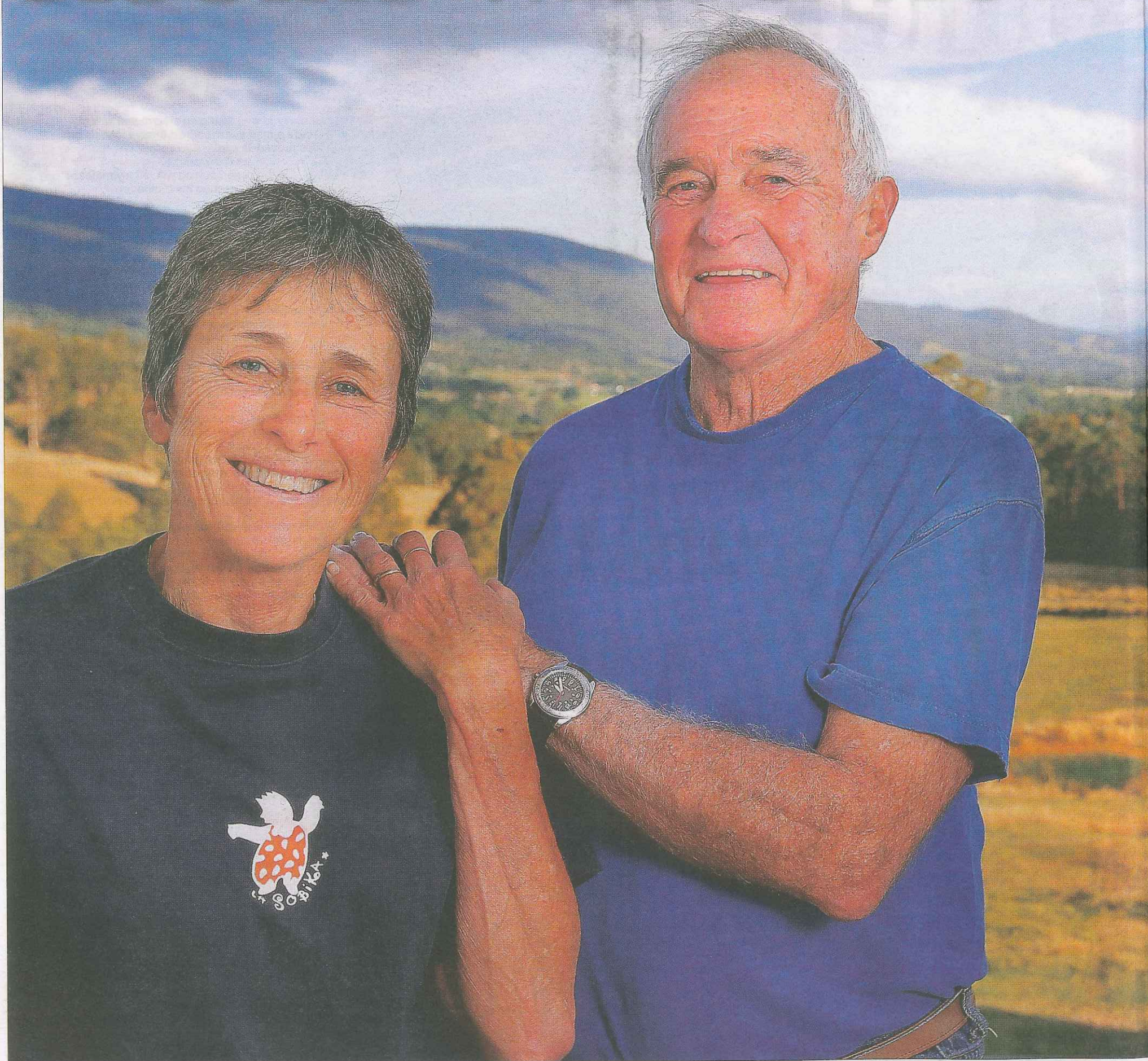
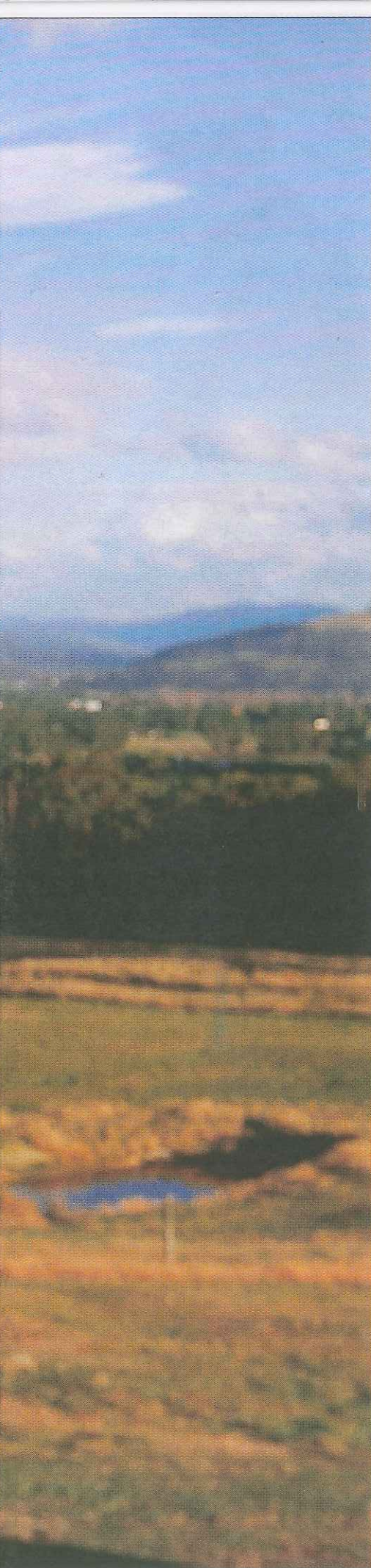


