

Retreat

Contemporary chic and deep earthy tones capture the heart in this Byron Bay beauty

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Wraparound verandahs lend a distinctly Aussie flavour.

Holidaying in beautiful Byron Bay has been a cherished part of the life of interior designer Melissa Bonney for many years. So much so, that whenever each time came to farewell the coastal town renowned for its natural beauty and laid-back vibe, the director of Sydney design studio, The Designory, says she felt as though she was leaving a little piece of her heart behind.

‘There’s something really special about Byron – everything from the beaches right through to the hinterland. There’s just a magic in Byron and a beautiful lifestyle. The people have an amazing approach to life, and that rubs off on you,’ says Melissa.

It’s no wonder that Melissa and her builder husband, Brendon, are still pinching themselves that they now have their very own bespoke Byron Bay retreat.

And it’s one that can be enjoyed not only by their young family, but is also offered as a boutique rental under the couple’s holiday accommodation

business, called Barefoot Escapes.

Aptly named The Barefoot Bay Cottage, the fully renovated century-old weatherboard home is peacefully positioned opposite a lush nature reserve in the heart of Byron Bay’s market precinct. Each feature of the repurposed, restored and extended



‘We worked like crazy to get it done. But it’s worth it’

home, from its luxe interiors to its new wraparound deck and stunning outdoor freestanding bath, has been carefully considered and planned.

Despite this, the entire project from design to completion took a mere eight whirlwind weeks.

‘It was very fast and quite stressful, as we worked like crazy to get it all done. But it’s worth it now,’ says Melissa. ▶

Ticking boxes

From the moment Melissa and Brendon saw the property, they were in complete agreement that it fulfilled all criteria.

'We both felt that it fitted our brief for our next step really perfectly. We couldn't look back,' says Melissa.

That said, the couple initially envisaged simply refreshing the house.

'It was quite rundown and very dark when we first saw it, but we thought we would just give it a nice update and a lick of paint. Once we got started with the design work, however, we realised that we actually needed to do something more significant,' says Melissa.

'The house had a funny little extension at the back, with really low, angled ceilings and a rabbit warren of rooms and spaces. We ended up knocking down that area entirely and

rebuilding on the existing footprint.

'The ceilings were raised to three metres, the deck was continued around the entire house, and skylights and windows were added to bring in light.

'And while the original rooms at the front were retained, they were stripped bare and repurposed. We turned these rooms into a beautiful master suite and a kids' bunkroom,' says Melissa.

Indeed, every surface in the north-facing home - designed to capture both the winter sun and cooling summer coastal breezes - has been touched by Melissa and Brendon's creative brush.

'We painted the interior and exterior, installed a new roof, added an outdoor bathroom, fitted beautiful built-in bench seating, then added a new pool area, a big grassy backyard and lots of landscaping,' says Melissa. ▶



High ceilings, skylights and windows bring in the light.



Getting creative

Melissa and Brendon are parents to teenage daughters 15-year-old Bella and 13-year-old Liz, and their four-year-old son, Nixon.

‘The kids were obviously extremely excited about the house right from the beginning. We had to make sure that, when we designed it, the home would work not only as a holiday rental but for

