

Family beach home is a shack no longer



Trisha Croaker

From the Drawing Board

For more than 20 years, Milton and Alma Roxanas welcomed family and friends to a modest two-bedroom fibro beach shack at Avoca Beach.

Surrounded by bush and towering eucalypts, the house was five minutes from the beach and the source of countless happy holiday memories.

With three young grandchildren and changing needs, the couple employed architect Eva-Marie Prineas, of Architect Prineas, to design a new retreat to suit.

"The brief was simple," Prineas says. "Our clients loved all the trees on site and wanted to feel that they were living in a really light treehouse. Importantly, while the shack's surrounds were now significantly developed, they wanted to retain the spirit of holidays spent in the original structure."

Prineas said it was important "to ensure the new house was an appropriate beach house, that it be relaxed, not too large and very much about being connected to the landscape".

It also had to be highly adaptable and responsive – to feel cosy with two occupants but flexible and generous enough to accommodate multiple families visiting together.

Her solution was to position the house along the site's top southern edge, where it camps over the original shack footprint, minimising disruption to the site and allowing much of the block to be regenerated by bushland.

She then went up, designing a compact two-storey, one room-wide home that gently turns away from the street and south to open completely to the trees and the north. Living and sleeping areas face the block, with bathrooms, laundry, storage and kitchen positioned against the southern service wall.

Floor-to-ceiling glazing has been used in all north-facing rooms and a finely detailed steel balustrade is wrapped around full-height windows allowing all openings to fully retract. Being inside feels like being outside among the trees. A large



deck and bridge to the street cantilever off the living area, heightening the sensation of being outdoors.

Materials and their treatment are deliberately simple and speak to the tradition of low-maintenance, relaxed beach shacks. Externally, dark fibre cement sheeting has been used to ensure a low profile from the street. Inside, warm white walls and blackbutt feature throughout, ensuring a light and open spaciousness.

This is a thoughtful, relaxed weekend that floats among eucalypts in a gentle, unobtrusive way.



Warm and welcoming ... floor-to-ceiling glazing has been used in all north-facing rooms of this Avoca Beach "shack", while inside blackbutt is a feature.

Photos: Brett Boardman