

BEACH HAUS

A major white-out has given this renovated 1920s home a strong Northern European feel but it's still as Australian as Cottesloe Beach



cheat sheet

Who lives here Caroline, a freelance writer; her husband Henry, a financial advisor; and their children, Ava, 5, Benjamin, 3, and Lucy, 9 months.

Style of home A Federation home with three bedrooms near Perth's most popular beach that has become a five-bedroom, three-bathroom house.

🕒 Caroline and Henry signed with design firm Lahaus in May 2016. After six months of planning and approvals, builder Distinctive Homes began construction in early 2017. The project was completed in April 2018.

DINING AREA (this page & opposite)

Polished concrete floors and walls painted Dulux Natural White set the cool, modern tone in the new extension.

The limewashed free-form stone fireplace and adjoining oak shelves subtly separate the dining and living spaces. The white steel door, designed by Lahaus and made by Reliance Design & Fabrication, is a 'collage' of differently patterned glass. Gas fireplace, Lopi.

SPRIT PRINT (OPPOSITE) BY VICTORIA AGUIRRE, PAMPA

WORDS JESSICA ZOITI PHOTOGRAPHY JODY D'ARCY STYLING LISA QUINN-SCHOFIELD



DINING AREA The combination of Huxley American oak table from Jordan and Thonet wicker chairs adds a strong natural wood element. Muuto 'Ambit Rail' pendant lights from Living Edge are another Scandi touch.

LIVING ROOM (opposite) Modern and functional was the design brief here. Floor-to-ceiling windows look out to the pool. Sunny sofa and Cove coffee table, both from Jordan. Woven rug, Armadillo & Co.

MARBLE COFFEE TABLE (ABOVE); SARAH ELLISON; POLTRONA FRANU 'COTOLA' LEATHER BOWL AND FRITZ HANSEN 'STACK' TRAY (OPPOSITE); MOBILIA; CUSHIONS AND VESSELS (OPPOSITE); JARDAN



bright idea

Limiting a room's colour scheme and accessories ensures maximum impact. In the living area, Jody D'Arcy's print *Blushing Rottnest* bounces off a wall in Dulux Natural White.

There was always something special about the house next door for Caroline and Henry. Sitting alongside their home of a few years in Perth's ocean-side suburb of Cottesloe, the three-bedroom Federation cottage needed some work but had a reassuring solidity and charming character features. "We thought it was beautiful," says Caroline. "We both love older houses, especially the ones that seem quite unassuming from the front and have modern renovations at the back. So, in a way, we had a vision for the house from the start."

The original home had a long corridor with bedrooms off to the side, and high ceilings, jarrah floorboards and cornices throughout. In the 1990s, a renovation saw the addition of an ensuite to the main bedroom, and a sleep-out with a bathroom and laundry. "The place was quite dark but had a lovely feel to it," says Caroline. "We contacted the owners on a bit of a whim and asked them to let us know if they were ever thinking of selling."

One year later, opportunity came knocking. The couple snapped up the house and moved next door with their two children, Ava and Benjamin. They lived there comfortably for a while, until the desire for open-plan living and more storage kickstarted plans for a major renovation.

"Our main priority was to create more living space, introduce natural light, storage and add some bedrooms," says Caroline. "With a young family, it was important for us to have the kids playing outside or in the living area while keeping an eye on them from the kitchen. Since having our third child, Lucy, it's a lot easier to get things done when they're within sight!"

The new space had to reflect its coastal location and feel bright and relaxed, but also complement the existing home.

"We live quite close to the beach and wanted the house to have a beachy, contemporary vibe," says Caroline. "We also liked the idea of knowing where the original house finished and the new one began, without it appearing too jarring."

Other must-haves were four good-sized bedrooms and a study, a pool and a decent amount of lawn. To bring this vision to life, the couple hired local design firm Lahaus and, later, building company Distinctive Homes.

"We felt it was important to identify with the beach context but wanted to avoid creating a clichéd coastal-themed home," says Lahaus creative director Lara Staunton. "The other challenge was the original Federation house – the junction between old and new and how we could integrate the interior."

