

BLUE-SKY



ZONE

Creating space for new ideas manifested this warm, energy-efficient Melbourne home

WORDS SAMANTHA VAN EGMOND PHOTOGRAPHY MARNIE HAWSON STYLING BELLE HEMMING

CHEAT SHEET

Who lives here Maggie and Pete, along with their 13-year-old daughter and two sons, aged 11 and seven.

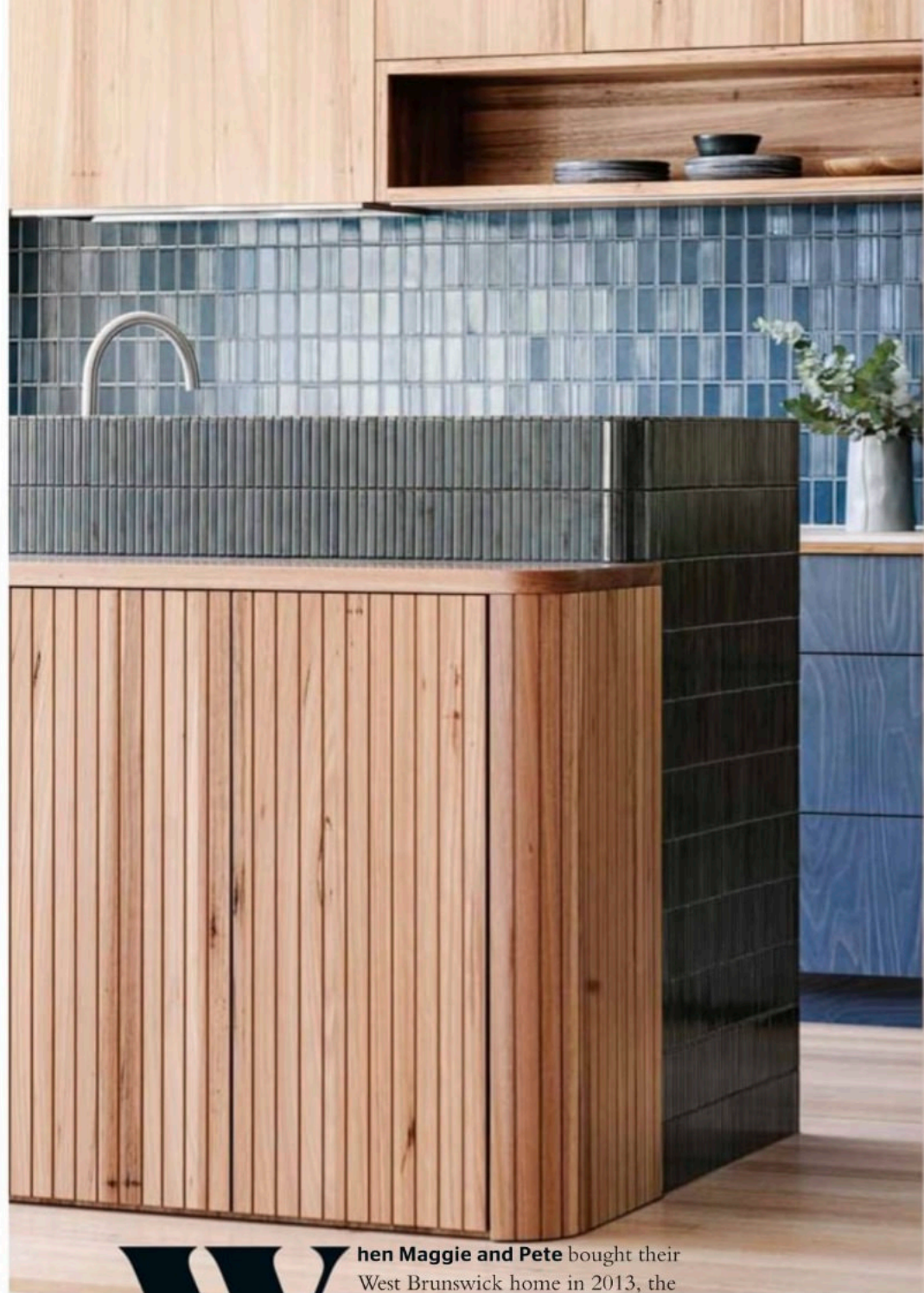
Style of home A double-storey Edwardian weatherboard that's been redesigned as a fabulous, functional family home.

