation is easy. It involves stripping the floor, but it can be done to almost any floor surface.

Another benefit of bathroom customisation is the restrictions you can place on use.

"We have requests from clients who don't want the kids to have control of the exhaust fan. Kids walk into the bathroom and the exhaust fan comes on automatically. It means the room doesn't get steamed or mouldy. When the kids get older, you can show a bit more trust."

NO OCCUPANCY

Further to this, occupancy sensors are also changing the way we use the bathroom. Two distinct types of sensor exist: one is

movement, the other is occupancy. Movement sensors require movement to activate. When talking about lighting, this can be a pain in the neck. You don't want to be lying still in a bath when the light suddenly turns off. Occupancy sensors are a much better option. These sensors detect activity in a room, including noise levels and offer an extra level of control.

Lighting in the bathroom space can be programmed to a number of differing levels (scenes). These are then stored on the system and recalled at the press of a single button. The scene selected will depend on the anticipated activity in the bathroom.

When an occupancy sensor is introduced into this control equation the system will automatically activate a subdued "low" scene and maintain this for the duration that there is someone in the room. Upon exiting the room and the sensor no longer detecting any activity the lighting will simply switch off after a pre-programmed period of time – simple, automatic and convenient.

This is an ideal scenario for late night visits to the bathroom and when entertaining guests.

The intelligence of this system is in when a different scene is selected from the wall control panel the occupancy sensor is automatically disabled and manual control from the wall panel takes over. Pressing the 'off' button when exiting the room will re-establish the sensors auto operation – ready for the next time someone enters the room.

Auto mode works best when there are guests in the house. If you are entertaining, you have peace of mind that there will always be a light on for them and they are not fiddling with different switches when desperate to use the toilet.

Lighting is commonly featured in bathrooms. Some features include under bench lighting where kickboards are lit up, LED strip lighting, creating a non direct light in a low scene. If you are having a shave or applying make-up, you can even design a work scene to accommodate.

FULL INTEGRATION

As part of an overall smart home, many functions are integrated into the one system.

"You generally create a single button function at the front door to turn everything off," Franks says. "Systems can be disabled, so if you are going away on holidays and want to turn your sensors off, you can disable the bathroom by turning the system over to an away function."

This goes for all electrical systems in the house including floor heating beyond the bathroom, extending to living spaces terraces and balconies. It also extends to heated towel rails common in a modern home.

The control of the systems in a bathroom forms part of the overall system in the home. When renovating, you will need to consider rewiring the home.

TECHNOLOGY IN THE TOILET

Imagine waking up in the middle of the night and stumbling into the bathroom. Dim

lights switch on immediately; the floor heats up to warm your toes and a peaceful music ensures you remain half asleep. When you've finished your business, you wash your hands under an automatic flow of temperature controlled water, dry your hands on a warm towel heated by the towel rail and walk out with the lights switching off behind you.

Were you dreaming? No. You were taking advantage of the technology now available that makes your bathroom experience a pleasurable one.

Technology in the toilet is no bad thing, in fact a little bit of luxury in your own private Idaho is something we should all aspire to. ●

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SELF FULFILMENT

As people's lives become more hectic, it's the little things like taking a long bath that can help you relax. But, some people are too busy even for that.

London-based Unique Automation's Bathomatic is an automated digital bath filler that automatically fills a bath to a set level and temperature, adding bubbles and perfumes as required.

When filling, the water temperature in the bath tub is monitored and the temperature of the incoming water is adjusted to stay within predetermined limits. This compensates for water temperature losses through the walls of the bath and the ambient temperature.

Between baths, the system is fully drained to maintain hygiene levels.

The system is controlled from a small, wall-mounted touch screen user interface that comes with a white or black all-glass front, however it can also be customised to suit any bathroom design.

There are four configurations available in the Bathomatic product range:

- Bathomatic Basic provides an introduction to bath tub management. When the bath has been filled, water temperature is controlled by emptying small amounts of water and adding hot water. Its features include temperature control, water depth control, nine programmable presets and patented solutions.
- Bathomatic Eco is an environmentally-friendly bath tub management system. It incorporates an in-line heater and a circulation pump, which keeps the water at a constant temperature for any length of time without letting water out.
- Bathomatic Eco Ultimate has an added extra of four to eight fragrance dispensers. Every preset stores perfume and bubble bath and you can mix your own aromas which are dispensed during the filling process.
- Bathomatic Eco Whirlpool Ultimate is compatible with most whirlpool systems. Its additional features include an added whirlpool functionality and whirlpool user interface.