The original footprint now boasts the entrance, main bedroom suite and nursery, with all the character features – the jarrah floors, ceilings, cornices, brickwork and fireplaces – lovingly restored. In the rear extension, an open-plan living, dining and kitchen area forms the heart of the home and flows seamlessly onto an alfresco entertaining space with pool and large grassed play area. The first-floor addition houses the three children's bedrooms.

"At first we were a little worried about our bedroom being quite far from the kids' bedrooms, but it's working really well," says Caroline of the main bedroom at the front of the house. The study is being used as a nursery – which was the plan – with Lucy to move upstairs with her siblings when she's old enough.

Having lived in the home for more than a year, the family is absolutely rapt. "Lara did a truly amazing job," says Caroline. "Our house is full of special elements that Lara custom-designed and I get to enjoy them every day." **10**

Other projects by Lara Staunton and Lahaus are at lahaus.com.au. The builder was Distinctive Homes; distinctivehomeswa.com.au

“The kitchen is our favourite part of the house. It’s so bright and light, and being able to look out onto the pool makes us feel like we’re on holiday”

CAROLINE, HOMEOWNER

KITCHEN Interior designer Lara Staunton delivered character by using textural materials such as irregular square tiles from Myaree Ceramics for the ceiling-height splashback, and custom oak veneer cabinetry by Distinctive Homes in a light matt whitewash. The benchtop is ultra-durable, seam-free porcelain from Dekton. Dita stools, Grazia & Co.



POWDER ROOM (left) "Wet spaces can be playful and distinctive but still in keeping with the concept," says Lara. Oak veneer vanity. Tiles from Surface Society. Mirror, Designstuff. **MUD ROOM (below)** Wall hooks from Normann Copenhagen and By Wirth. Baskets, Kmart. **ALFRESCO AREA (opposite)** A concrete table from Techstone Moulding and chairs from Domayne make this a great spot to socialise.

lessons learnt

"Heavy foot traffic and little people constantly running over it meant the alfresco paving was becoming stained. After the renovation, we decided to hone and re-seal the concrete"

CAROLINE, HOMEOWNER

"Other than this, the build was quite drama-free. As it was the first time we had built, we wanted to make sure there was someone on hand to call and consult throughout. Lahaas was great and, as a result, we didn't have any nasty surprises. Lara meticulously detailed every inch of the house."



GREAT FINDS

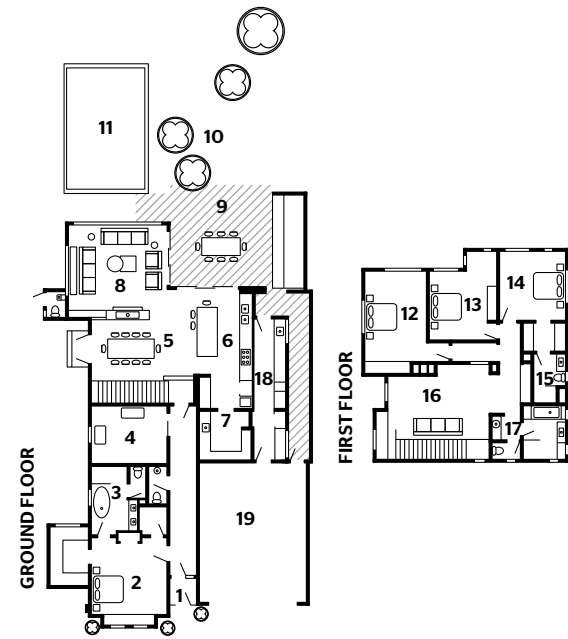
timber time

Wood tones warm a blank canvas

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT STYLING: NATALIE JOHNSON. BASIN (OPPOSITE TOP), VILLEROY & BOCH, TAPWARE, ASTRA WALKER