Location Melbourne's West Brunswick, which is the traditional land of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

🕒 The renovation began in April 2021 and the family moved back in on completion in February 2022.



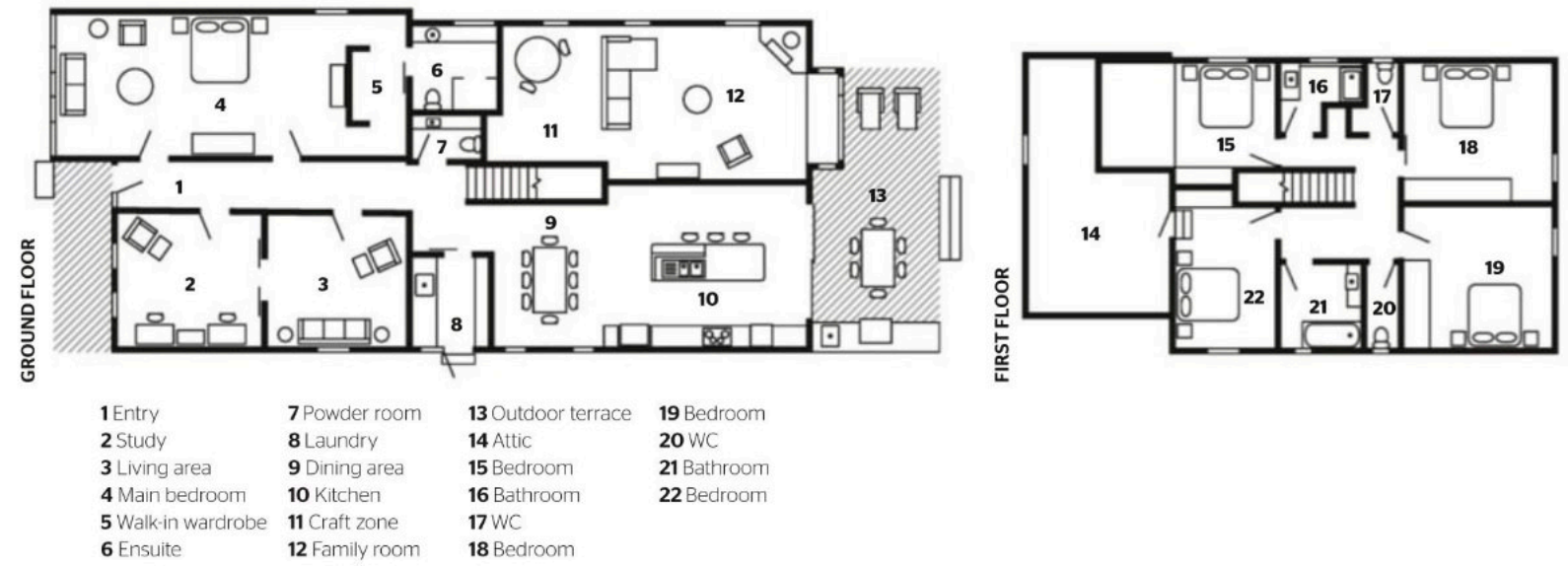
KITCHEN (both pages) "I was keen to have a blue kitchen, and I'd collected heaps of images of houses that I liked," says Maggie. "When I was showing them to Megan, it was clear what I was drawn to." To be more sustainable, the gas cooker was replaced with a Fisher & Paykel induction cooktop, and there are new BINQ double-glazed windows in the space. The original hardwood floors were sanded and resealed. Eco-certified timber veneer was used for the upper cabinets and hardwood for the bench, both in blackbutt. Smoked Birchply laminate in Natural on rear cupboards, Laminex, Nagara gloss mosaics in Dark Blue, Tiento Tiles. Miele appliances, pre-existing.

