





ON THE *waterfront*

Incorporating electronics in a six level riverfront environment poses a number of problems, but there are ways to safeguard the integrity of the technology and help owners understand the necessity of integration in such a large abode.





Electronic equipment installed in any outdoor setting should carry with it an ingress protection (IP) rating wherever possible; this rating ensures the protection of the equipment from foreign forces, including water. In the case of the owners of an iconic Brisbane riverfront home that took eight years to complete and a commitment to a multi-million dollar budget, it was imperative they spend the extra money and properly safeguard their investment.

However the owners were hesitant at first and didn't fully understand how technology could make their life in such a large home easier. It took time to come to terms with the notion that integration at this level is akin to assisted living, which is imperative in larger residences, especially ones built to look like a six star hotel resort.

Custom installer Electronic Living was tasked with integrating all technologies into the home.

"This particular house has quite a substantial footprint in size to say the least," Electronic Living director Damian Cavanagh says. "The house was also built on the side of a hill, so there was a lot of groundwork needed from the outset of construction. Further to that the clients were meticulous, with every room personally designed to reflect a common theme."

Meticulous may be considered an understatement by some; the owners erected their own site office in the middle of the home in order to be on site every day, which

can sometimes pose its own complications.

"The residents had their own ideas about the way things should be done, which doesn't necessarily align with the way installations should be carried out. It's sometimes hard to express to owners the reasons why they should and shouldn't install a technology, particularly when they have never lived with this level of technology before. They didn't have any pre-conceived idea of how the technology would benefit them. So it took some gentle persuasion to convince them of how they could potentially benefit."

It was explained that in a larger style home, technology integration is as critical as your basic electrical wiring and plumbing.

"Without putting some level of automation and integration into a six level home or similar, it becomes very difficult for the client to look after the home on a day to day basis," Damian says.

"Even simple things like controlling lights, window fittings and general security, must all be taken into account. All these things are taken for granted in a normal size home, but without simplified control and automation in a very large home, living day to day would be very difficult."

Damian says the clients were initially reluctant to use technology, believing that any level of integration would complicate their desire for the perfect aesthetic. It meant the integration of all technologies had to be invisible or at minimum be complementary to the home's meticulous interior design.

"The most rewarding thing for our company was seeing the client's mindset change during the course of the project. Because we integrated and implemented the technology in small bursts over a long period of time, it meant our clients were able to find some comfort very quickly in what we had done and our scope broadened very quickly from that time on. We were able to integrate more and more technology as the project progressed level by level."

WATER IN THE AIR

Once the clients were on board with the technology, there were other considerations, including the installation of technology in what are essentially areas of the home exposed to the elements. It meant installing equipment that is durable and able to withstand the worst that Mother Nature has to offer.

Damian can't stress enough that if you are installing equipment into areas such as a riverfront and beachside environments, any outdoor and often indoor equipment should be IP rated wherever possible.

"All outdoor speakers, cameras and other equipment need to be IP rated, if at least to preserve longevity of the equipment. It prevents our company having to return every couple of years to replace hardware, which in the long term costs the home owner more unnecessary expense. This rule is often applicable with internal equipment also. We have found televisions in certain >





“The owners were hesitant at first and didn’t fully understand how technology could make their life in such a large home easier. Eight years later they couldn’t imagine life without it.” //





areas of the home where the room is often open to the outside can just as easily be punished by harsh weather conditions, the worst being exposure to salt air which will almost always initiate corrosion on rear terminals. Having said that, certain clients aren't willing to spend the additional money IP rated equipment, so they decide to install cheaper technology and accept the fact that it will have to be replaced in a shorter period of time.

"In the long run, however, the installation of IP rated equipment will be cheaper. In my experience it's worth spending the extra bucks."

As the residents of Brisbane also found out recently, living riverside can cause any manner of tragedy. Flooding in Brisbane caused a whole array of damage, including the wash out of communications rooms. It means the industry will have to look at alternative areas for installation.

"Honestly no one could have anticipated that Brisbane could be so devastated by such a flood, so it was never a consideration when designing systems for riverside homes," Damian says.

Fortunately for the owners of the property in discussion here, there was no damage; however other residents weren't so fortunate.

"We had ongoing projects in several homes during the recent floods. AV systems

and communications rooms were located in garage and basement levels, some completely submerged by flood water."

It means installers must ascertain whether the basement in a riverfront home is the ideal position to design a communications room where the crux of the lighting and AV systems are located.

"Moving forward if we think there is potential of a home being flooded we will now mention it during initial project discussions allowing the home owner to make an informed decision when choosing the most appropriate location in the home."

Electronic Living takes IP protection very seriously, particularly with outdoor AV equipment.

"We take a no compromise approach to speakers being outside especially when exposed to salt air. We always use IP rated products and extreme speakers to outlast the elements. Our company will always initially specify to that standard, and it's the client's choice to pay for that feature. If they don't, they are completely aware they may end up with speakers that form rust, salt calcification and look unsightly over time."

DO IT PROFESSIONALLY

When installing integrated technologies, or even just high-end AV equipment, it's important to have it done properly, particularly when you are installing into such

a large house as this six level 'resort'. Just like bringing in a designer to plan your home, an experienced integrator is imperative to correct installation. The integrator will carefully map out and engineer to meet the client's needs.

"The biggest thing these days is to install seamless equipment into the home," Damian says. "If you get to the planning stage early and deal with an integrator, what they can do is make the equipment disappear into the home and not become a prominent aesthetic feature. You can use invisible speakers or architectural speakers. If it's planned and prepared early all equipment should be seamlessly integrated."

The owners of the Brisbane riverfront home have been working with their integrators for the eight year build cycle. It has meant that the home has had to be 'future-proofed' to meet the specifications of changing technologies.

"The most important thing to do is safeguard the infrastructure and build redundancy into cabling infrastructure," Damian says. "Technology is changing, so we always provide a backbone into the home that will facilitate technology now and well into the future. We purposely communicate to the client that we are providing additional cabling outside of what would be considered as standard to enable future redundancy to protect their investment."



TAKE ME TO THE RIVER

The following are Damian's five tips to think about when adding technology to a riverfront environment.

1. Really think about how you will live in the home. Often with riverfront environments a lot of living is done outside, so we are frequently addressing entertainment needs inside and outside the home which are often one and the same. Outdoor theatre areas in pools and gardens have gained popularity in recent years and are worth considering
2. Plan. Think about these things prior to planning stage. Often with these projects, the integrator and technology are afterthoughts, so elements are added towards the end of construction. However, if everything is planned at the beginning you end up with a much better and often cheaper solution.
3. Spend the additional money and buy IP rated products for outdoor areas to enjoy longevity.
4. Whether it's a riverfront property or not, creating a system that is easy to use requires simplicity of control.
5. Always use a CEDIA certified installer. These approved installers have the credentials and the know-how to turn your dreams into reality.

The fact that his clients are no longer afraid of technology means Damian is able to ensure that he installs and integrates products that will last in and adapt to the environment in which they exist. It also means the clients can enjoy the technology and let it help them, rather than be worried that it could adversely affect their lives. Living by the water does pose problems, but those problems can be overcome by implementing the right equipment, no matter how long that takes, into the relevant environment. ☺

Jonathan Jackson

Installer

Electronic Living

www.electronicliving.com.au