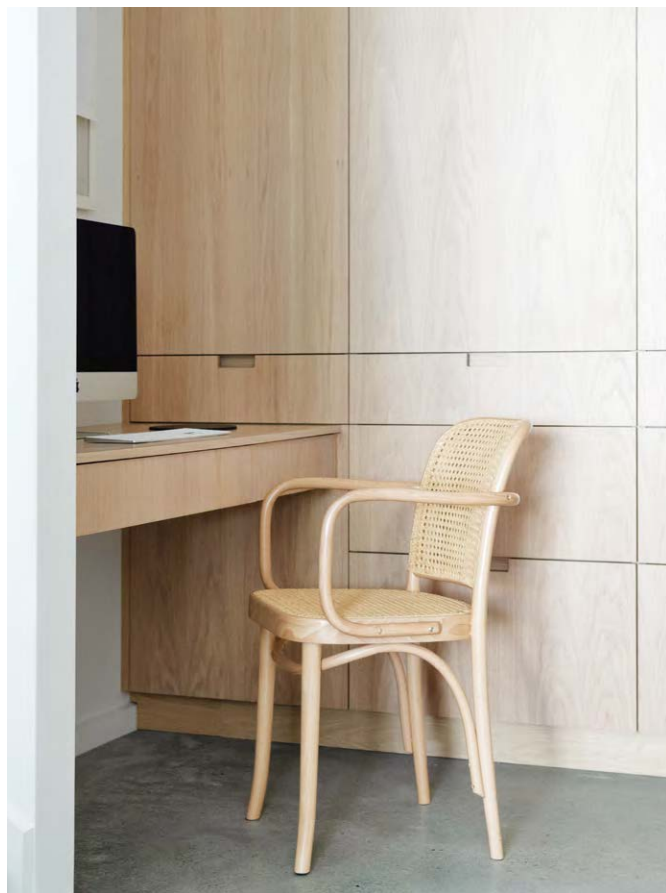
LEFT TO RIGHT Hoffman dining chair with cane seat, \$499, Thonet. Duke cushion in Apricot, \$265, Jordan. Segment tray, \$89.90, Città. Muuto 'Ambit Rail' pendant, \$1290, Living Edge. Chub coffee table, \$1595, Sarah Ellison.



- 1 Entry
- 2 Main bedroom
- 3 Ensuite
- 4 Nursery
- 5 Dining area
- 6 Kitchen
- 7 Scullery
- 8 Living area
- 9 Alfresco area
- 10 Garden
- 11 Pool
- 12 Bedroom
- 13 Bedroom
- 14 Bedroom
- 15 Bathroom
- 16 Activity room
- 17 Bathroom
- 18 Laundry
- 19 Garage

VASE AND ORNAMENTAL BIRD (TOP LEFT), MOBILIA: LINE WALL LIGHTS (BOTTOM RIGHT & OPPOSITE), DOUGLAS & BEC: BED, LINEN, BEDTONIC, CUSHIONS, JARDAN

MAIN BEDROOM & ENSUITE (this page & opposite) "Exposing the original bricks was a reminder of the home's heritage," says Caroline. The Finley bed is from Jordan Victoria & Albert bath. Tapware, Astra Walker. Custom mirror by Lahaas. Framed print above fireplace is *Royal Daydreams* by Jody D'Arcy. **STUDY NOOK (opposite, bottom left)** Just off the scullery, this desk has been integrated into a wall of oak-veneer cabinetry. Chair, Thonet.





BUSH PAD

We chart the transformation of this crisp, clean-lined home in Bangalow, NSW, from a dark and outdated chalet-style cottage

WORDS LOUISE O'BRYAN STYLING SARAH ELLISON PHOTOGRAPHY LYNDEN FOSS



cheat sheet

Who lives here Mikarla Dawson, a wedding and events florist in Byron Bay; her husband and co-worker Mitch; and their son Van, 3.

Style of home Built in 1983, the exterior of this two-storey, A-frame house in nearby Bangalow was originally mission-brown brick with a green tin roof. The couple renovated it to create a low-maintenance home with four bedrooms, two bathrooms and an open-plan living space connecting to an extended deck and pool.

🕒 The couple started work in October 2016 and wrapped it up in December 2017.

\$\$\$\$ The building work, decorating, pool and landscaping cost about \$350,000.



