

STYLE WITH SUSTAINABILITY



Above: The north-facing ground level has floor-to-ceiling double glazing. Sliding doors merge the internal and external spaces. The external paved entertainment and barbecue area is framed with a recycled ironbark pergola.

Left: Textures, colours and materials, such as spotted gum timber, layer the finishes.

This slick coastal retreat ticks all the right boxes, reports **Sue Peacock**.

FOR 25 summers and hundreds of weekends architect Tony Baenziger and interior designer Sue Coles enjoyed their log cabin on the Bellarine Peninsula.

It provided the great Australian pastimes of fishing, surfing and swimming at the beach. It may have been a bit dark and dingy, but it was low maintenance, quiet and private, and on 900 square metres.

They renovated it once, before accepting the obvious. The family – that includes two teenagers – had outgrown the little kit home nestled among the gum trees at the end of a Point Lonsdale court. Besides, there were building complications.

“We decided to pull the old place down and start afresh,” says Mr Baenziger.

They saw it as a golden opportunity to build a house that showcased their architecture and design talents while meeting their long-term lifestyle plans. It needed to be big enough for relaxation and to entertain friends and family while also being sympathetic to the neighbouring, single-storey dwellings.

“We are interested in doing more

coastal work so we felt this could not only be a home but also a place to work from should we have more clients down here,” says Mr Baenziger.

They wanted a dwelling which emulated their ideals around sustainability and quality but wasn't ostentatious or “over the top” when it came to the surrounding streetscape. Its footprint is just under 300 square metres without the garage. They also wanted to use a local builder and local materials.

“In order to use the site efficiently, we needed to build a two-storey house. But we didn't want it to overshadow the neighbours or cause undue stress on them,” says Ms Coles.

So what do you do when you have a flat block, with no ocean views and neighbours on five sides separated by post and wire fencing?

“The main challenge was to make the footprint compact. We didn't want it to stand out like a sore thumb in the court,” says Ms Coles.

The building was carefully oriented to the rear of the wedge-shaped block to minimise its impact and outlook. The

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Architecture Houses



Spotted gum timber cladding creates a sense of warmth in the family bathroom.



Fixtures and fittings throughout reflect the streamlined quality of the interior.

From page 6 second storey was pushed forward to the north side, to stop it blocking the winter sun to their southern neighbour.

"This also gave us an opportunity to provide shelter, via the eaves, to a vast, north-facing, glazed ground-floor area," says Mr Baenziger.

A wall of glass runs along the entire ground floor, separating the main living areas from the outdoor meals and barbecue area and the garden.

Vertical glazed panels connect the internal partitioned spaces and provide views from one end of the house to the other.

Heavy, recessed timber sliding doors ensure the kitchen and living and dining areas can be closed off for privacy or for when only one section of the house is needed. Double-glazing and extensive insulation coupled with the sliding doors give it excellent acoustic capabilities. Unlike many holiday homes, this house has generous spaces and can accommodate a large group of people,

separating the children and adults when required.

Materials used include natural timbers such as spotted gum to clad the upper level and line the ceiling of the lounge area, ironbark on the pergola and screen door and western red cedar on the vertical batons (which act as sunshades over the upper bedroom windows). Split-face concrete blocks "bookend" the wing walls at the eastern and western ends



Sue Coles and Tony Baenziger.

of the house and provide a contrasting texture to the timber.

Random pattern Castlemaine slate forms the apron finish surrounding the house and as a pathway connecting the adjacent workshop and garage.

Some materials were recycled, including the stone used on the curved wall around the outdoor entertaining area. This was taken from the fireplace chimney and garden-bed walling of the previous house.

"It means there are some remnants of the old place still with us," says Mr Baenziger.

In other areas materials are chosen for their practicality. Tiles, including cork in the kitchen, are used throughout the ground floor providing added thermal qualities while being easy to sweep clean of beach sand.

Sustainable design elements such as the cedar louvre canopies – to control the direct summer sun into each of the upstairs four bedrooms – complement the more active energy and water-saving

features. Not that you can see them.

Ten solar panels are hidden on the north face of the three skylights on the roof and timber-clad blades on the western and eastern facades hide the eaves' gutters and conceal the mechanics of the rainwater harvesting system.

The skylights open to provide efficient chimney ventilation when cool summer breezes arrive.

"I call it 'sailing' the house," says Mr Baenziger. "It was a bit of an experiment and works brilliantly and quickly."

There are many hidden treasures, finely detailed surprises, artefacts and trinkets that have also been woven into the design.

They include the subtle use of mirrors, custom surfboard racks in the garage, an outdoor bluestone shower, an equipment wash-down area and a back door entry to the internal shower that has an integrated timber seat and wet-suit drying rail.

A totem pole was resurrected from

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Architecture **Houses**



From page 8 the old house and marks the entry, while beautiful Tyndall limestone – the bluestone of Sue Coles' hometown of Manitoba, Canada – makes an eye-catching plinth for the fireplace. Elegant bronze door handles came from New Zealand.

In the kitchen, Melbourne-based sculptor and designer Martin Hodge's metalwork is a striking feature on matching doors at the end of the island bench. "For us, it is really important to have artistry within architecture and these doors bring in an element of Tony's Swiss heritage," says Ms Coles.



Above left: Sculptor Martin Hodge's metalwork transforms the island bench to an artistic showpiece.

Left: The high efficiency fireplace has glass doors to the dining and lounge spaces.

GROUND FLOOR PLAN



DEALING WITH THE ISSUES

Sue Coles' and Tony Baenziger's friends and family were eager to hear about any mistakes or disastrous mishaps that occurred during the building of their beach house.

"They were very keen to know whether we encountered any setbacks and how we solved them," says Ms Coles.

The pair praised local Barwon Heads builder Nick Heyward, with whom they had an excellent working relationship, for quickly dealing with any problems.

"We specified everything in great detail before we began but nevertheless there were a few surprises, such as my 300 kilogram cavity sliding doors," laughs Mr Baenziger.

"I wanted them in spotted gum, which is heavy and durable. When they were made up, the specialist joiner remarked on just how heavy they were. I suddenly realised the sliding track we had specified wouldn't carry the weight, so we had to have a special sliding door track manufactured – and quickly."

They advise not to stick your head in the sand when it comes to "issues".

"If there is a mistake, admit it and address it, then find and act on the solution. We enjoy working with the builder, the trades and the client to collectively resolve issues; it is team work at its best," says Mr Baenziger.

He says the two main questions were:

WHAT SORT OF PREPARATION SHOULD PEOPLE DO BEFORE SELECTING AN ARCHITECT?

"Obviously the first thing is to have a project and, preferably, a brief," he says.

"If I was looking for an architect, I'd like to think that they had experience in the type of building project I was taking on. I would certainly look at the projects they have on their website and I would also ask for references from previous clients. After all, there is likely to be a lot of money involved. Local knowledge near the site can also deliver some advantages.

"Most architects will offer a free, no-obligation meeting to discuss a client's project to see if the fit is right between both parties. With residential work it is important that the architect and client/s can work together because [it involves] a very intimate and personal journey."

DO YOU FIND CLIENTS HAVE TROUBLE VISUALISING HOW A BUILDING IS GOING TO WORK?

"Some clients are better than others at reading plans and have an appreciation of space and scale. Others require assistance to understand and comprehend what we are proposing. Often we will construct simple massing models of our client's projects from cardboard. It never ceases to amaze me how excited they get when they see the models. It's as though someone switches the light on for them."

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