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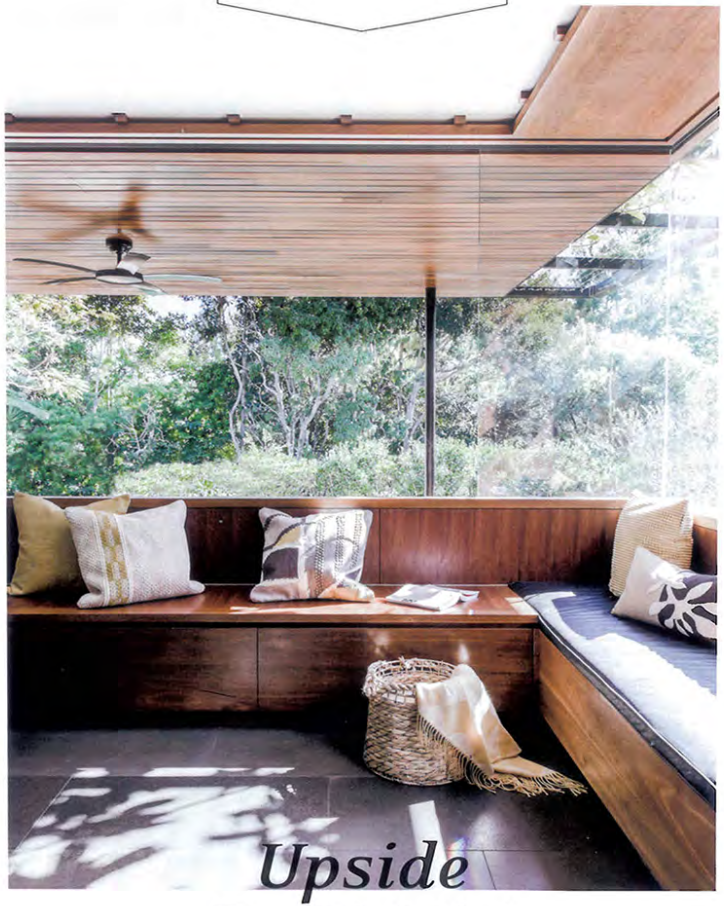
SIX HOMEOWNERS SHARE THEIR RENOVATION EXPERIENCES



Upside DOWN

This Queenslander renovation turned a home on its head – and opened the way for an arresting timber-on-timber interior.

STORY ***Rachael Bernstone*** | STYLING ***Kate Nixon*** | PHOTOGRAPHY ***Maree Homer***

DOWNSTAIRS LIVING Warm spotted-gum veneer meets the cool hue of bluestone tiles in this new social hub. Cushions and throw, West Elm. Fan, Light & Design Group.
BACKYARD Moving between the dining area and the garden is child's play for (from left) George, Agnes and Freddie thanks to frameless sliding glass windows atop a built-in bench. Landscape design by Arbour Essence. ***For Where to Buy, see page 224.***

FEATURE PLANTS

COURTYARD
Camellias
Pink rain lily (*Zephyranthes grandiflora*)
BACKYARD
Beehive ginger (*Zingiber spectabile*)
Tahitian lime (*Citrus latifolia*)
Zoysia japonica lawn

This is the life

Relocating the kitchen downstairs, removing the old U-shaped staircase and inserting an easier-to-navigate return staircase in the centre of the house were game-changers for this family. "Now the children just run straight outside to the garden," says Claire. "They can play outside while we're cooking or relaxing, and we don't need to take them upstairs to supervise them anymore."

DOWNSTAIRS LIVING *this page and right* Claire enjoys reading to her children in this open-plan space. Spotted-gum walls surround the fireplace, while the sliding glass windows overlook the garden. Chair, Freedom. Sofa, Domayne. Floor tiles, Eco Outdoor. Universal fireplace, Jetmaster. Cushions, throw and rugs, West Elm. Basket, Target. The cane rocking horse was a gift from Claire's parents. Flowers and foliage, Phoebe Stephens Flowers (throughout).
Smart buy: Martini aluminium side table, $199, West Elm.
For Where to Buy, see page 224.

Awaiting the arrival of their second child, Claire and Scott reluctantly acknowledged that their inner-city cottage could not comfortably accommodate their growing brood. So began the hunt for a new home. Five kilometres north-west of Brisbane's CBD, they discovered a traditional Queenslander with a large garden and pool that seemed ideal.