Rooms with a view



HILLSIDE HEAVEN: Jenny Skinner and Keith Dixon fell in love with the view around Crabtree during a trip to Tasmania from Adelaide and had their home built to take advantage of the scenery.



BLENDING IN: The couple's home, designed by architect Misho Vasiljevich, is a mix of weathering steel, concrete, corrugated sheeting and Tasmanian oak; below, the office space makes the most of the stunning vistas which first attracted the couple to the property. Pictures: LUKE BOWDEN / PETER WHYTE

A cooler climate and a breathtaking view were enough for this couple to up sticks from the mainland, as **LINDA SMITH** discovers

WHEN Jenny Skinner made the move from South Australia to Tasmania 18 months ago it was with some hesitation.

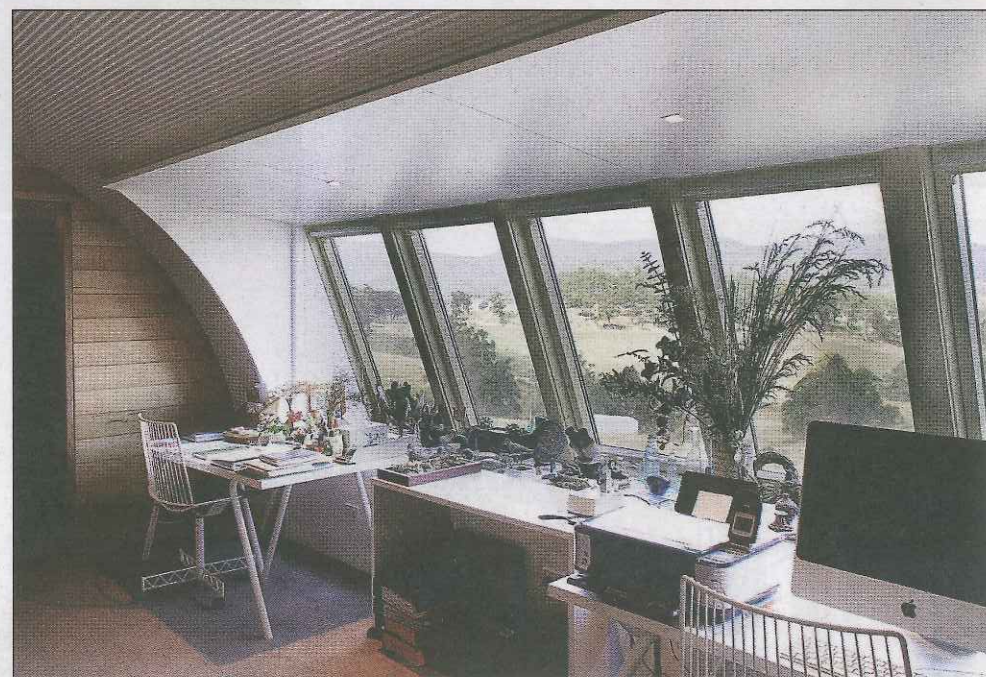
The retired research assistant was pleased to farewell the scorching Adelaide summers in favour of Tassie's cooler climate, but she was reluctant to leave her close network of family and friends.

