

# Shape shifter

A dark 1980s home emerges as a light-filled treehouse **10**



**Elements** Beach luxe **12** **Display** Champion Homes Capri **20**



## Renovate

### The brief

To open a dark 1980s home without having a major impact on the existing footprint.



### ARCHITECT

Eva-Marie Prineas  
architectprineas.com.au

### THE SOURCE

**Aluminium louvres** JWI Louvres, [jwilouvres.com.au](http://jwilouvres.com.au)  
**Blackbutt veneer on joinery** Briggs Veneer, [briggs.com.au](http://briggs.com.au)  
**Nook sofa** Jordan, [jordan.com.au](http://jordan.com.au)  
**Sinclair dining table and Tomoe chairs** Temperature Design, [temperaturedesign.com.au](http://temperaturedesign.com.au)



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# The space odyssey

A design rethink takes a family home in a clever new direction, writes **Robyn Willis**

There's an old rule about renovating that you should live in a house for at least a year before you make any changes. The theory goes that settling into the house allows you to see how it works, what its limitations are and how the light falls.

Given they had raised a family here, the owners of this house in Lane Cove were better placed than most to understand its strengths and weaknesses.

Once their chicks flew the nest, however, it was time to reconsider the house they had built in the 1980s and prepare themselves for the next stage of their lives.

The problem was they had lived in the house for so long, it was hard for them to imagine it any other way.

Architect Eva-Marie Prineas says the former kit home had a lot to recommend it, including raked ceilings and a mature bushland garden that gave the house a sense of permanence.

However, for those living inside the house, there was little connection with the leafy surrounds outside.

"It had high ceilings but the rooms were all divided," Eva-Marie says.

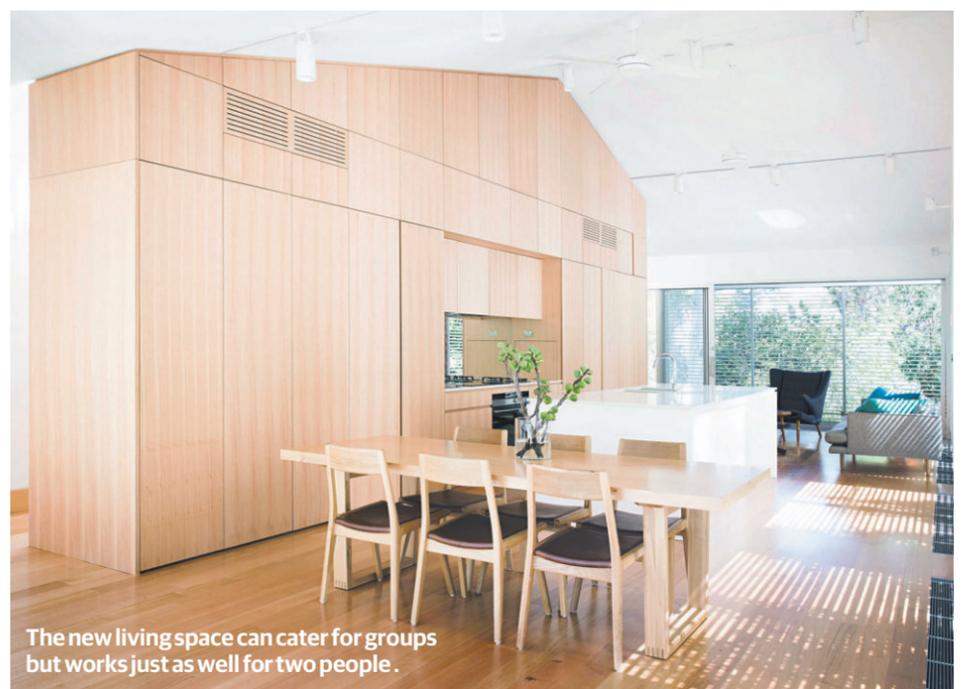
"It's a split level house with the main living area at the front and a study, plus a cramped kitchen and dining room.

"The kitchen was tiny and the dining room was tiny and they never used the living room because it was dark and cold.

"It was time for a change."

### Divided heart

The house operated almost as two separate buildings with the living, kitchen and dining level looking towards the street and the bedrooms to the side, accessed via a small set of stairs in a split level style.



The new living space can cater for groups but works just as well for two people.

A garage, laundry and rumpus room are positioned underneath the bedrooms.

The lack of light in the living area was largely due to the segmented nature of the rooms in the living area.

Eva-Marie's decision to remove the divisions to create an open plan space was pivotal to a new way of arranging the house.

"Instead of a series of walls that run parallel to the front door, we ran one wall in the opposite direction," she says.

"The wall separated the hallway from the living spaces so that part of the house became open plan but it was also a joinery piece for

the kitchen and the TV in the living area." Indeed, the divider has become the hardest working wall in the house providing plenty of open and closed storage.

It also smoothly integrates the kitchen into the open plan area, with an enclosed space for the oven and cooktop which faces on to the generous island bench.

### Simple complexity

Changing the direction of the walls allowed natural light from the large side windows to flood the space and, with the addition of blackbutt floors and matching timber veneer,



**Keep it simple**

The floorplan of this house has been simplified with the introduction of a single joinery wall that acts as the engine room for the living space. The old deck was replaced with new blackbutt timber that has silvered and elegant but robust steel balustrading.



the overall effect is a space that feels both larger and more comfortable.

Rows of louvres control how much light penetrates the space, depending on need and the time of day.

The wall is a highly detailed piece of joinery but the space appears simplified.

“When you are dealing with a house, you have to keep things simple,” Eva-Marie says. “You can’t make it overly complex.”

**Deck hands**

The living area at the front of the house now has an enclosed veranda with louvred windows while large sliding glass doors provide access to the indoors.

The dining space at the rear enjoys a natural aspect with a deck offering seamless access to the garden on the sloping site.

While the deck and veranda were already there, Eva-Marie says they were a little tired and in need of an update.

“The veranda and deck were falling apart so we replaced the decking with blackbutt that we’ve allowed to go silver and the balustrades are steel because we wanted an elegant look,” she says. “The louvres at the front act as balustrading as well so the lounge room gets a lot of light now.”

Eva-Marie says care has been taken to pull the garden into the house wherever possible, so that even the trunk of the mature gum tree in the front yard is framed by a large window at the end of the hallway.

“It’s a great advantage to have established trees because it takes years to grow trees like that,” she says.

“The way this house is designed, it is really bringing the outside in and strengthening that connection.”

Now the house is perfectly suited for the owners’ next stage of life, which is shaping up to be busier than ever.

“The house often has lots of people in it and it takes the numbers quite comfortably but often it’s just the two of them,” she says.

“When they are there on their own, it feels like their own little apartment.”

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Pictures Chris Warnes



The new light-filled living space at the front of the house has a private deck with louvred windows.

