E90 - Key Mistakes to Avoid when Designing your Bathroom - Bathroom Design Essentials

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Hello everyone, and welcome to this episode of My Forever Home, the podcast, Bathroom Design Essentials season.

We are now nearing the end of this amazing season of bathroom knowledge, and I certainly hope that throughout the previous 17 episodes that you've been getting loads of information around how to design your bathroom. Today, I'm going to actually talk to you about key mistakes to avoid when you're actually designing and executing the creation or renovation of your bathroom.

This is actually a bit of a snapshot of what I went through in the five key co- that can make with your bathroom design webinar that I ran a couple of weeks ago. It, there has been amazing feedback on that webinar, and so I will run it again later in the year. Which is great. But for those of you who missed it, and for those of you who would like a snapshot of the key mistakes that you can make in your bathroom and how to actually avoid them, this is the episode for you.

And it's not gonna be in the same detail as what I had in the webinar. And of course, with the webinar, I'm able to visually show you some of the key concerns. And some of the key things that I see, the key mistakes that I see people make, and I was definitely able in that webinar to visually show you just what it ends up looking like.

And only yesterday was I on a Facebook group and I saw it was a disastrous vanity outcome for the lady that had posted it, and I felt so sorry for her. And she was basically on the group asking for suggestions on how could she rectify, and I suppose not pull it out and redo it, which was obviously going to cost her the most, but most amount of money, but how could she make do with the error that was made.

And and I suppose visually make it as appealing as she could. What had actually happened is her ... It's gonna lead me into the number one mistake what had happened is her vanity was actually built too short. So it was wall to wall on the top, and then all the cabinetry underneath the bench was there was a gap between the wall on the right-hand side of the, the vanity, and then there was a gap on the left-hand side, and that, that gap wasn't even the same distance.

So she had a big void underneath the bench on the left-hand side which was probably about 600 millimeters big, and then on the right-hand side she had another void that was probably around 300 millimeters deep. And she was asking for advice on what am I gonna do with this void. And that's actually gonna lead me to the number one mistake that I see people make, and it's one of those mistakes that people feel that they're going to save money by not getting the planning done.

And that is around internal elevations. And this is having your bathroom drawn up. Every, all, each wall is actually drawn up for you. And that will actually show you your cabinetry design, but it's also going to show you where all the fittings are going. It's going to give a roadmap for your builder. He's able to quote accurately.

It looks at the tile layout. It is in detail, if it's done properly, around where PowerPoints are going to go how thick is your bench top, have you got drawers, have you got cabinetry, whatever it is, have you got, ... And it is really going to guide the builder. He knows exactly what he needs to build.

But the beauty for you by having internal elevations is it means that you're able to view everything before it's built. You're able to make changes. You're able to discuss things internally with your family around do we want this like this or actually would we prefer it another way. So it means that all the heavy lifting and the thinking is done at floor plan stage rather than on site.

And some of the things that you may wanna change are not possible to change on site. And if they are able to be changed, it is gonna cost you a lot of money. Or you're going to end up with what I saw this poor lady end up with, and that was an absolutely less than desirable outcome. My heart just sank for her, that she'd obviously spent a lot of money.

She would've been getting really excited about having her new bathroom created, and it was far than less than ideal. So she'd sunk a lot of money in getting it built, but she also was going to live with an undesirable outcome, or either she would've had to rip the whole thing out again and get it replaced, which is super costly.

Or she was now looking at ways to, fill these voids in her bath- in the spaces, these cavities that were not meant to be there. And I looked at it and I thought, "This is the number one thing that she didn't do", and that was have internal elevations. Because you could go back to these drawings, and if it's not, if your builder is not creating what's in those drawings, you can have a conversation.

"This is what the drawing is showing. This is what we've agreed on. This is what you've quoted on and this is what the deliverable is." It's very clear. Now, what I see often happen is and I do this as, as

well, that clients will, wanna know how much is it going to cost to complete the elevations for whatever it will be for their home.

And they decide not to do it. They don't want to invest that money upfront. But what it really, what you're really doing is you're kicking that can down the road, because you are gonna pay that money down the track. You're either gonna pay for it in variations, or you're going to pay for it in big mistakes that you're gonna have to re- w- rectify.

Or you're gonna pay for it not only from a monetary perspective, but a, what this lady's doing, which is living with something that she really doesn't wanna live with. And what cost, what money, monetary value can you put on that? She sunk that cost. So this investment upfront, it's like having your you're paying for the architect, you're paying for your draftsman, whoever's doing your building design.

It's actually like saying, "I want you to build me a house, but I haven't got a floor plan." That is effectively what it's saying if you don't get internal elevations. It is part of the puzzle. And I, and I know people choose not to do elevations because they don't wanna pay for them. They don't see the value.