As soon as Jenny, 64, and her partner Keith Dixon, 79, found a 2ha rural block at Crabtree and saw the striking environmentally friendly design Tasmanian architect Misho Vasiljevich proposed for the site, she knew she'd made the right decision.

The curvaceous home – a mix of weathering steel, concrete, corrugated sheeting and Tasmanian oak – was finished last July and Jenny and Keith have quickly settled in.

With personal touches throughout – rugs, timber chests, vases picked up on overseas trips or handed down from family members and collections of pinecones, shells, feathers and plant offcuts belonging to self-confessed “amateur botanist” Jenny – the home looks as if they have lived there for many years.

Listening to Jenny speak about her home, her new local friends and her affinity for the Tasmanian landscape, it's hard to believe she and Keith are newcomers to the state.



“We bought the land while we were down here on holidays,” Jenny said, explaining that one of Keith's three children already lived in the state.

“We knew the area, we loved the Huon Valley and we just happened to drive past here.”

“We turned the corner and I said, ‘Oh wow, look at the view,’ and then we saw a ‘for sale’ sign.”

They bought the land within a couple of days then decided to build a home that would make the most of the view and natural environment, while also catering for their needs as they got older.

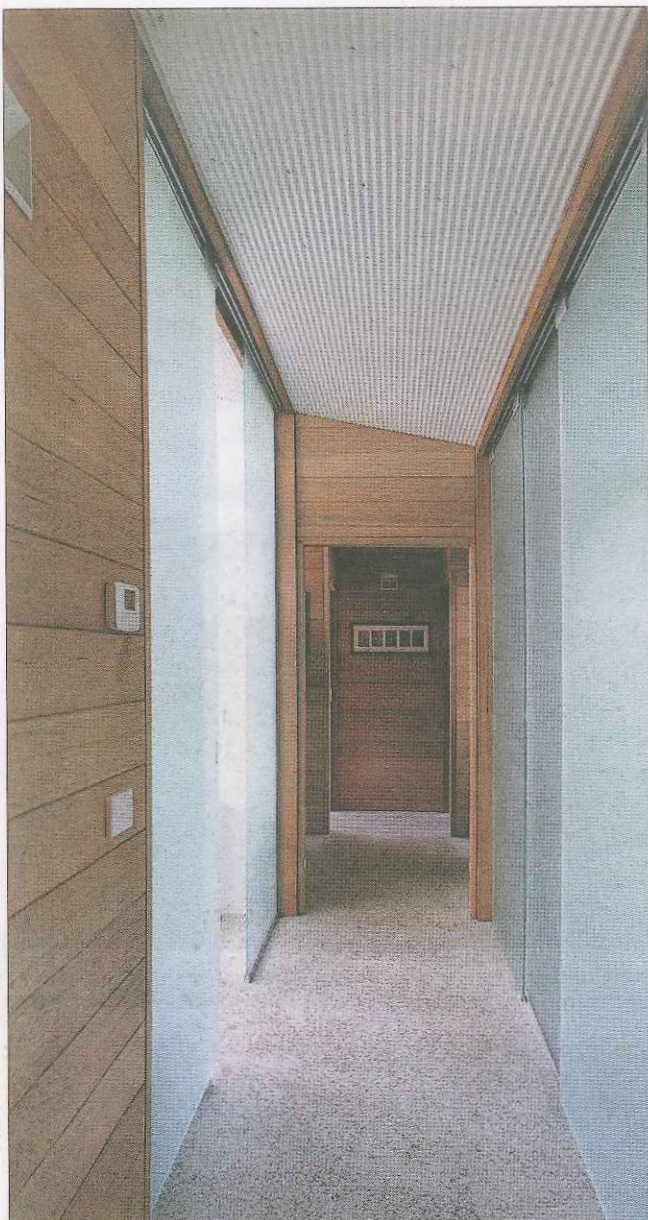
The house has two wings – two bedrooms and a bathroom at one end for Jenny and Keith and a one-bedroom guest

wing and bathroom at the other end, joined by a central kitchen and living area.