LIVING AREA Lofty beamed ceilings and striking white surfaces ensure the open-plan space is always bright. Mikarla has kept the seating relaxed, with cool linens in sandy shades, while the rug from Tigmi Trading adds a welcoming feel. Chairs inherited from Mitch's family suit the easygoing set-up. A fiddle-leaf fig (*Ficus lyrata*) in Rosso pot from Pop & Scott makes an impact in the corner. **EXTERIOR (opposite)** This view of the house, featuring Mikarla, shows how it has been rendered and painted Dulux Lexicon Quarter. The green roof is now Colorbond Shale Grey.



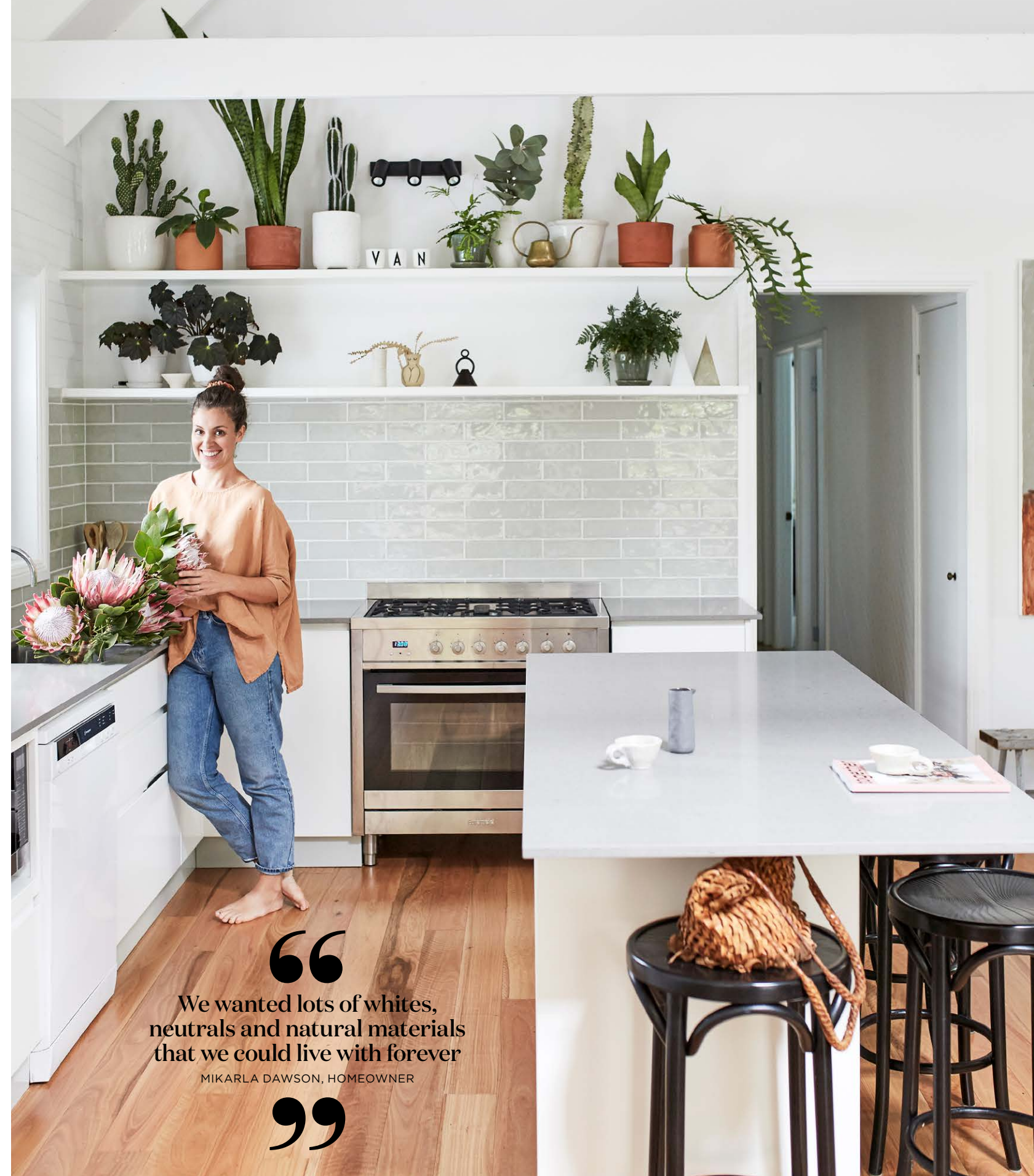
Seeing the potential behind a dated 1980s brick home with old aluminium windows, cork floors and chipboard ceilings takes an inspired eye. “I think my mum even cried a little,” says Mikarla Dawson, recalling her parents’ initial reaction when shown photos of this property in Bangalow on the NSW far north coast.