But you're going to see the value at the end When it's going to save you the time, the hassle, you're gonna have to be on site more, and a whole, and then the cost around. Yeah, as I said, you're kicking that can down the road by not doing them at floor plan stage. So if you can just think about, "Okay, I'm going to get my builder to build me a house and I don't have a floor plan."

That is what you're asking your builder to do by not having internal elevations. Now, I don't wanna talk about this for the entire episode, but there's one other thing I want you to think about, and I hear this a lot as well, and that is, "Oh, but I'm gonna meet with the cabinet maker on site, and we're gonna nut it out all on site, and we'll work it all out then."

That is also a recipe for disaster because really the opportunity with your cabinet maker on site is to go through the plans. You're doing a hard measure, but there's no heavy lifting at that time. The heavy lifting comes at floor plan stage in terms of the design because there's so many things that the internal elevations can pick up that at floor plan stage that you're not gonna be able to pick up or fix down when you're meeting your cabinet maker on site.

And I'll just use one example, and that is, and this happens with us a lot, and that when we're designing and doing the internal elevations, and that is just moving or adjusting a window. So because we're doing the design of the joinery and everything else in those elevations and in that space, we're able to see the impact of perhaps moving a window up or moving a window to the side or maybe making the window 20 meters shorter so that it either marries up with the cabinetry or we're able to get better storage in, or we needed to move the heated towel rail so that it met the regulations for it being away from a water source.

Now, you're not gonna be able to do that stuff on site. If the windows are in, 'cause that's when the cabinet maker's coming in, when all the windows are in, you will not have the opportunity to make those really significant changes that are going to impact what's happening internally. And that's the thing with internal elevations.

You're looking at all the things that can happen internally and before you start to build. So that's internal elevations. It really is the number one. So you might wanna think that it's an, you're investing a bit of money, but you're doing it for a reason. You're getting all that heavy lifting design thinking out before you actually start the build.

You get a better quote. You get a really accurate quote from your builder, which means you get a fixed price quote, and you're also able to sorry, the light's not very good. And you're also able to liaise with your builder, and y- his expectations are very clear. So definitely worth the investment.

Now the other one is a freestanding bath not being suitable for the space. I've spoken about this a lot in the when we were talking about baths in one of the previous episodes. But this is a mistake that I see people make, trying to sp- fit what I say a fair, a, a square peg into a round hole in terms of no, I really want that freestanding bath.

Oh, my goodness me, I just it's just a must-have on my list." And you jam it in because you really want that freestanding bath, and it really doesn't look right. And in the webinar, I was actually really able to show some just terrible scenarios of, let me just jam this, this freestanding bath into the space 'cause it's what I really want.

And actually, it's just a design compromise. It's not suitable for the space, and a hob bath would've just looked so much more streamlined. So really be mindful of the freestanding bath. T- think about how heavy it's going to be. Can, have you actually got the reinforced floor to be able to do it?

And just- Think about the cleaning, how much space you need around it. A freestanding bath to be to have the right aesthetic needs that that space around it for it really to look and be showcased. If you've got walls on either side of it that are, 10 mil or, 50 mil off, off between the wall and the bath, it's just not gonna give you the aesthetic that a freestanding bath needs.

But it's an expensive mistake to make because you're living with an aesthetic that you don't like. You're living with functionality that's not working because you can't get around the sides or the back of it to clean. And it's pretty costly, a freestanding bath. They're more expensive than a standard bath generally.

And so really make sure that the space can take a freestanding bath. The third one is inadequate storage, and boy, oh boy, do I see some amazing bathroom designs. Just magnificent to look at. But with my designer eye, I look at them and go my functionality eye because I'm function absolutely number one.

And I look at it and I think, "Wow, gee, that's beautiful. But how on earth are they gonna use that bathroom?" There is not an ounce of storage anywhere. There's no cabinetry. It's just a bench. Looks amazing. Very open and, you're showcasing a magnificent bench top. But there's no overhead storage, and it's so where are they gonna put their stuff?

How are they gonna use this space? So don't forego your aesthetic over the ability to store what you need to store in your bathroom. You need to work out what you need to store first to work out what sort of storage requirements you need, and never underestimate eye-height storage and just how much space and how much you can store at at that eye-height storage.

That really is the crème de la crème of storage in my view. So don't design a bathroom and forget about your storage requirements and have the aesthetic really dominate how that bathroom is going to look over the functionality that it needs to give you. Number four is lack of inadequate task lighting, and this is another one.

Think, "Oh, those materials are absolutely beautiful. It looks really beautiful," but gee, how on earth are they going to be able to put their makeup on or shave or do anything that you really need to do in the bathroom because the task lighting is not work- there. The inadequate lighting, the use of only down lights.

The the just no option to actually be able to really ramp up the lighting when the natural light is just not adequate in, early morning or late at night. So really make sure that you have got multiple light sources and the ability, as I always say with lighting, to dial it up and dial it down as you need to.