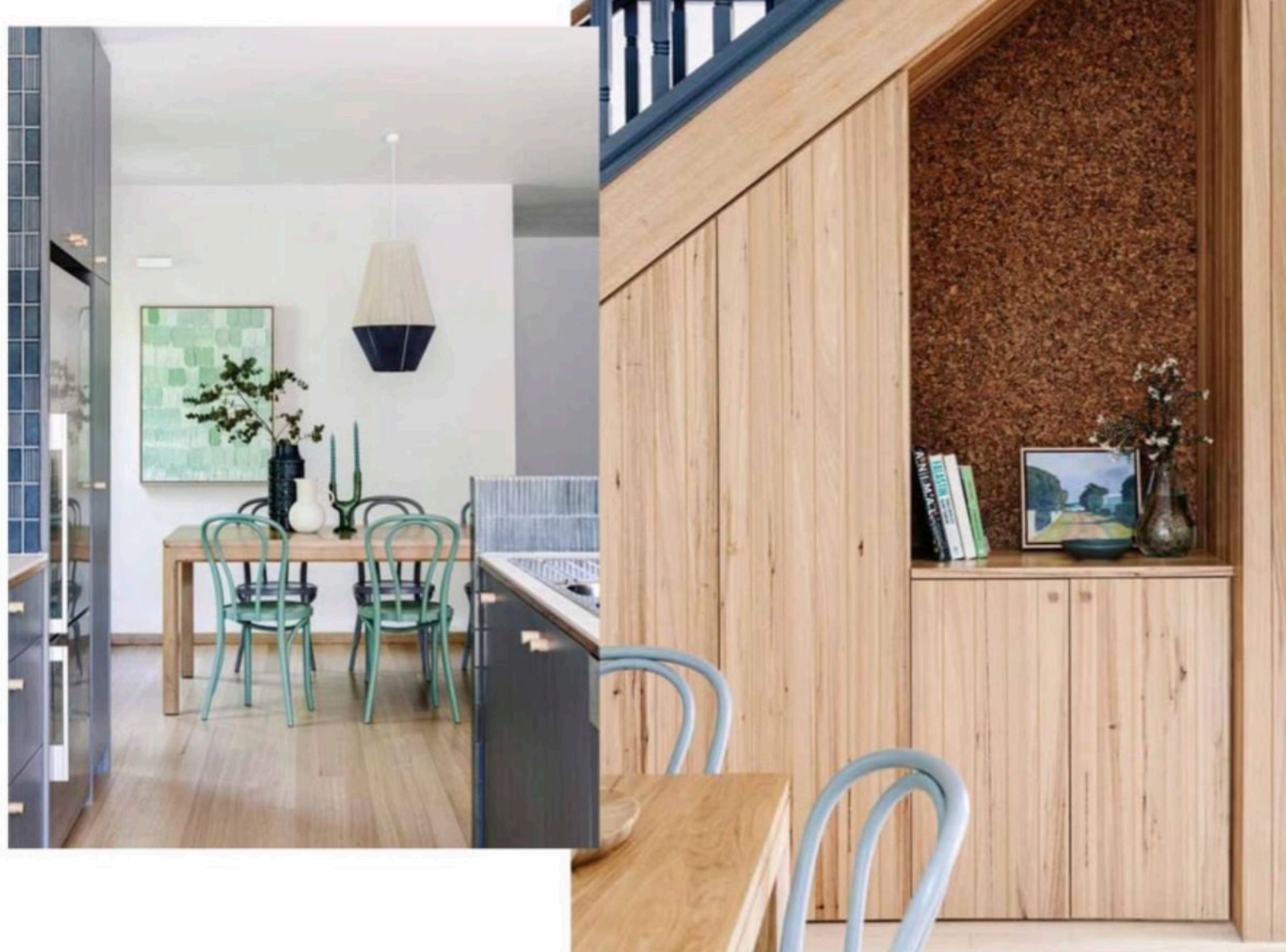


FAMILY ROOM "The glazing almost makes you feel like you're outside," says Maggie. She found the material for the window-seat cushion very early on, which informed the other blues and greens in the home. A projector screen hidden in the ceiling above the bay window drops down to transform the space into an entertainment area, eliminating the need for a TV. Cobble chair and ottoman, Freedom. Side tables, House Of Orange. Artwork, op-shop find. **KITCHEN** (opposite) The new design features porcelain-panel benchtops made without silica or sealants. It's called Urban White by Fiandre, from Artedomus. Inax 'Yohen Border' tiles in Navy/Green on island, also Artedomus.

