

Space station

Spread out everyone, there's always room to move in this extended family home



WITH FRANCENE RIDLEY



Even on a miserable, wet autumn day, with the cloudy sky sending down drizzle and casting a pall over the city, this house at The Gap seemed to shine in its bush setting. Something about the single-level layout and the freshness of the white exterior paintwork against the surrounding eucalypts made me feel that this would be a bright, comfortable house.

These were my impressions as I approached the hilltop home, having walked from the main road up the driveway through a forest of gums – a fitting introduction to a house that sits so gracefully on its block. Originally designed by Geoffrey Pie in 1982, the new owners decided on a renovation led by architect Shawn Godwin, of Grange firm Base Architecture.

Shawn's clients have four children and needed space that the original four-bedroom house could not provide. (They previously lived in a multi-level hillside home, also at The Gap.)

"The original house was a cute cottage, but it was so dark," says one of the owners. "We certainly wanted to keep it though and Shawn saw exactly what we needed to do to make it a family home."

Changes included a new wing for the children – this runs perpendicular to the main house at one end – while more floor space was added at the other end, providing a suite for the owners.

Their bathroom is hardly what you would call an ensuite, it's more like the set-up found in a luxury resort. I only realised where the shower was when I saw the showerhead – glass being the only barrier between it and the tree canopy, which provides the ultimate "natural" ceiling.

"When it rains and you're in the shower at night, it's just magical," the owner says.

With 6ha of land around them, the owners have no issues with privacy. Shawn has made the most of this space with a fully equipped kitchen, barbecue and TV-living area outside the main kitchen, which has windows creating a servery between indoor and outdoor spaces. (The total floor area is now 640sq m, including the garage and outdoor room.)

"Last summer, we hardly used the oven inside, we just used the barbecue. The kids could be swimming in the pool while we watched the news on the TV outside," the owner says.

I could imagine just such a scenario as I chatted to the owner over cake and coffee, seated at the outdoor dining table.

As a self-confessed entertainer, the owner wanted a kitchen fit for catering, but also serviceable as the family hub.

"There were a few things I wanted in the house – a big laundry and an office in the kitchen," says the owner, and Shawn kept to the brief, providing a small office in the scullery.

In the children's wing, delineated from the main house by polished timber flooring, each child has their own bedroom and bathroom, and a corridor the owner jokingly refers to as "the cricket pitch".

A combined study area provides each child with their own set of drawers and some bench space for their desk.

"It is a fabulous family home," the owner says. "With the concrete and timber floors, the kids can come in and out without worrying



BIG AND BRIGHT ... the now spacious house lets in the fresh air. **Photographs** // Christopher Frederick Jones

about dirtying carpets. And they love using the kitchen as well as the outdoor space."

This project was one of the last Shawn completed as co-director of Base. He is now sole director and says he and his team are in for a busy time ahead, with projects including a joint venture with three other architects to complete 14 of the 64 beach shacks at the Kula

development in Coolum. And, as it has during the past five years since its inception, Base will provide more inspiration to clients such as this family at The Gap, who intend to stay put and enjoy their home for many years.

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