



HOME

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CROXTON



# SIMPLY STYLISH

An old house in a top spot only needed  
a set of fresh ideas to realise its potential.

There's nothing retro about the extension to this 1940s house: instead it is young and creative and refocuses the house to its large back garden.

When lawyers Kiersten Mulligan and Brendan Tobin moved from Sydney to a freer lifestyle in Newcastle they had the foresight to select as their first home a two-bedroom weatherboard house at Lambton with the benefit of a large, level 715-square-metre block. They bought for \$395,000. Now four years on and with two children, Gabriel, 2 and Oliver, 4, they last year spent another about \$250,000 (including about \$17,000 in architect's fees) to make their conveniently sited home perfect for a growing family.

Kiersten says the old house had "lots of little rooms" and a living area on the road side. While the front views were special, out to the garden and its abundantly flowering magnolia trees and the park beyond, there was the potential danger and some noise from the fairly busy suburban road.

"It [the changes] repositioned the house to the back," Kiersten says.

Before settling for the style of their extension Brendan and Kiersten did some research on the web and decided Shane Blue of Bourne Blue Architecture fitted their desired aesthetic.

"We like his coastal, environmentally friendly style," Kiersten says. "Things like the [outside] water tanks and lots of light and space. Quite simple, but stylish."

Kiersten says they thought about perpetuating the home's original art deco features and did continue the stepped cornices in the hallway. But in the new areas built of eco ply painted a grey-green they decided to go for a clean modern style. Old carpets were pulled up in the front and the cypress pine flooring beneath was given an attractive light modern finish with water-based polyurethane. New timber flooring in blackbutt continued into the rear extension.

Blue as director, his colleague Claire Lavis as project architect, and Liam Taylor, of Taylor Made Building, Kotara, created the changes that add about 50 per cent in area to the original house, making it a three-bedroom,



two-bathroom home plus a large study/ playroom or fourth bedroom. A new neutral-toned en-suite has been added off the main bedroom which occupies the former living area, a lovely space where the couple wakes to the leafy views. They had already updated the main bathroom, last revamped in the 1970s, and a third toilet has been included in the new laundry.

But the main focus of the 70-square-metre rear extension is a luxuriantly large and lofty open-plan living/kitchen/meals space.

The room opens to 50 square metres of covered terrace and the large backyard where the vegie patch is overflowing with a tasty but thirsty selection of plants which is making the couple think of adding to their

existing tank water storage.

Blue says the home's rear orientation to the west needed screening, hence the "fairly elaborate pergola structure [over the terrace] to shade and provide a functional outdoor space." Its translucent roof is propped up in the air so it gives more height to the space and helps ventilate it."

Inside the living area both the south and north-facing gable ends are glazed, giving a high leafy outlook.

The green splashback in the timber ply, white, CaesarStone and stainless steel kitchen echoes the spring-time colour of the bud burst leaves.

Matt white built-ins abound in the house, lining the hallway, in the bedrooms, in the

kitchen cabinetry and along the northern wall of the living area where the television is tucked away in a bank of cupboards allowing an attractive built-in gas fire vented to the exterior to be the focal point instead.

Light grey granite tiles on the terrace are Kiersten's only bugbear. "That's the only thing I regret," she says. "It's too light and shows the dirt." But for the rest, the transformed house couldn't be better.

**ABOUT FACE:** The renovation swung the focus of the house from the front to the back, with a new open-plan living space that opens to an outdoor entertaining area and generous backyard.

**PICTURES: GAVIN BLUE**



## FAVOURITE FEATURE

The raised roof over the west-facing patio allows air to circulate, rather than getting trapped underneath, which makes the outside entertaining area cooler in summer.