When Maggie and Pete bought their West Brunswick home in 2013, the couple saw plenty of potential in the double-storey Edwardian – and not because it had two of everything. Presenting as mirror-image properties squeezed into one house, the dual-living set-up designed by the previous owners – two sisters and their husbands who lived side by side – had a maze-like floor plan that made the home feel like a rabbit warren despite its generous size. "I think the odd layout put a lot of people off," says Maggie. For the young family, however, it ticked some key boxes, including a big backyard and proximity to schools and sporting facilities, so after it was passed in at auction, they made an offer.

Six years and a third child later, Maggie and Pete had a clear idea of what they wanted from the house. "We always had plans to renovate, and after living in the space for that amount of time, we really knew what was required for it to work for us in the future," Maggie explains. The pair sought to create a feeling of openness and a connection to the east-facing backyard, without undertaking extensive renovations or encroaching on the





outdoor space. “It was already a beautiful house, with wooden floors and timber framing. We wanted to maintain that warmth and work with what we had, while making it suit our needs.”

Seeking design solutions with minimal environmental impact, the pair called on Megan Norgate of Brave New Eco, an interior-design studio known for its resourceful approach. “We had seen a lot of their work, and one of the biggest things for us was reusing, repurposing and working with what was there as much as possible while still resolving the issues we had,” says Maggie. “We knew they wouldn’t just come in and rip everything out and start afresh – they would see what was working and what could be rejigged slightly, then look at where we would need to bring in new materials.”

Megan worked alongside Joanne Nataprawira, also of Brave New Eco, and Joel Griffs from Heidi Build on a considered redesign, with the judicious addition and subtraction of walls and the repurposing of spaces delivering on improved wayfinding. “Previously when you walked through the front door, there were literally six doors coming off the hallway and none of them was an intuitive path to the back of the house,” says Maggie. While at first the couple weren’t confident this could be resolved without significant engineering, which they didn’t have

the budget for, the new layout exceeded their expectations and they can now see their backyard from the front gate.

To achieve this, the twin kitchens were removed and on-sold for other projects, while the central dividing wall between the original kitchens and the living/dining areas was removed and replaced with gently curved apertures to open up the two sides. “We’re both big cooks, so it’s nice to have a connection from the living space to the kitchen,” Maggie shares. A generous blackbutt timber island bench and overhead cabinets made with an eco-certified blackbutt veneer add warmth. “We really don’t like stark spaces. One of our favourite things about Brave New Eco is their ability to create spaces that feel comfortable and lived in.”

The bay window is a much-loved nook in which to spend sunny mornings enjoying views overlooking the backyard and cosy evenings by the fire. “That window seat is always in use, and when visitors come over it’s the first place they gravitate to,” says Maggie, crediting a multitude of small, clever design decisions with enhancing the overall aesthetic and practicality of the house. “A few times a week we say, ‘Wow, we are so lucky to have such a gorgeous home.’”


Brave New Eco is at braveneweco.com.au and @braveneweco. Heidi Build is at heidibuild.com.au and @heidibuild

DINING ROOM (above, both images) A hand-woven Pop & Scott ‘Dreamweaver’ pendant sits above the custom dining table from Pash Furniture & Homewares. Farneg bentwood chairs, Apex Furniture. Green Palette framed painting and Emeralds ceramic candleholder from House Of Orange. Under the stairs is a handy corkboard in Chunky Autumn from Frame Shop. Small artwork by Anna Anderson. **LIVING AREA** (opposite) Blue and green were the starting points here, too. Sussex sofa in Molmic ‘Chandon Hunter’ polyester fabric, Oz Design. Retro Lounge Fauteuil (chair) and ottoman in Brick, and Stoneware side table, both House Of Orange. Belle rattan pendant light, The Family Love Tree. Standing lamp, Ikea. Multi-coloured rug, purchased a few years ago.