However, for Mikarla, husband Mitch and son Van, who were relocating from Sydney, the secluded house at the end of a cul-de-sac presented a chance to create the beach home they’d been seeking. Its lofty ceilings, family-friendly layout and mature tropical surroundings were perfect!

Feeling more like a Thredbo ski chalet than a laidback beach house, the orangey wood and dated brick surfaces were the first things to be tackled. “Once the floors were stripped and the exterior rendered and painted, we hit the entire house with white to cover up the pine and make it feel bright,” says Mikarla, who initially made idea boards featuring Dulux Vivid White but was advised by a decorator to use another white.

OVEN (OPPOSITE), EUROMAID, STOOLS, THONET

KITCHEN Mikarla’s flawless arrangements of house plants brings instant personality, colour and drama to the plain walls and simple shelves. Glossy subway tiles from Beaumont Tiles reflect the light. The benchtops are Caesarstone Oyster. **LIVING AREA (opposite)** Winter in Bangalow can be chilly so a functioning fireplace was a must for the family. They chose a new Norseman wood-burning stove from Barbeques Galore. Mikarla found the lanterns at Shikara Design & Kasbah Imports in Byron Bay. A handful of Queen Anne’s lace (*Daucus carota*) from the garden provides the greenery. Candleholder from Marr-Kett, also in Byron.



“
We wanted lots of whites,
neutrals and natural materials
that we could live with forever
”

MIKARLA DAWSON, HOMEOWNER



“As Vivid White isn’t tinted, it wouldn’t have covered the wood well enough, so I opted for Dulux Lexicon Quarter instead,” says Mikarla. “The hint of black has cooled the warm wood beneath and helps to keep the backdrop crisp without feeling too icy.” She and Mitch teamed it with Coastal Blackbutt flooring, a hybrid product from Eco Flooring. “We were both determined to steer away from rich tones, like the honey-coloured pine we’d just ripped out, and go down the cooler route,” she says.

Three months into the project, and with the basics all hooked up, the couple moved in with baby Van. From then on, the work was largely decorative – although living amid the chaos for more than a year was testing. “As well as managing the timeline and budget, we were starting up our new wedding and events floral business,” says Mikarla. “We probably should have delayed moving in until 90 per cent of the work was done. I’d also underestimated my husband’s vision for the landscaping, and how long it would take. However, levelling what was a swampy jungle and working with the existing Bangalow palms and eucalyptus was well worth the hard work. We now have an incredibly lush, useable garden.”

