

BEFORE



Backyard bliss

Space and light were vital in turning this small Sydney cottage into a bright, open and practical urban oasis

WORDS VANESSA KEYS STYLING STEPHANIE POWELL PHOTOGRAPHY NICKY RYAN

CBD living may hold a certain charm, but for Chris and Davina, the hustle and bustle pales in comparison to the blue skies, generous backyards and peaceful pace of suburban life. "The funny thing is, we never wanted to move to suburbia," says Chris, who runs building and interior design company ORBIS Development with his architect sister. "But after the birth of our first child [Alice, now six] we realised our tiny inner-city terrace just wasn't going to cut it."

When the couple ventured a little further from the city, they stumbled upon a wide-fronted, single-storey cottage in Undercliffe, a small suburb near Earlwood in Sydney's inner west. "The house ticked all the boxes: large backyard, double garage, single storey, open-plan kitchen and dining, and parks nearby," says Chris. "It had a country-style look and character, which didn't suit us, but we knew it was something we could easily change." Freshly painted walls and landscaping were first on the to-do list, as well as rendering the "awful" internal exposed brick walls.

But it wasn't until two years later, with the arrival of their second child, Oliver, now four, that the couple started to think seriously about making structural changes. "We have a constant stream of visitors, so a large guest room was a must," says Chris. "We also wanted a second family bathroom, an office space and a new master bedroom. Increasing the amount of natural light, improving energy efficiency and ventilation were also priorities."

They decided against adding a second storey, as they were mindful of their strict budget and didn't want to overcapitalise on the house. "Luckily, the block was huge, with 60 square metres of land to the side of the house behind the garage, which was mainly unused. We also wanted to remain in the house during construction, so adding to the side enabled us to contain the build," explains Chris.

"It was a long, lengthy process, but we couldn't be happier," says Chris. "We achieved everything we set out to, and even managed to come in \$25,000 under budget!"



Greener building Ever mindful of the environmental impact of their extension, Chris and Davina put an emphasis on sustainable building design. A 2kW solar panel system was placed on the new roof, and heating and cooling costs kept as low as possible with extra insulation in the ceiling space and walls. Ceiling fans, insulated glass and block-out curtains were also purchased. "We also installed a rainwater tank that connects to the garden's drip irrigation," says Chris. To limit landfill and stick to their tight budget, the couple sold or gave away all of their demolition materials and leftover building materials on eBay. "We even included timber offcuts for firewood, and old floorboards," Chris adds.

Parents' retreat
"The best part of the extension is lying in bed in the morning, looking out over our backyard," says Chris. "We love having our bedroom away from the main section of the house; it's brilliant having a place to retreat to and relax in, away from the noise of the kids."

Outdoor focus Minimal changes were made to the original living area and kitchen. "We wanted to go all-out with the bathroom, and we knew a new kitchen and living area would completely blow out our tight budget," says Chris. "The only thing we really wanted to do was increase the natural light, so we replaced the French doors with oversized bi-folds. This enabled us to open the living room completely and have an inside-outside space." >

November 2004
Chris and Davina purchase the 1890s cottage. In January, after settlement, they start on the easy parts: painting, landscaping and rendering the internal exposed red brick walls.

October 2006
Work starts on the backyard. A large deck with pergola, an in-ground pool and a manicured garden transform the yard into an urban oasis.

March 2009
Chris draws up plans for an additional family bathroom, office space, large guest room and a new master bedroom, and lodges a development application.

June 2009
Construction begins, with the shed demolished to make way for the addition. A new concrete slab is poured and brick walls built. By July, the internal walls, windows and roof structure are all in place.

September 2009
The plumber, electrician and tiler start work. In October, the home's rear doors are replaced with large bi-folds. This process starts at 6am and finishes at midnight to avoid leaving a gaping hole in the house overnight.

November 2009
With floors and joinery installed and a Christmas deadline looming, a painter is hired to finish the internal walls. Wallpaper and blinds are installed and the house is finished for Christmas Eve.



Master bedroom "We wanted the new master bedroom to be light and airy with absolutely no clutter," says Chris. Integrated built-ins provide plentiful storage, while sliding doors open to the backyard and let in ample light. "We chose sliding doors with flyscreens rather than bi-folds, as we wanted to be able to lie in bed at night and see the stars." A white palette, with just a few splashes of colour in Missoni cushions from Top3 By Design, adds to the feeling of light and space.



