THE COURIER-MAIL

QWEEKEND

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THE LONG DRY

AFTER YEARS OF DROUGHT, HOW DO THE PEOPLE OF THE WEST KEEP GOING?

BY
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BARDON . BRISBANE

When a young couple found a colonial home at Bardon, in Brisbane's inner west, they assumed it would need no renovating. Living in it for a few months proved them wrong, as the living areas were upstairs and they knew they wanted to spend most of their time downstairs, near the back garden. "The house was divided into the top and bottom floors," says one of the owners, "and they were operating almost independently."

The couple commissioned Kieron Gait and Leah Gallagher of Kieron Gait Architects to make the house more practical for their family of three young children. The architects embarked on strategies to "make the house feel as one" and to open the living spaces to the back garden. A large atrium and light well was established at the rear of the old home, incorporating the staircase to the ground floor. "There's now a view to the back garden as you walk along the upstairs hallway and look down through the atrium," says Gallagher.

Bedrooms and a wide living room occupy the top level, while a new kitchen, bathroom and living space have been inserted beneath. The downstairs rooms are surrounded by tall, frameless glass windows above banquettes that give what Gait calls a "letterbox view" of the garden beyond. Northern sunlight floods into the space from the side, and the western sun is dampened by the strategic use of a black stone tiled floor, reducing reflection and glare. The palette is soothing and organic, with highly crafted spotted gum cabinetry alongside black stone and steel.

Gait is careful to include fun and memorable qualities in his work, and here the bench seats are low enough for the children to jump off into the adjacent garden beds. Another playful idea is the inclusion of openable solid flaps under the bench seats, from which the children crawl in and out of the dining room at the pull of a rope, which lifts the flaps.

OPPOSITE PAGE THE AFTERNOON WESTERN SUN IS TEMPERED BY THE BLACK STONE TILED FLOOR, WHICH REDUCES REFLECTION AND GLARE.

THIS PAGE *(FROM TOP)* TIMBER FEATURES HEAVILY IN THE NEW LIVING SPACES, WHICH OPEN TO THE GARDEN; THE HOUSE'S ORIGINAL COLONIAL FAÇADE.

ONE STRATEGY WAS TO OPEN THE LIVING SPACES TO THE BACK GARDEN.

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