“We really don’t like stark spaces. Brave New Eco creates rooms that feel comfortable and lived in” MAGGIE, HOMEOWNER

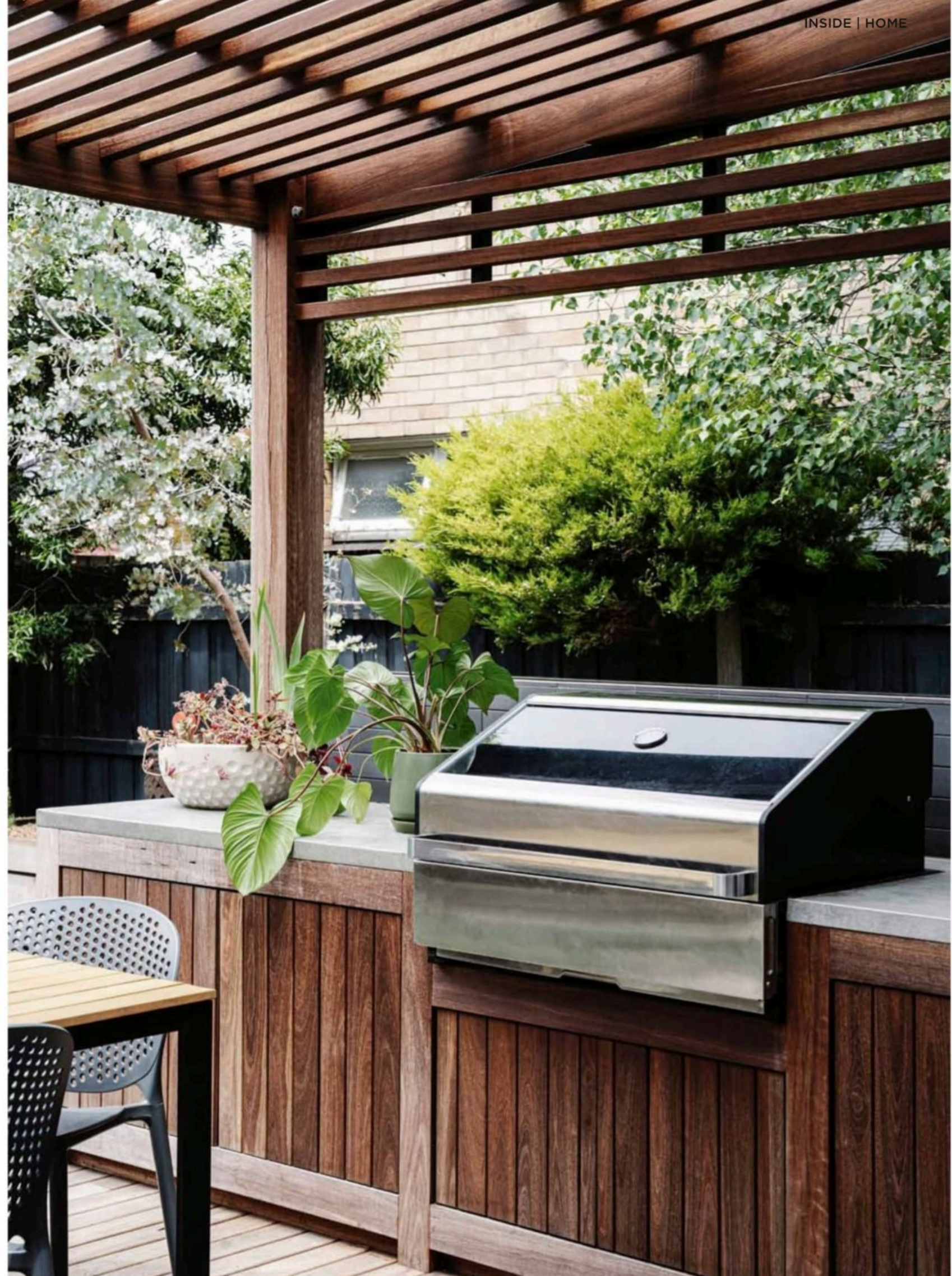


 good news

A number of environmentally minded features have earned the home a 6.6-star energy rating, including the double-glazed windows installed in considered locations to maximise natural light and provide cross ventilation. Existing materials were salvaged wherever possible, among them the skirting, cornices and architraves, which were removed and reused. In addition, care was taken during the demolition to preserve even the materials that would not be reused in the renovation, such as the kitchen bench, for the owners to resell.