So that means you've got multiple light sources on dimmers, so you can really create that ambient lighting when you're having a bath or you just want a nice little light to come on when you go- when you get up in the morning, you don't want this glaringly bright light. You can just dial it down or you only had one light on rather than, you push a button and, six down lights come on.

You're just like, "Oh my goodness me, get me out of this space. I don't want all that bright light." You need to have a combination of multiple light sources on dimmers so that you've got very good light in, i-i-in front of your face. So that's an overhead light or it's lighting at the side. And then you've got other lighting in the space so that you create lighting in the room as a whole Number five is tile layout.

Oof, this is a doozy. And this is also where your internal elevations are going to absolutely guide you in terms of getting the right tile size, how's it gonna work in with your niche, how you're going to make sure that your niche is at the right height and in the right location to marry in with all the with- with your tiles.

I showed in the webinar what I just regarded as an absolute disaster of a shower niche because none of the tiles were meeting up with the niche. And it was very obvious that they hadn't worked out the tile layout before they'd actually created the shower niche. And what you need to understand with a recessed shower niche is that's actually framed out at frame stage.

How many people do I know have not even selected their tiles at that stage? So the builder is running blind. He's got no idea where to put the shower niche because we don't know what the tiles are at that stage, at frame stage. They're selecting those things later on. Where if it's all in the internal elevations and it's all been selected, which is how we work with our clients, everything is done before the builder starts, before you actually go to a contract stage with your builder.

Everything is known. So we know how big the tiles are. We know how many tiles up from the floor we need to meet the base of the shower niche, and how many do we need to come in from the side, and how many do we need to come in from the top so that we've got a full tile in that shower niche. But just a couple of things with tile layout.

You really need to have that on your internal elevations. You need to start with a, a, a full tile at the doorway, not a tiny little strip. You need to make sure that any strips of tile, small slivers of tile are actually behind the door or under a vanity or somewhere where it's a little bit hidden, it's not obvious.

One of the images I showed in the webinar was, h- a, a sliver of tile at the doorway. It just looks terrible. And they've gotta marry up with if there's other tiles going on at the doorway. They've all gotta marry and it's gotta be a seamless a seamless flow. You may actually work out when you're doing your tile layout with your internal elevations that actually I really want all my grout lines to marry up.

And it's like maybe I need to choose a different tile size so that I can achieve that. So this is where the heavy lifting is with your internal elevations. It's going to allow you to see the tile layout. You can see the tile extent as well and that is also part of the tile layout. Your builder knows exactly where you're expecting tiles to be and what the layout's going to be.

I'd always do a check on site as well. Talk to the tiler. It might be that you need to start left from right. You might need to start in the middle and then work out. But tile layout is really a an obvious finish in terms of it's done well or not so well, if it's a bit of an afterthought or the tiler's sort of gone for the easy option in terms of how he's gonna start the tiling.

So have a conversation with your tiler. And really good tilers are they are wanting to avoid these slivers of tile and and sometimes also if you're using with large format tiles, it may mean that you've got more m- more wastage based on getting the tile layout right. And so you can make a choice at floor plan stage whether you really wanna be able to do that, whether your budget can extend to that.

Because with larger format tiles you generally have larger offcuts and more wastage. All right. Number six is no ventilation. It's really important that you've got an openable window in a in a bathroom. And only this week was I doing a floor plan sanity check and it's something that I picked up on.

There was no window. We definitely want the natural lighting. That, that's one thing. We always would wanna opt for natural light coming into a bathroom. It's a beautiful way to wake up. It's a vista. You really wanna be able to get as much natural light into your bathroom as possible.

But you need that to be an openable window. You need to get out the moisture in the sp- in the room. Fresh air comes in. So definitely make sure that you've got ventilation in in the space. Having an exhaust fan is not really sufficient. And also if you're i- in a passive house where you have a sealed house, you're not gonna have any exhaust fan anywhere.

You'll have a HRV that's extracting air out. But nothing beats an openable window for all of those reasons. Now, with the floor plan sanity check I was doing where there was a skylight, which is also, an option if there's no other way that you can get natural light into that space.

And so the suggestion then was to make sure that skylight was openable and then also had a blind so that you can block that severe sun coming in summer. Just another another mistake that I see is having the toilet center of attention when you open the door to your bathroom. That is absolutely a design faux pas.

It's definitely a no-no. There'd be very few situations where that's not able to be changed, where that's not avoidable. But in, in instances, you absolutely should try to have your loo tucked around the back of the door or to the side. But you really don't wanna open up your bathroom door and wow, front and center is your toilet.

So definitely try and move that and not have it facing the door. Toilets are expensive to move. But when you're building a new house, you get that design right. Again, internal elevations are gonna sort this all out for you properly. Not just the fact that it will be on the floor plan, but how does that then work out with everything else?

