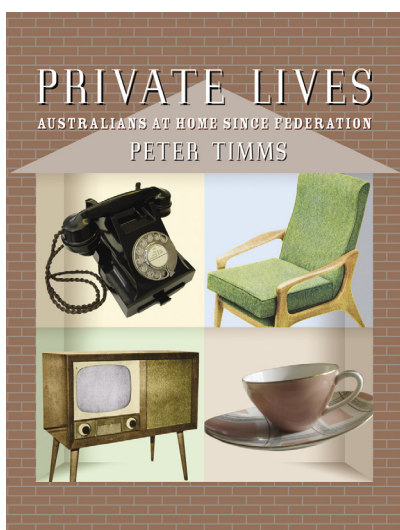


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**Peter Timms is available for
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**For more information
please contact
Jude Bourguignon on
0411 263 590, or email
jude.bourguignon@gmail.com**

PRIVATE LIVES AUSTRALIANS AT HOME SINCE FEDERATION

by Peter Timms

Starting at the verandah and the front door, Timms takes us on a room-by-room tour of the Australian home since 1900, tracing the evolution of furnishings and fittings, outlining the technological and social developments affecting layout and design and discussing the many ways people have organised their work and leisure activities over the years.

In *Private Lives*, Peter Timms details the changes that have transformed domestic life over the past 100 years. Privacy, security, comfort and happiness have always been ideals people strive for, yet what we think they are today, and the ways we try to achieve them, would have bewildered our grandparents.

No room is ignored. Five different kitchens are carefully reconstructed, from 1910 to 2007, to map the development of cooking equipment, the rituals of dining, and the revolution in women's work schedules. In the bedroom, Timms looks at everything from mattress fillings and the symbolic role of the bed to changing sex-roles and child rearing practices. The labour involved in doing laundry a hundred years ago is described in all its hair-raising detail. Plumbing, he says, more than electricity, television or computers, is the most important technological advance of the past two hundred years.

Beautifully illustrated throughout, *Private Lives* is witty, irreverent and inventive. Full of fascinating information and insight, it is a sympathetic, but not uncritical, look inside the suburban house that helps to explain why we live the way we do.

Peter Timms was born and educated in Melbourne and, from 1971 until 1988, worked in public art galleries and museums in Victoria and New South Wales. He has been a freelance writer since 1988, including periods as art critic for *The Age* and editor of *Art Monthly Australia*. He is the author of several books, the most recent being Australia's *Quarter Acre: The Story of the Ordinary Suburban Garden*.