

# Better Homes and Gardens®

## THE MARKET

Australians read more magazines per capita than any other nation in the world. Since 1990 alone, more than 200 new titles have appeared in newsagents. With almost nine in every 10 Australians regularly reading one or more titles, it's not surprising that sales of magazines have climbed steadily in the past decade, making magazine publishing one of the country's boom retail industries.

Perhaps the strongest growth area in Australian publishing has been the Homemaker market with the number of Homemaker titles more than doubling in the past seven years alone. Much of the credit for this boom must go to *Better Homes and Gardens*, leader of the Homemaker magazine pack since launching in Australia in 1978. Successfully transferring the Homemaker ingredients which made it a publishing star in the US, *Better Homes and Gardens* is today part of the Australian landscape.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

*Better Homes and Gardens* enjoyed success with Australians from its inception, ranking among Australia's top 10 selling magazines since making its Down Under debut. In February 1995, the magazine made worldwide news when it launched its own half-hour show on prime-time television. Astonishingly, the show was produced by a magazine publishing company with no previous experience in television production!

The credibility of the magazine content translated well to the small screen. Viewers tuned in to watch hosts John Jarratt and Noni Hazlehurst,



(a real-life married couple and pair of well-loved actors) show and tell how they got the most out of hearth and home. They were joined by various editorial experts from the magazine who presented specific specialist segments.

The show, aired on commercial television on Tuesday nights at 7.30pm, was an instant success, enjoying the kind of ratings that make network executives preen. It was no surprise, therefore, when the show walked off with the Logie Award for Best Lifestyle Programme of 1995, 1996, 1997 and again in 1998. For the duration of 1998,

the show continued its popular run.

Sales of the magazine, meanwhile, soared by more than 50 per cent as *Better Homes and Gardens* went down in history as the most successful masthead publishing venture in the world. Today more than 40 per cent of Australians participate in the *Better Homes and Gardens* experience every month, either through television or the magazine.

The magazine and

television staff continue to sit side by side in their cross media teams. In every sense, the *Better Homes and Gardens* multimedia experience has been a watershed event in television, both locally and worldwide. "Having a prime time television show is evidence of how hot *Better Homes and Gardens* is," declared Murdoch Magazines managing director, Matt Handbury.

## HISTORY

In spite of a lack of celebrity gossip, fashion features, the perennial "Seven Ways to Spice up your Sex Life" and the absence of bodice-ripping fiction, *Better Homes and Gardens* is a mainstream magazine that continues to flourish as we approach the millennium.

It made its debut in the US shortly after WWI as *Fruit, Garden and Home*. Founder and publisher E T Meredith, who served in US President Woodrow Wilson's cabinet, had a clear vision for the magazine focused on creating the ideal home environment for one's family.

Meredith's magazine changed its name two years later to the *Better Homes and Gardens* we know today. The magazine went on to make history with several publishing milestones: 1923 saw the magazine's first recipe contest; 1925 its first DIY project; 1929 the launch of 'taste-test' kitchens; 1930 the title's first article on cooking for men (yes, men!); 1941 the magazine's first BBQ feature, and so on.

In Australia the magazine has enjoyed 20 years of successful operation with an unstinting focus on home, gardening, decorating, craft, food and DIY.

In 1991, after witnessing the success of service journalism in the United States, Matt Handbury bought the Australian publishing rights to two of the most successful publications of this ilk, namely *Better Homes and Gardens* and *family circle*, from Rupert Murdoch.

By the early '90s - as word of 'cyberspace' and 'information technology' began to spread - Handbury's multimedia dream for his successful Homemaker titles began to take shape. "Australians in the '90s are focusing on the home, and service providers like *Better Homes and Gardens* have never been more relevant," he noted.

Most importantly, publishers on both sides of the Pacific have never underestimated the intelligence of *Better Homes and Gardens* readers, aiming rather to nurture readers' spirit of home and family. The result is a well-loved brand that continues to grow in popularity and nurture Australians involvement in their home life.



**THE PRODUCT**

Abundant, involving, personal, affordable, achievable, empowering - these are the magazine's and television show's core brand values. Experts in their field share their passion for gardening, decorating, crafts, cooking and DIY with an inexhaustible enthusiasm and attention to readers' and viewers' needs. Armed with ideas and inspirations, people thus turn to the home for self-expression, creativity and harmony. With its clear manifesto to provide better ideas and inspiration, *Better Homes and Gardens* encourages and empowers people to revel in home, hearth and family.