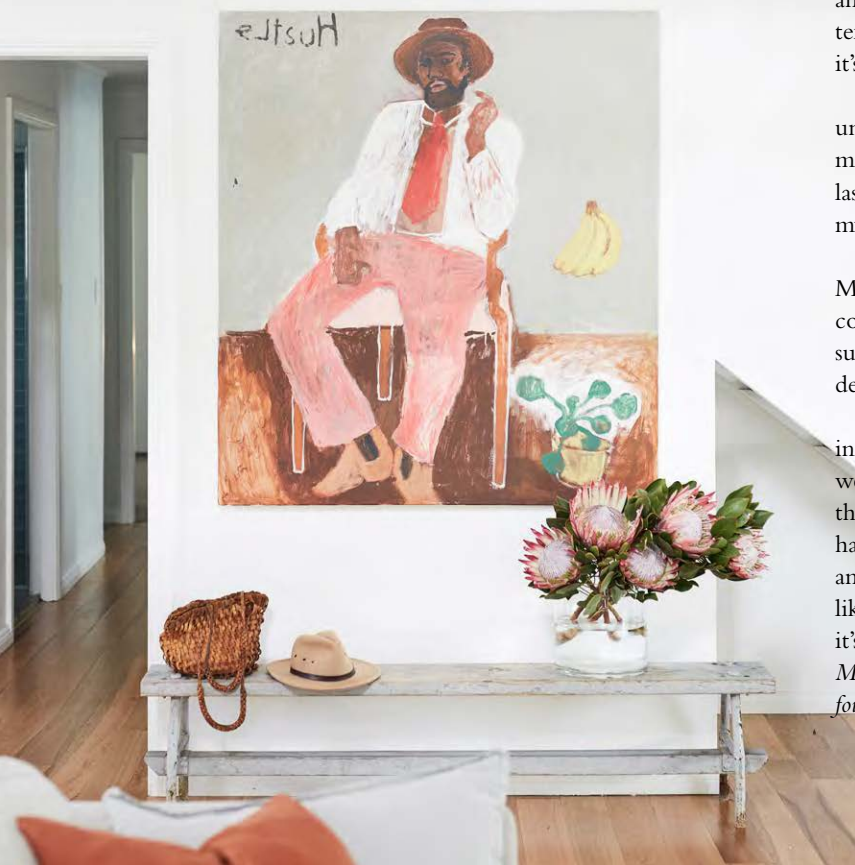
The verdant theme continues inside as Mikarla’s leathery green house plants pack a punch against the white walls and exposed-beam ceiling. In the seating area of the open-plan living space, sun-bleached tones and textures ensure the pace stays slow and relaxed. A large island in the centre helps to zone the kitchen, while an alcove off to the side has been fitted with simple storage benches. “We all love the nook,” says Mikarla. “The wraparound windows, which we painted black for a modern update, catch the morning sun and evening warmth, and the hidden storage is invaluable. It was a great spend.” Elsewhere, the kitchen is unfussy and simple, with basic two-pack polyurethane cupboards and a Caesarstone benchtop. “I’ve added subtle colour and texture through the wall tiles and house-plant displays, but overall it’s an easy, down-to-earth space,” she explains.

The vibe is similar in the ensuite along the hall, where an unadorned vanity feels more like a graceful dresser. “The lantern matches the ones in the living space,” says Mikarla. “I bought the last remaining few from an eclectic store in Byron. That’s one of my top tips – always buy that one-off when you see it, or it’ll go.”

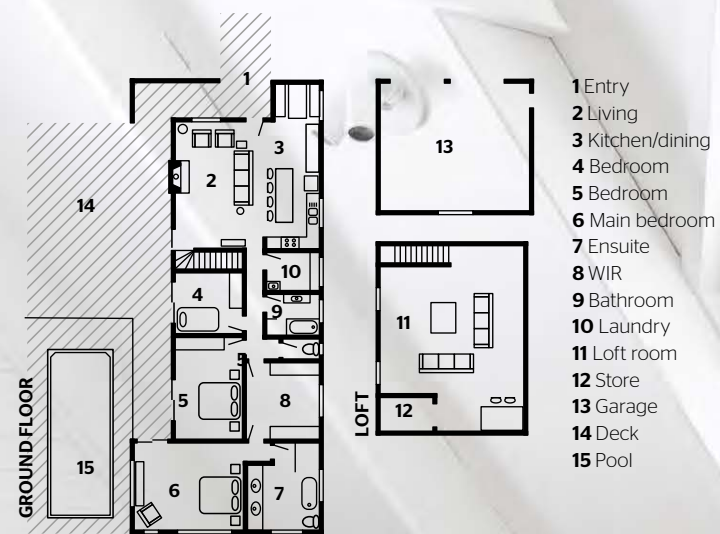
Back outside, the white theme continues in the garden with Mitch’s landscaping triumph – the curved rendered walls that contrast with the home’s angular architecture and brilliant green surroundings. Bold, patterned pots add a cheerful note to the pool deck, and an outdoor shower is the soak of choice in summer.