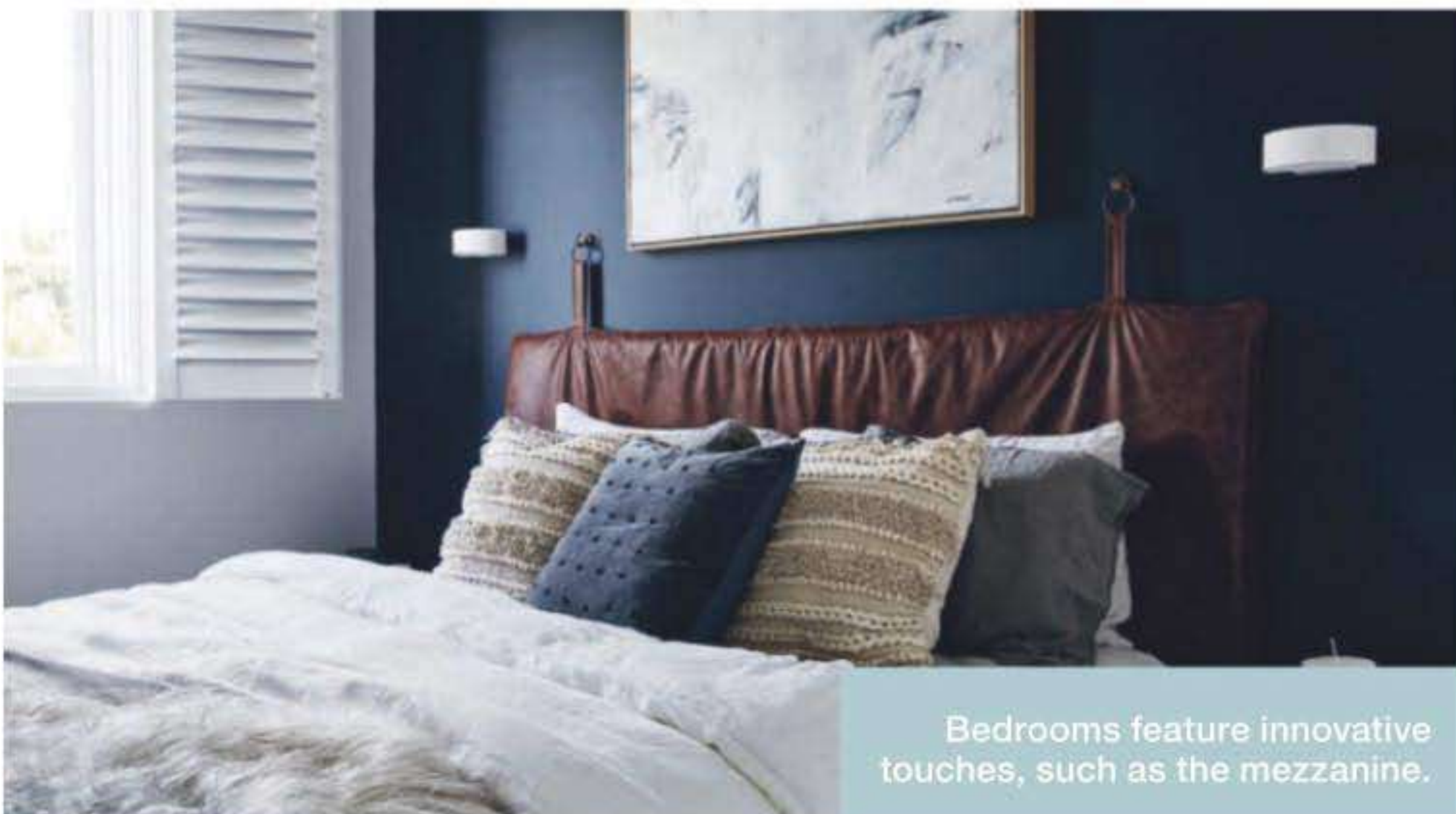
all of us as a family,’ says Melissa.

Melissa and Brendon also had to prepare for the unexpected – and be flexible because of the short time frame they gave themselves to complete the renovation.

‘Because we were moving and organising everything at such a fast pace, we didn’t have every stage of the renovation fully documented

as we would normally do on a client’s project,’ says Melissa.

‘We had a couple of those wonderful hiccups that happen when you’re moving quickly – where the product you order doesn’t turn up on time, so you have to quickly switch it and then change other things as a result. We were constantly juggling, but it all came together in the end.’ ▶



Bedrooms feature innovative touches, such as the mezzanine.





Outsider influence

When it came to finding inspiration for the finishes and fixtures of the three-bedroom home, Melissa knew exactly where to start.

‘We had a concept from the beginning. We really wanted to capture the essence of the Byron area – the connection to both the lush hinterland and the idyllic beach,’ she says.

‘It was important that the colours and materials we used drove the overall feel and experience of actually being in the home.’

Bathed in natural light and infused with a feeling of space, organic texture and contemporary coastal style, the cottage features a consistent palette of crisp white, sage green, deep navy and concrete grey.

‘I am very much about repetition.



Repetition of colour themes and textures is a feature of the house.

I like to repeat a material from the front fence to the back fence. There are the sandy tones, the greys, as well as the dark navy [Haymes Paint Stormy Blue] used on the exterior as well as in furnishings and on a feature wall in one of the bedrooms,' says Melissa.

'I also used a stunning green [Haymes Paint Gulf] on joinery and in cushions and materials.

'In terms of the furniture, we used some beautiful vintage pieces to bring in texture, depth and life to the building.