Clever nook The initial design of the master bedroom saw the bed centred in the room with a low-level partition wall and a walk-in wardrobe behind it. This would have limited the sense of space, so Chris moved the bed to an exterior wall and positioned the built-ins adjacent to it. To break the area up, the couple added a dressing table nook with a mirror and light.



Wet area Undeterred by the small space, Chris cleverly designed a 'wet area' in the new bathroom, which squeezes a shower and bath into the small space, separated from the rest of the bathroom by a low wall and frameless glass screen. "Instead of a shower drain, we installed a large grate between the wet and dry areas," says Chris. "This, along with the sloped floor, helps to catch all the water."



Wallpaper For the wall opposite the bed in the master bedroom, Davina chose a Rasch textured wallpaper, which brings a raw, organic element to the primarily white space.



Exterior: A hardwood deck, covered pergola and in-ground pool were installed.
Extension: The side of the house was extended to house a new master bedroom, guest room and office.
Bathroom: A bedroom was converted into a family bathroom.
Living area: Bi-fold doors were installed to connect indoor to out.



Bathroom light Positioned in the centre of the house with no external walls, the bathroom has been fitted with a large, remote-controlled skylight to provide light and ventilation. A crisp, clean colour scheme of sleek white and grey was chosen to open up the small space. "We used large grey tiles for the floor and rear wall, so when you stand looking in the mirror you see a continuous line of grey," explains Chris. Matching tiles in white were applied to the other walls for continuity.

*SOME COSTS ARE BASED ON OWNERS' ESTIMATES AND MAY VARY



Budget breakdown

Master bedroom
Bed: try 'Ashton' bed, \$999/queen, Freedom, 1300 135 588, freedom.com.au. **Floor:** Blackbutt Australiana-grade 85mm timber floorboards, \$53/sqm, Sydney Flooring, (02) 9755 1899, sydneyflooring.com.au. **Wall paint:** Wash & Wear 101 Advanced Low Sheen in Whisper White, \$63.90/4 litres, Dulux, 132 525, dulux.com.au. **Wallpaper:** Rasch 'New Authority' textured wallpaper, \$140/10m roll, Annandale Paint and Wallpaper, (02) 9519 4139, apwalls.com.au. **Wardrobes:** Custom-made wardrobes, \$8000, Carrera By Design, (02) 9816 3335, carrera.com.au. **Expect to pay: \$30,000 (includes building and materials)**

Bathroom
Basins: Paco Jaanson 550mm undermount basins, \$479 each, Cass Brothers, cassbrothers.com.au. **Bath:** Villeroy & Boch 'Oberon Quarryl' rectangular bath, \$1999, Cass Brothers. **Shower:** 'Waterslide' spin round 200mm shower rose, \$475, Rogerseller, (03) 9429 8888, rogerseller.com.au. **Tapware:** 'Logic' wall basin outlets 150mm, \$225 each, 'Logic' wall taps, \$265 each, 'Profilo Bloc' 150mm oval wall bath outlet, \$260, 'Profilo Bloc' wall taps, \$165, 'Tonic' rectangle shower mixer and diverter, \$358, all Rogerseller. **Tiles:** Casalgrande Padana matt tiles in Thassos and Linosa, from \$55/sqm, mosaic tiles in Carrara Bullets and Bluestone, \$33/300mm x 300mm sheet, all Classic Tiles (02) 9560 6333, classictiles.net.au. **Vanity:** Satin polyurethane cabinet in Dulux Whisper White with CaesarStone benchtop, \$5000, Carrera By Design. **Skylight:** VSE electric-opening skylight, from \$1910, Velux, 1300 859 856, velux.com.au. **Expect to pay: \$19,000 (includes building and materials)**

Outdoor entertaining area
Pool: In-ground concrete pool, \$30,000, Mirage Pools, (02) 9544 8222, miragepools.com.au. **Deck:** Grey ironbark decking timber, \$10,000, Danias Timber, (02) 9564 3434. **Solar panels:** 2kW solar panels, \$4000, SolarGen, 1300 676 527, solarpanelrebate.com.au. **Expect to pay: \$55,000 (includes building and materials)**

Contacts
Designer/builder: ORBIS Development, call (02) 9319 6633 or visit orbisdevelopment.com.au.



Complete works \$104,000*