“We work from home and run our business from a studio in the garden, so we wanted to create a relaxed sanctuary where we’d be happy to spend most of our days,” says Mikarla. “In fact, throughout summer it’s hard to leave this place, especially as we have a resident koala to keep an eye on. Van named him Banjo, and even on Christmas Day with 20 people in the garden, he still likes to wander around. This truly is a very special place, and it’s just right for the three of us.”

Mikarla and Mitch’s business is called *Wilderness Flowers* and can be found at wildernessflowers.com or on Instagram @wilderness_flowers



VAN’S ROOM Playful Van loves his loft-style space. The eclectic mix of earthy linens from Pampa have a charming timeworn feel, and practical vinyl flooring from Carpet Court is a breeze to clean. **DINING NOOK (opposite top)** Lush palms and ferns are framed by the black-edged windows. Mikarla had storage benches made to fit snugly on either side of the Habitat Home Collection table. **LIVING AREA (opposite bottom)** On the staircase side of the room, the upbeat pastel shades of Emma Gale’s artwork *The Hustle* are picked up in a stunning display of proteas. Replica Eames white table, Matt Blatt.



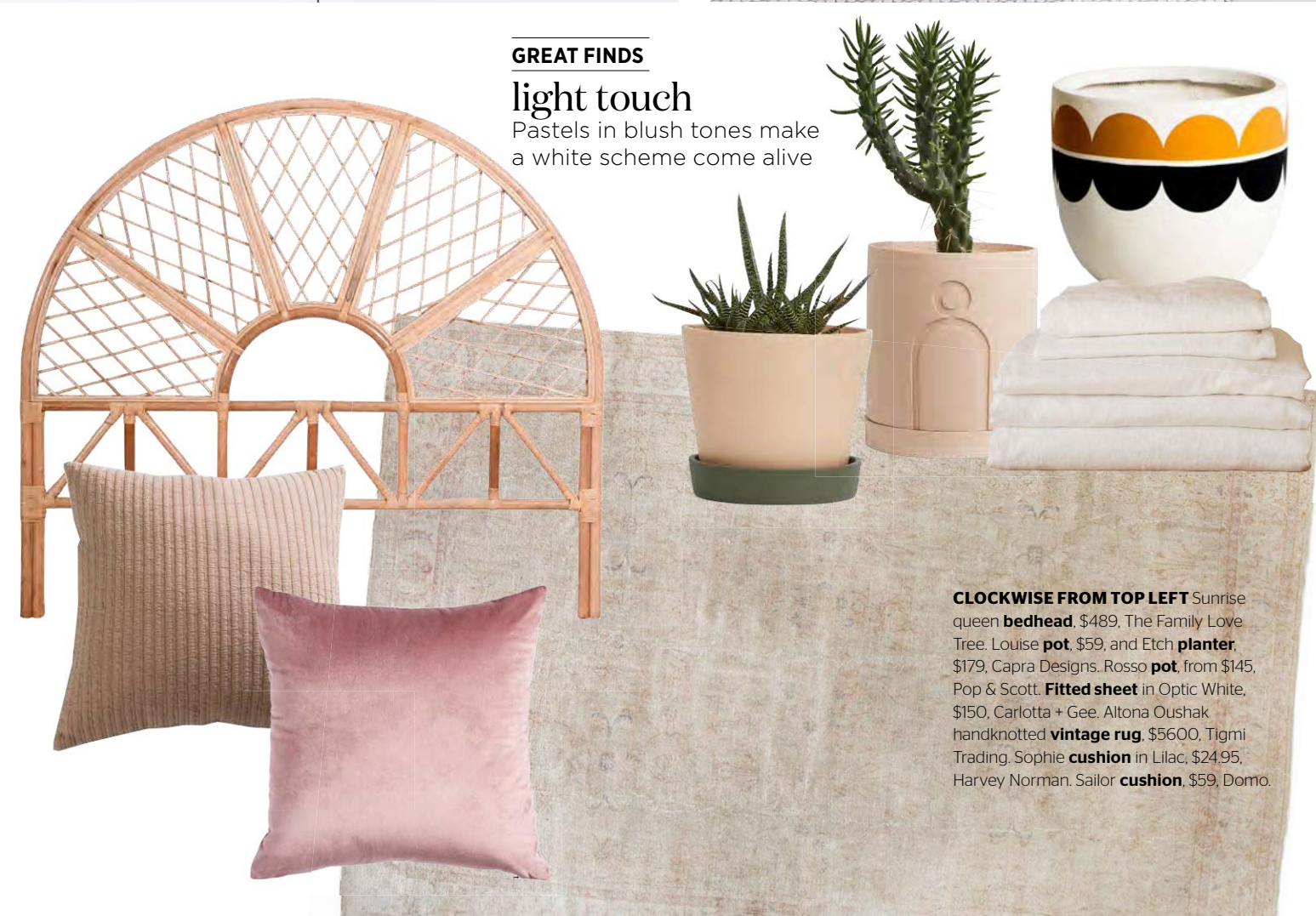


MAIN BEDROOM Mikarla's wishlist included a walk-in-robe and spacious ensuite. The walls are painted Dulux Eucalyptus Leaf Quarter and over the bedhead from The Family Love Tree is a dried eucalyptus branch. The bedhead was Mikarla's only online purchase – she prefers items she can see and touch first.
ENSUITE (opposite) Bold black cement basins from Slabshapers tie in with the lanterns from Shikara Design. The bespoke vanity is so huge they had trouble finding a 3.5m-long slab to fit, so ordered custom Caesarstone in Nougat. The tiles are the same as those in the kitchen. Bath and taps, Who Bathroom Warehouse.

GREAT FINDS

light touch

Pastels in blush tones make a white scheme come alive