Mixer inside the shower. Boy, oh boy, do I see this happen a lot as well. So this is where had to really educate a client around this. She was adamant she wanted that mixer right next to where the shower rail was finishing so that everything was lining up. And I had to really highlight to her that's great to look at."

Everything's on that one wall. She didn't want the mixer to the side. I said, "But that means when you step into your shower to turn on the water, you're going to get wet straight away, and it's gonna be cold." So you need to make sure that your mixer is actually at the side, so you don't need to step in the shower to turn it on, the shower space, to turn it on.

It's to the side. It's out of the shower so that you don't get wet. You wait for the water to warm up, and then you step into the shower. So that is pretty important because you don't wanna get wet, and you don't wanna get cold. So mixer outside of that shower space or definitely well to the side, not under the shower itself, so that you don't get wet.

So once I had that conversation with this client, she said, "Oh, yes, I hadn't thought about that." Again, this is going to be on your internal elevations. Otherwise, you may have a builder that says I didn't know where it was gonna go. I just put it where I thought it should go," and you've got no say then.

That is expensive 'cause the plumbing has already been put in at roughs, rough-in stage. The other one is, look it is worthwhile, and again, you'll have a conversation with your interior designer at elevation stage around your window treatments. Think logically. You wanna make sure that you've got

You don't wanna go and spend all this money on window treatments and then, they're not great in a moisture environment they're not easily accessible. So you need to think about that as well. So an example of that would be, over a bath, that you've got a beautiful window that's, over your bath, and it's a freestanding bath, and you've got this, beautiful vista out where you're lying in the bath.

But how are you gonna treat that window? For some people that are on a rural block, fantastic. You really don't need to have anything because there's no privacy issues at all. But you need to think about how you're gonna access and get over the bath to get to the window treatment to be able to pull it down, or do you wanna have, something that's permanent there, or do you have motorization so that you can just push a button and it goes up and down?

So think about this at floor plan stage. And when we're we're, ah, ooh. When we are working with clients right from the start, we are working out what all their window treatments are before the build has even started so that we know what the impact is. Do we need motorization, and all those sorts of things.

But it's quite expensive to put something in and then, it gets ruined very quickly, or you can't access it, and then you need to replace it. I mentioned this one just before with regards to ventilation, but you really need to make sure you've got natural light. You, you might wanna have, you may not wa- wanna have a window at eye height because of privacy issues, and you don't want a blind, and all those sorts of things.

Quite rightly. These are the conversations and d- the decisions you should be making at elevation stage so you can see the impact. But, there are skylights. You might have a highlight window that you can actually see the sky when you're having a shower. Beautiful. And that's also, y- you're seeing the clouds and everything when you're waking up.

So there are ways to get around it from a privacy perspective, mitigating having to use window treatments but still, being able to see outside. So they are some of the key mistakes that I see people make. They do end up costing a lot of money. Even worse, I think, is le- spending the money and living with something that is just far less than ideal.

Living with something that you know, "Oh, gee, if only I'd picked this up earlier," or, "Oh, gee, if only I had done those elevations and I could see the impact of these choices." Again, you're just kicking

that money down, you're kicking that can down the road. So it's all in the planning. You know it yourself just with building a house i- in itself is, such a big exercise.

So you just need to make sure that your planning is there and the detail is in the planning, the design thinking and heavy lifting is in is in that planning stage. And so that is what's going to mitigate so many issues And so many costly mistakes. So if you're looking for more information around bathrooms and so forth, there's lots and lots of information on the website with our blogs.

There's also information and i- in the media on the website as well, where I have written and contributed to many publications around bathroom design and some of the mistakes that are made. So there's lots of information and resources on the website for you. Later on in the year, we'll be opening again the beautiful Bathroom Design Made Easy on- online course.

That is now closed. We had a great response, and I know people are now busy going through that and creating their bathroom designs. So next week, I'm going to be doing a season summary, and then we will be at the end of Bathroom Design Essentials. What a season it's been. Don't forget, if you need to get in contact and book a chat to work out how we can help you, support you just, go through and brainstorm with you where we a- where we may be able to help you, book a chat with me.

You can get direct access to my diary by going to the website and clicking on the book a chat button at the top right-hand corner of the webpage. Have a great week, everyone. We are in lockdown in M- in Melbourne at time of recording. So yet again, we're here where we were last year. I'm so grateful that we can still serve all of our clients all over Australia just because we've got all our systems and processes in place.

And of course, I can still record all these podcasts and get them out to you and still serve the community that I have and still share the information and knowledge that I have. So that still warms my heart, and I'm still able to just get on with it business as usual. Have a great week, everyone, and here next week for you as well.

Bye for now.

END OF TRANSCRIPT

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