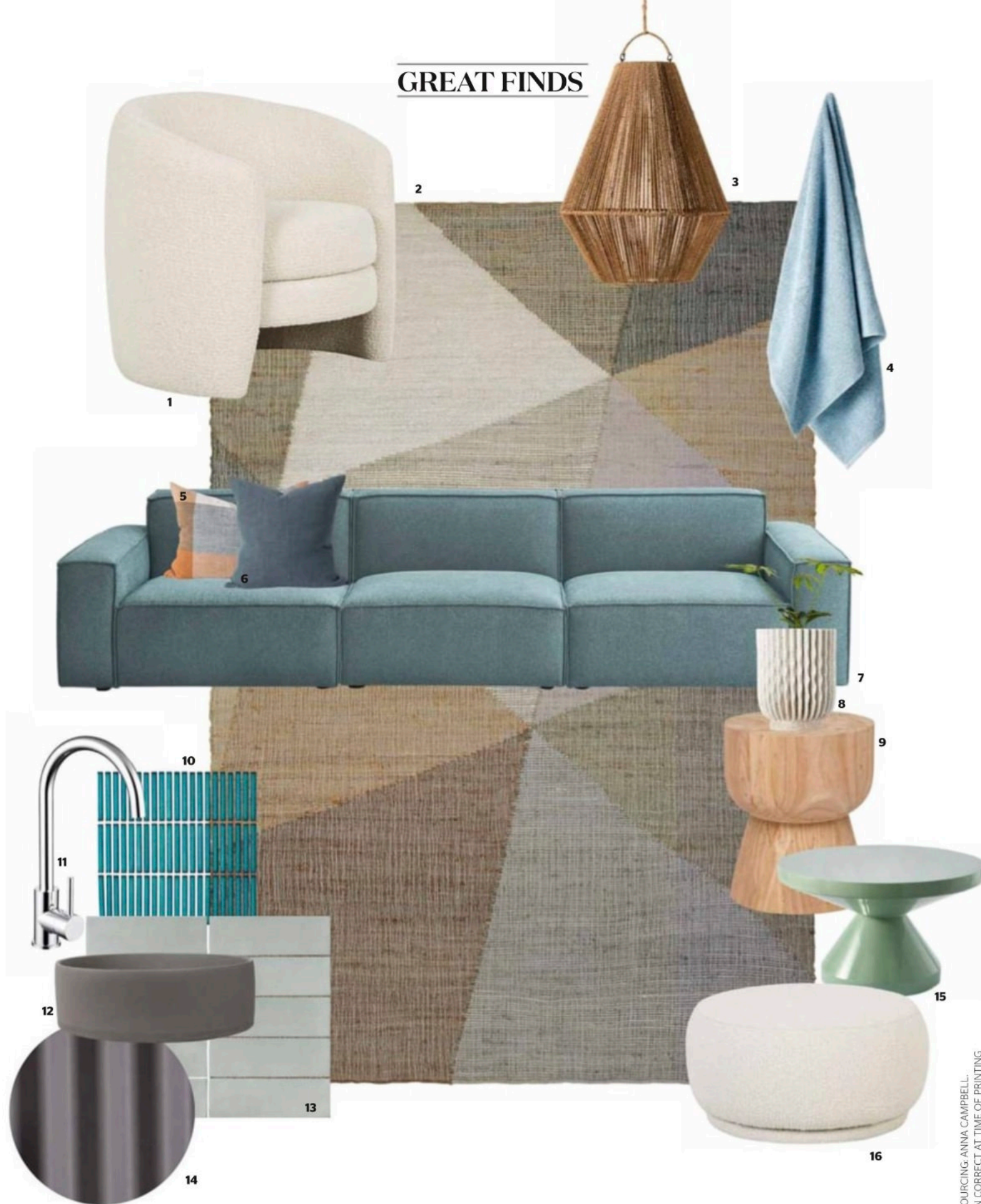


LAUNDRY (above) A green screen of bamboo creates a leafy outlook from the laundry, where contrasting white and green wall tiles add colour and texture. The terrazzo floor tiles in Polarity from Fibonacci Stone are reminiscent of a river bed. Wall tiles, Artedomus. Appliances, Miele. Drying rack, George & Willy. **ENSUITE** (opposite, top left) "This is my husband's favourite part of the whole renovation," says Maggie. "With the sky-blue tiles, it almost feels like an outdoor shower." Wall tiles in a mixed gradient of light blues are paired with a solid blackbutt timber vanity. Low-flow tapware was chosen to avoid water wastage. **MAIN BEDROOM** (opposite, top right) Behind the screen painted Dulux Te Aroha is a walk-in wardrobe. Dresser from House Of Orange. Bed linen, Bhumi. **BEDROOM** (opposite bottom) Attic space was reclaimed to create a larger space, with a skylight positioned above the platform bed. Walls, Dulux Palmer.



OUTDOOR AREA (both pages) Brave New Eco sought to resolve the functionality issues by focusing on reconfiguring the home. Aside from the addition of the 2.5-square-metre bay window that opens to the deck, the renovation remained within the original footprint. Maggie and Pete also have direct access to the garden from the kitchen, with sliding doors connecting the indoor kitchen to the spotted-gum deck. The custom-designed outdoor kitchen has its own sink and barbecue, while a covered pergola provides summer shade and screens a neighbouring house. "When we bought the property, there wasn't a single tree or plant on the block," says Maggie. "We're both keen gardeners, so we've put in a native garden and a veggie garden." Straw Brothers did the landscape design; Tom Barry of Bunya Gardens installed it. Two new 4000L Kingspan water tanks collect rainwater for irrigation. Loungers, Bunnings. Cushions, Southwood Home.

GREAT FINDS



