



“We turned the kitchen around, put it lengthways and gave the owners an island bench and a better pantry space”

The streamlined kitchen is packed with storage and is easy to navigate from all angles.



THE SOURCE

- Builder** Structure Building, structurebuilding.com.au
- Joiner** Ethan James & Co 0419 911
- Stone benchtop** Architectural Stone Works 9709 4078
- Kitchen barstools** from KE-ZU, kezu.com.au
- Kitchen pendant light** Masson For Light, massonforlight.com.au
- Front door handle** Handmade in Tasmania from Interia, interia.com.au
- Timber stools in bathroom and walk-in-robe** from Design By Them, designbythem.com
- Kitchen splash back tiles** from Skheme Tiles, skheme.com
- Bathroom tiles** Teranova, teranova.com.au



Staying the distance

This family discovered that their dream home was right under their noses the whole time, writes **Robyn Willis**.

The owners of this semi-detached house had no intention of staying when they submitted their development application to the council. With two small children underfoot, their two-bedroom home on the 'wrong' side of the semi was woefully inadequate.

"It was very dark and the site is very long and narrow," architect Ricci Bloch says. "The clients had two young kids and a two-bedroom house — the baby was sleeping in the front sunroom."

The idea was to renovate the house and put it up for sale. Plans were drawn up and approved and the builder was engaged to start work in a couple of months.

But then they had a change of heart. "There was a change in the market so they decided not to sell and they would do the build to suit themselves instead," Ricci says.

Ask the expert

It was at this point that the couple realised they could do with some expert design advice and called in Ricci.

"They had already priced the job and had a DA approved but it wasn't documented," she says. "They had not planned to live in the finished house so they hadn't given the plans much attention."

"But a house like that needs really good storage when it's so compact and you need to think about how you're going to get light in."

The basic outline was to put a new level on upstairs with three bedrooms, including a main suite with ensuite and walk-in robe. Downstairs, the kitchen would overlook the northeast facing garden.

Rather than resubmit plans to the council, Ricci worked with what she had been given. "I replanned the house a bit to draw in light," she says. "We made it an open staircase, which really helped because the neighbour was on the north side of the semi."

"Skylights on the upper level draw light through." In addition to the bedrooms, the owners wanted an upstairs laundry, along with a family bathroom for the kids.

Downstairs, Ricci thought the original plans for the kitchen were not as practical for a family as they could be. "The most obvious problem was the kitchen. It was a U-shaped kitchen which wasn't good for this space," she says. "There are too many walls in a kitchen like that and you can't move through it."

"We turned the kitchen around and put it lengthways with the house and gave them an island bench and a better pantry space."

Waste not, want not Ricci took the time to detail the plans before work started so that no space was wasted. Because the budget was already fixed, she did some creative specifying to give the family a beautiful home that would not blow out costs.

"I didn't want to give them an entirely Caesarstone kitchen so I worked with my supplier to give them an off-cut of Carrara marble for the island bench," Ricci says. "It turned out he had a piece that was just the right size."

She also specified the more expensive polyurethane finish for the kitchen cupboards while the walk-in robe in the main bedroom

and the built-in robes in the children's rooms were fitted out in melamine. She then finished all the wardrobes with custom-made handles from MadeMeasure.

Ricci says it's worth thinking about ways to make the most of your budget. "You can still do beautiful things with cheaper products," she says. "We spent more money on those handles but they're beautiful."

The squeeze on space Ricci describes the joiner on this project as a perfectionist and the pair worked together to squeeze every last bit of space out of this site.

"We basically used every bit of possible space, working out clever spaces and making sure they had enough," she says. "I wanted to design a kitchen where they could hide everything away so we hid some structural elements and we used the excess space for shelving."

"People have nice things and it's good to have them on display because it adds to the warmth and texture." The palette is deliberately simple with tones of white and grey broken up by timber elements. A tile splashback and tiled bathrooms introduce some low-key texture.

Ricci says keeping it simple emphasises the space and light. "The key in a small project is to keep the palette really minimal because in small spaces if you introduce too many materials, it over complicates things," she says.

It's an ideal solution for a family set to enjoy their new home for a long time yet.

How long did it take Six months

Design solution Tweaking the existing plans and adding tons of storage

The problem A DA approved project that lacked detailed plans

The site A semi-detached house in Dover Heights

Owners A couple with two children aged five and two

Architect Ricci Bloch Architecture + Interiors riccibloch.com.au

PROJECT

Picture: Tom Ferguson



The open staircase (left) lets light through to the ground floor and has the original shared bare brick wall as a backdrop. Joinery in the bedrooms (above) was finished in melamine and then detailed with leather handles (left) to add a little bit of luxury.