There's also a study for Jenny. When she's not collecting specimens from the natural world, she is in her study transforming her landscape photographs into greeting cards which she sells to raise funds for Landcare. Cuttings of lichen and moss sit alongside dried flowers, gumnuts, feathers, sea urchins and other items reflective of her love of nature.

“I just like bringing nature inside with me,” Jenny said.

Before retiring, Jenny worked as a research assistant in a biochemistry lab, which is where she met Keith, a former associate professor of biology, 37 years ago.



'OLD-AGE HOUSE':
Clockwise from above,
greenthumbs Jenny and
Keith have downscaled
their garden from their
Adelaide home; Jenny
is an avid collector of
feathers; large windows
flood the kitchen and
dining area with light;
and the home is divided
into two wings.





DOWNSIZING: The rock garden in one of the courtyards surrounding the home is a blooming ground for succulents and vegetables.

"This is our old-age house," explained Jenny, who, despite her early misgivings about Tasmania, now has no plans to live anywhere else.

Their top priority when designing the house was merging indoor and outdoor living spaces.

There are private courtyards off all the main living areas, while the bedrooms either have large windows to maximise the view or sliding doors that open into the garden – perfect for Jenny, who enjoys birdwatching from bed and listening to the croaks of resident frogs.

With windows in the bathroom, Jenny also enjoys nature views while soaking in the bathtub; in winter it is particularly impressive when there is a dusting of snow on the surrounding hills.

With curved walls and ceilings, timber accents, polished concrete floors and pops of red brightening up the fresh white interior, the home has a comfortable yet modern feel.

From the outside it looks far more futuristic with the shiny blend of metal and glass providing a stark contrast to the lush greenery of the surrounding countryside.

"We didn't expect it to look so unusual," Jenny said.

"But we loved [the design] as soon as we saw it."

The design stage took about a year, and the building work took another year.

Architect Misho's own home is located just across the valley in the Huonville hills so he could keep an eye on the construction progress using binoculars, to ensure everything went perfectly to plan.

Jenny and Keith, who rented in Franklin during the build, have utmost praise for the local designers and tradesmen who worked on the project.

The environmentally conscious home

captures maximum sun, has solar hot water and uses minimal power – important features for Jenny, who is president of the Franklin Landcare group.

The couple loved living in the foothills of Adelaide in a house they built 25 years earlier, but are pleased they escaped the heatwaves – Keith recalls a record-breaking swelter, which involved two weeks of temperatures above 35C, including some days that hit up to 46C.

They had a large garden in Adelaide which was once part of Australia's Open Garden Scheme, but are now enjoying having a lower-maintenance rock garden,

‘I've never seen a sky as big as this ... I could sit and watch the clouds all day’

with succulents, flowers and vegetables thriving in pots and raised garden beds constructed from timber and old car tyres.

Pumpkins, zucchini and tomatoes are among the haul harvested regularly from the vegie patch and gumboots are always on standby beside the back door.

When the couple are not in the garden or enjoying one of the many bushwalks nearby – Jenny loves collecting lace agate on the foreshore at Cygnet's Drip Beach while Keith enjoys a daily 4km return walk into Crabtree – they can often be found relaxing on the couch.

The lounge suite faces the windows,

with a small TV on a stand in the corner which can be wheeled into view when they get the rare urge to turn it on.

The couple say they would rather sit and watch the ever-changing cloud formations or admire the wallabies, bandicoots and quolls that call their backyard home.

Jenny is a Birdlife Australia surveyor and typically counts 40 different species of birds in the area each month.

"I've never seen a sky as big as this," Keith said of the expansive stretch of blue in front of him.

"There are all sorts of cloud formations in a meteorological sense, but also a lot of funny shapes ... I could sit and watch the clouds all day."

Jenny said the clear sky was yet another great thing about their property.

"What I like about this is that you're in the country and you have all this farming country around you but you don't have to be a farmer," Jenny said.

"You don't have the stresses of being a farmer but you get to enjoy this fantastic lifestyle."

"And all the local people are fantastic, too."

She said despite her initial reservations she was not regretting her decision to move to Tasmania. In fact a visit to Adelaide in January had her longing to return to Tasmania.

"I wasn't keen at first, but now I love it here," Jenny said.

"This feels like home now."

The Crabtree house has been nominated in the residential architecture (new houses) category of the Tasmanian Architecture Awards. To vote in the Tasmanian Architecture Awards People's Choice Prize, visit www.architecture.com.au/events/state-territory/tas-events-awards Voting closes on June 18