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Owners get a lift out of installing elevators in high-end homes

Installing a lift is a sign of building an affluent house.

ROBYN IRONSIDE THE AUSTRALIAN 2:34PM April 10, 2018

Once upon a time, a house with a lift seemed like the ultimate luxury for the super rich.

What could be more indulgent than stepping out of the car into an elevator to travel straight up to the master bedroom on the fourth floor?

But today, builders and lift companies say residential elevators are becoming almost a standard feature for homes and one of the top priorities for renovators.

Ella Brown, from Brisbane's Corella Constructions, says improving affordability and the desire to stay put in old age, is driving the demand.

"Gone is the time when it was a case of 'oh you've got an elevator, that's an opulent thing to have,'" says Brown.

"People are doing it because they don't want to move out of their Queenslander (house). They want access and houses are generally getting higher." She says manufacturing costs and technology has helped make lifts more attainable.

"We did a home recently whose owners weren't interested in a swimming pool but they wanted to put a lift in," Brown says. "They probably would've spent the same on the swimming pool if they put it in but they got exactly what they wanted and there are no issues when they get home with suitcases, or the groceries."

Residential Lift Company owner Peter van Emmerick says 12 years ago his business supplied about 12 lifts a year — now it's more like 300.

“They’re becoming very popular because they’re space-saving compared with stairs.”

“One of our lifts can fit into the space the size of a water closet or linen cupboard.”

Ranging in price from about \$30,000 to \$40,000, not including installation, Van Emmerick says lifts should be a feature of all highset new homes. “There is a steadily growing demand as people become more and more aware of the fact lifts are here to stay,” he says.



“They’re much cheaper to install in a new build than in a renovation, but still cheaper than a swimming pool and a lot less maintenance. We recommend an inspection once a year.”

The Lift Shop marketing co-ordinator Bradley Wood says the past two to three years had seen demand double as a result of the ageing population and people building more storeys on their homes. “Demand from the ageing population goes to all levels of the market but the three- to four-storey homes tend to be at the premium end, such as your Bellevue Hill, Mosman-type property in Sydney,” Wood says.

“We’ve put lifts into terraces, we’ve put lifts into any type of situation because all of our products are custom-built to suit.”

Affordability is also a big factor for the growing popularity of lifts with their prices starting at \$40,000, Wood says.

“They’re definitely more mainstream,” he adds. “It seems like 20-years ago ducted air conditioning was the main luxury feature in a house, but now it’s a lift.”

Installing a lift in his \$32 million Vaucluse mansion was a no brainer for cosmetic surgeon Jerry Schwartz even though the marble lined lift with rimless glass doors was imported from Italy and cost \$120,000, including installation.

“We thought our Loch Maree Place, Vaucluse, house was our forever house, we thought we would grow old in it so we decided to put in a lift before we got too old,” Dr Schwartz says.

“Also our cleaner found going up and down the stairs in our three-level house was burdensome for her.”

The lift cost about \$60,000, while its rimless glass doors were \$10,000 — the balance went to excavation and opening up the house to install the lift shaft.

Dr Schwartz previously installed lifts in his former Eastern Suburbs homes. “It’s probably a sign of building an affluent house, one wants to include a lift particularly if you have aged parents,” the hotel tycoon adds.

The Loch Maree Place house is on the market after Dr Schwartz paid \$65 million for CK Ow’s mansion, around the corner in Vaucluse Bay.

Additional reporting: Lisa Allen