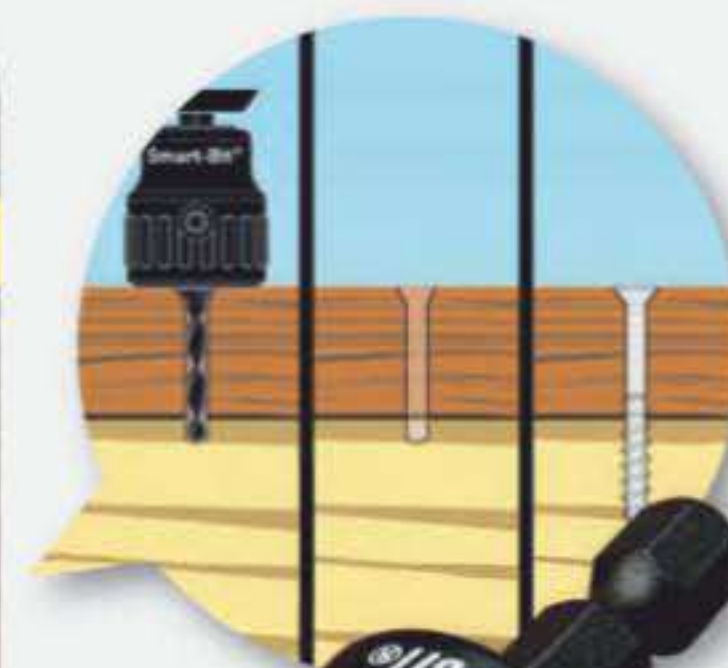
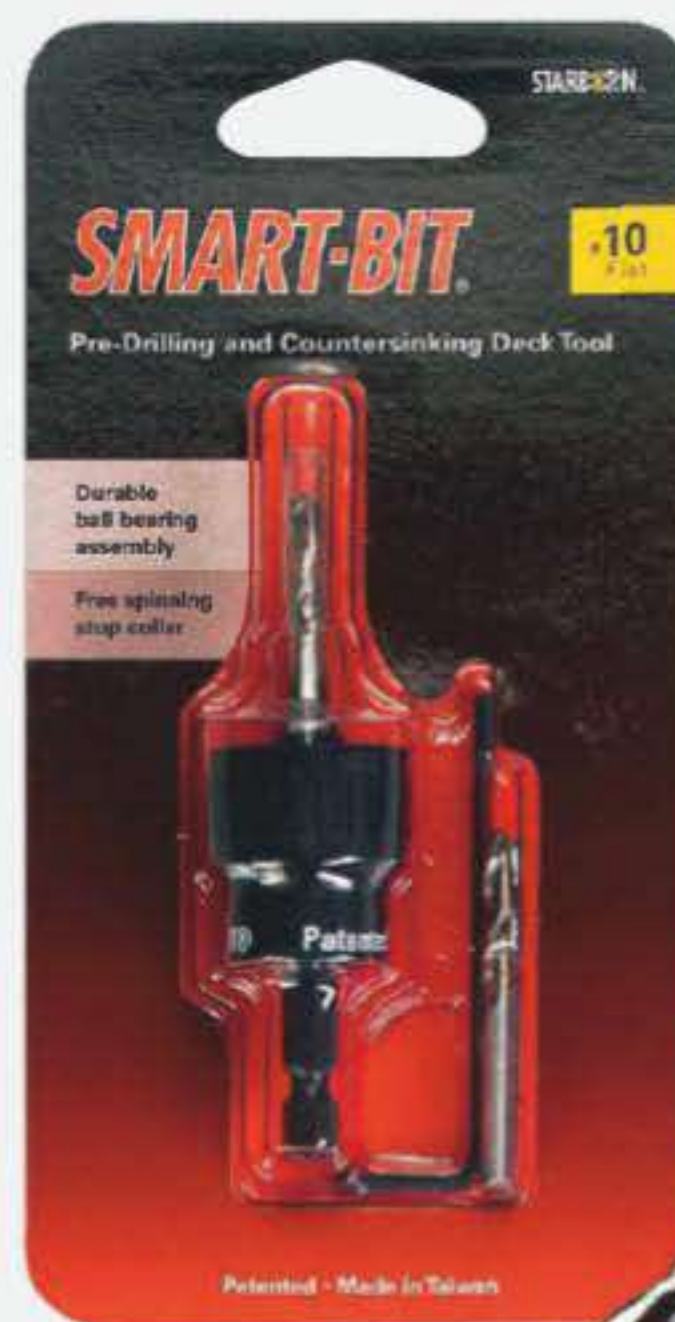
'The other unique thing about this project is that it's fully shoppable,' adds Melissa. 'Anyone can go online to purchase some of the decorating pieces at thedesigntuner.com.au and all of the finishes and specifications are available on our website, the-designory.com.au.' ▶



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The north-facing verandah catches winter sun and summer sea breezes.



Built-in bench seating, not to mention a pool, provide outdoor temptation.



Alfresco living

'Byron Bay has the most incredible weather all year round. We wanted to create a space to come together with friends and family and enjoy the connection to the surrounding tropical gardens and nearby nature reserve,' says Melissa. ▶

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Outdoor living is a focus in this home, right down to the bath.



★
 ‘We wanted to create a space to come together with friends and family and enjoy the connection to the surrounding tropical gardens and nature reserve’

‘The outdoor living and dining was extremely important.’

With the vast wraparound deck a key feature of the home, appropriate lighting and heating was essential. Melissa and Brendon chose the IXL Fresco Aurora Outdoor Heater.

‘We used the multifunctional Fresco outdoor heater and light over our outdoor dining area. It makes the space perfect for entertaining and its multiple

settings are great for holiday makers to customise to their needs,’ says Melissa.

And now there’s only one thing remaining for Melissa and Brendon to do – enjoy spending time with family and friends in their very own Barefoot Bay Cottage.

‘It references everything that Byron Bay is to me,’ Melissa concludes with a smile. ‘I think it’s a very special place.’ ❖