1 Kennedy Tenner **occasional chair** in Beige Bouclé, \$1975, GlobeWest. **2** Jahmal **floor rug** (200cm x 300cm), \$524, Freedom. **3** Adi Teardrop jute **light shade**, \$249, Inartisan. **4** Reed **bath towel** in Blue, \$39.99, Linen House. **5** Morrison woven **cushion cover** in Midnight/Turmeric, \$99.90, Città Design. **6** Linen/cotton **cushion cover** in Cod, \$79.90, Città Design. **7** Jonathan extended **sofa** in Zenith Blue, \$2749, Castlery. **8** Polymorf Home 'Gudrun' **planter** in Off-White, \$380, SSense. **9** Woodrow hourglass wooden **stump**, \$390, Fenton & Fenton. **10** Coogee antique kit-kat **mosaic tiles** in Green, \$150 per sq m, Tile Cloud. **11** Elysian **kitchen mixer** in Chrome, \$229.90, ABI Interiors. **12** Cameron concrete **basin** in Meteor Grey, \$199, Buildmat. **13** Sixty Mini Brick **tiles** in Salvia, POA, Tiento Tiles. **14** Steel **surface** in Basalt Matt, POA, Colorbond. **15** Zigzag **coffee table** in Olive Green, \$1056*, Polspotten. **16** Kennedy Button **ottoman**, \$1005, GlobeWest.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: ANNA CAMPBELL.
*CURRENCY CONVERSION CORRECT AT TIME OF PRINTING

lessons learnt

“It’s really helpful to be onsite for the final decisions”

MAGGIE, HOMEOWNER

“An opportunity for me to take long-service leave and travel around Australia coincided with the renovation, so my family went on a four-month caravan trip while Megan and Jo kindly managed the build. We’d look forward to going through the fortnightly progress photos from wherever we were at the time. Although we had total trust in them, it was great to be back in time for the finishing touches and paint choices, and to physically stand in the space with colour samples.”



SHED A much larger shed was replaced with a smaller, but more functional multi-purpose room, designed by Jo at Brave New Eco and built by Joel from Heidi Build. The space is lined with oriented strand board (OSB) and features a covered verandah on the house side, with wood storage on the left and gardening tools on the right. “We joke about our architecturally designed shed!” says Maggie. “It’s like a giant mud room, and has become our main entrance and exit.”