At the core of the magazine and television show's editorial strength is a commitment to service journalism. This is a way of providing readers with ideas and information that will inspire them to action. Magazine and readers enjoy a two-way relationship based on reliability and trust. Handbury emphasises the importance of every editorial and television show staffer aligning his or her creativity and know-how with this purpose, to support the high involvement positioning of *Better Homes and Gardens*.



mission to get street kids off the street. Better Homes Farm, as it is known, is run by a charismatic priest, Father Chris Riley, whose mission it is to help a community of boys and girls overcome their backgrounds. Readers of the magazine are also invited to become involved.

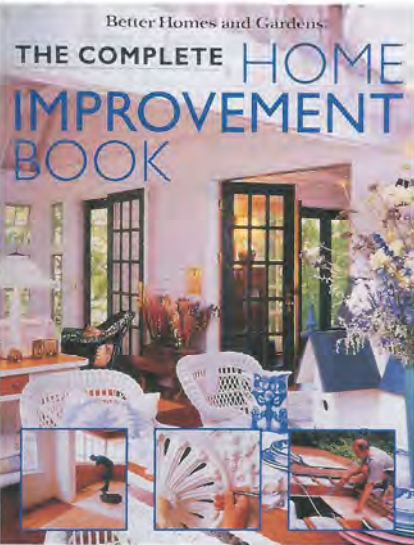
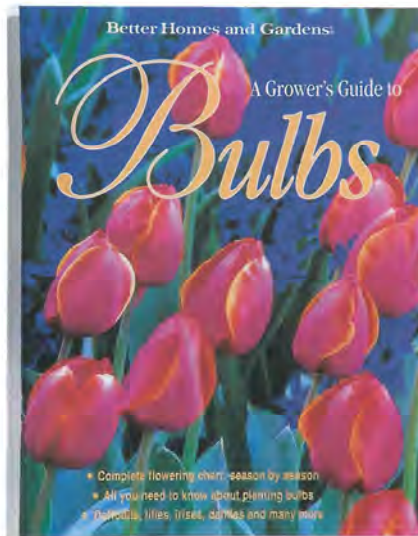
In fact, at Murdoch Magazines, "get involved" is the corporate credo. And for *Better Homes and Gardens*, this means getting staff and readers involved down at the farm.

**PROMOTION**

The strength of the *Better Homes and Gardens* brand has spawned many successful brand extensions. In Australia, big names are forming partnerships with *Better Homes and Gardens* to maximise marketing opportunities.

Increasing numbers of companies recognise and appreciate the strength of the title and the multimedia branding opportunities produced by its own television show. The Australian icon St George Bank, for example, recently paired to dramatic effect with *Better Homes and Gardens* in a Great Australian Homes Mortgage-Buster co-promotion.

*Better Homes and Gardens* continues to build on its commitment to home and hearth with



**RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**

An exciting new development for *Better Homes and Gardens* was the launch this past Christmas (1998) of a range of videos. Great as a reference for anyone keen about home projects, and selling for less than \$20 a piece, the videos were snapped up by all major Australian retailers and distributors.

The magazine has also led the way in developing ways to contribute to the community. In 1995 the Handburys, together with Meredith Corporation, bought a 100-hectare farm south of Sydney with a

collector books under its banner, including diaries, cookbooks, gardening, BBQ and DIY annuals and a host more.

In partnership with its sister title, *family circle*, the magazine also sponsors a popular Home and Family Show that tours the country's shopping centres, highlighting new home products and lifestyle developments, bringing retail branding opportunities for its magazine sponsors and advertisers.

**BRAND VALUES**

The magazine's philosophy is unwavering: "To serve people who have a serious interest in home and family as the focal point in their

lives, and to provide this service in the form of ideas, help, information and inspiration to achieve a better home and home life. Inherent in this philosophy is the editorial responsibility to move these people to action."

A recent Magazine Involvement Study found that almost three-quarters of the magazine's readers trust the information provided by the magazine. In addition, over 65 per cent of its readers believe *Better Homes and Gardens* is an active source of information.

**THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS**

- Down Under, almost two in five Australians participate in the *Better Homes and Gardens* experience every month.
- *Fruit, Garden and Home* was the original name of *Better Homes and Gardens* when it was launched in the US in 1922.
- In Australia the magazine's editor-in-chief has always been female, while in the US, the first woman editor-in-chief was only appointed in 1993.
- The Australian television show has won the People's Choice Logie Award for Best Lifestyle Program in the four years it has been entered, as well as an international award for its regular cooking segment.
- *Better Homes and Gardens* has published 250 issues since its launch in Australia and screened almost 100 hours of television.
- The magazine was the first ever in Australia to attach free seeds to its cover. The seeds appeared on the September 1986 issue.
- *Better Homes and Gardens* was the first magazine ever to be sold in supermarkets in Australia.
- In 1997, *Better Homes and Gardens* won the Special Interest category in the Australian Society of Magazine Editors for a special feature on "Gardens".