"We purchased the house thinking we wouldn't have to do anything to it, but when our *third* child was born, we realised it wasn't perfect," says Claire. "The kitchen was upstairs, so I had to pull the children away from the backyard to make lunch or dinner, which meant they had to play upstairs and indoors."

Claire and Scott approached Kieron Gait Architects with a view to making some changes that would improve functionality. "We went in with a fairly low budget, thinking it would be a small renovation, but our ideas began to evolve," says Claire. "We knew we wanted to live here forever."

Kieron and his colleague Leah Gallagher drew up a series of plans, incorporating feedback from the couple as the design progressed. "Claire and Scott didn't know quite what they wanted at the beginning, so we presented a range of options," says Kieron. "They were able to make informed decisions, and eventually we got to a budget they felt comfortable with."

At Kieron's suggestion, Claire and Scott contracted A.H. Done Builders early on, so they could monitor construction costs as the design developed. As ▸

Dulux Whisper White
interiors, ceilings throughout

Dulux Mid Brunswick Green
exterior trim

Dulux Green Alabaster Half
exterior

DINING *this page and opposite bottom* Bespoke spotted-gum joinery by William McMahon Cabinetmaker provides copious storage as well as a display surface. Manual ventilation flaps under the window seat admit cool breezes. Table, Commercial Road Antiques & Decorative Arts. Cushions and throw, West Elm. Pendant light, Zenith Interiors.
Smart buy: Nordmyra dining chairs, $58/each, Ikea.
KITCHEN Along the boundary wall, custom-patterned 3M film on the splashback window balances light, privacy and decorative visual relief. Electrolux fridge and Oliveri mixer, Harvey Norman. Stools and jug, Ikea. *For Where to Buy, see page 224.*

◂ this also meant they didn't need to put the build out to tender, the project was accelerated: it took 13 months from initial concept to completion, and the family moved back in time for Christmas in 2013.

On the first floor, the five bedrooms were overhauled and updated and the kitchen, dining and living areas transformed into a sitting room and study.

A new staircase - with a skylit void above - leads to a new open-plan kitchen, dining and living space on the ground floor. Taking inspiration from the spotted-gum flooring upstairs, the architects used the same species on the ground floor joinery, walls and ceilings. With its bluestone floors and expansive use of timber, this area now evokes the feeling of a cool, shady undercroft.

Renovation finished and their family complete - with George now seven, Agnes, five, and Freddie, three - Claire and Scott couldn't be happier.

"We work so hard during the week, it's nice to have somewhere great to come home to," says Claire. "This is such a beautiful place to be." ▸

Kieron Gait Architects, Morningside, Queensland; (07) 3399 5446 or www.kierongait.com.au. A.H. Done Builders, Paddington, Queensland; (07) 3367 8333 or ahdonebuilders.com.au.

Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.

'We really enjoy being at home here. Everything works and everything flows.' *Claire*

STUDY A wide passage adjacent to the stairwell contains a custom-made desk and wall-mounted shelves. A second-hand chair adds historical depth. Cushion, West Elm. Antique framed print, Priority Framing.
MAIN BEDROOM In this tranquil space, monochrome bedlinen injects restrained drama. Florence Broadhurst Japanese Fan bedlinen, David Jones. Bedside table, Theo & Joe. Lamp, Target. Carpet, Godfrey Hirst Carpets.
ENSUITE For a seamless effect, bluestone floor tiles have been extended to a nib wall that screens the freestanding bathtub. Custom mirror, William McMahon Cabinetmaker. Astra Walker Icon tapware, Winning Appliances. Towel, Aura by Tracie Ellis.
Designer buys: Duravit Durastyle basin, $1133, and console in American walnut finish, $715, Elite Bathware & Tiles.
TERRACE Shaded by spotted-gum ceiling boards and a vine-covered steel trellis, this paved area is a drawcard in all seasons. Timber outdoor chairs, won in a raffle by Scott's father, fit in perfectly. Sliding doors, Duce Timber Windows & Doors. Fan, Light & Design Group. *For Where to Buy, see page 224.* H&G

Before

Reno snapshot

Pivotal decision
"Allowing the vine-covered trellis to bring the garden into our living space."

Unexpected blow-out
Plans for a small renovation turned into a major project.

Where to save
"We saved money by buying similar taps in a cheaper brand than specified," says Claire.

Words of wisdom
"Everything was decided through consultation with Kieron and Leah. We did spend more than we'd intended but, on reflection, we're happy with that."

Favourite room
"The shady new downstairs living room. For 10 months of the year, that's where we most want to be."