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Sunrise queen **bedhead**, \$489, The Family Love Tree. Louise **pot**, \$59, and Etch **planter**, \$179, Capra Designs. Rosso **pot**, from \$145, Pop & Scott. **Fitted sheet** in Optic White, \$150, Carlotta + Gee. Altona Oushak handknotted **vintage rug**, \$5600, Tigmi Trading. Sophie **cushion** in Lilac, \$24.95, Harvey Norman. Sailor **cushion**, \$59, Domo.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: NATALIE JOHNSON, LUNAR VASE (ABOVE LEFT), SARAH ELLISON, BEDSIDE TABLE, FREEDOM, BEDLINEN (OPPOSITE), SHERIDAN, STRIPED PILLOWS AND RUG, TIGMI TRADING



“
 The old house was a 1980s horror but we fell for its high ceilings, internal light and mature tropical gardens. We worked with the pros and took away the cons
 ”
 MIKARLA

lessons learnt

“We didn’t put enough time into planning our first bathroom and ended up replacing the cabinetry and stone tops. Always go for the highest-quality finishes or you will end up replacing them”

MIKARLA DAWSON, HOMEOWNER

“We also naively thought that our previous renovation experience – on our three-bedroom apartment in Sydney – would prepare us for this one. Wrong! Initially we tried tackling sections of the work bit by bit to control the budget and chaos, as we had done on our apartment’ reno, but soon realised that we had to move much faster on a larger-scale project to get through the jobs and meet our timeline. And this time we had to juggle a lot more balls at once.”



GARDEN The pool and deck by Dynamic Pool Designs were the last elements of the home’s transformation. Building the pool deck a metre lower than the entertaining area was a last-minute change that caused a few headaches but ensured uninterrupted views. Bangalow palms and gum trees, as well as macadamia and tea trees from a neighbouring farm, line the perimeter. **BUILT-IN SEAT (opposite)** A great spot for enjoying the garden and Leisurescapes fire pit.

PLANTERS: POP & SCOTT



bright idea

It looks extravagant and costly, but this slick piece of landscaping was done quickly and efficiently. “Mitch wanted the garden to have more natural curves and designed this to use better blocks with a rough render,” says Mikarla. “It was done in just a month by our local landscape guru, Zac Davis of Green Living Designs.”