



down to earth

A multi-level home that's more grounded than most.

Words **Sandra Killen**

People who live in two-storey houses often complain of feeling detached from their garden. The lament is not ungrounded and it's a response that the family who owns this house in Bulimba, on Brisbane's east, didn't want.

With three children aged 3, 6 and 9, their prime motivation for buying the rundown wooden house on a 946sqm flat block was so the kids could play outside. "We bought ▶

Photography: **Scott Burrows**





the house for the back yard," says one of the owners as we take in the treehouse cradled in the macadamia's branches, the rope swing tied to the native quandong's bough, the girls' cubby and the trampoline on the grass.

They'd lived in the house for 18 months, hating every moment, and intended to demolish it and start again until architect Chris Bligh convinced them he could salvage the building with a contemporary addition and renovation. His design involved raising the house, moving it slightly on the block and extending it to create a kitchen and dining space at the rear that opens onto an outdoor terrace. A new double-height loungeroom with tinted glass walls and a study on the mezzanine above also relate visually to the back yard. The mezzanine allows conversation between the levels and is the perfect spot from which to launch a paper plane.

The sleeping quarters are upstairs – from here, the parents can almost touch the tree canopies, the son can count the goldfish in the pond below and the girls happily share their room, allowing for a playroom in the fourth bedroom. And the enclosed front verandah makes a cosy music room. ■



Demolition rescue ... The new mezzanine (above) incorporates a study; the extension also allowed for a kitchen and dining space at the rear of the house (opening pages), opening onto an outdoor terrace (top); and (left) the re-design raised the house and moved it slightly on the block.