

Detailed delivery

Pulling off the perfect renovation requires attention to the minutiae as well as an understanding of the big picture.



BATTEN UP ... a comprehensive renovation of this New Farm home did away with a long, inconvenient veranda to make way for a usable, stylish deck that links with the newly level back yard. **Photographs //** Jeremy Veitch

"It's a popular thing to do, but it's also quite tricky," says Chris Bligh, of Bligh Graham Architects. He is referring to the question faced by every renovator looking to extend their worker's cottage or Queenslander: how?

"It's tricky because there is the danger of looking like you have just whacked a totally out-of-character extension on to the back of your old home," Chris explains.

When Chris approached the brief to overhaul the veranda falling away at the back of the clients' high-set Queenslander in New Farm, he started with their main concern – the bathroom. Changing that room set in motion a renovation that included rebuilding the veranda to house a play area and study.

He added exterior stairs and screening to the eastern side of the house and built underneath to include a laundry and guest bedroom with bathroom. But the pinnacle achievement was rebuilding the deck and levelling the back yard.

"We had wanted to move the bathroom for years – it was in the enclosed veranda – but we also wanted something beautiful," says the owner. This meant completing all those other tasks,

which gave Chris the opportunity to fully integrate the deck extension with the original layout and the new designs.

On a large scale, this is seen in the use of the same batten style at the front for the garage, at the side for screening the stairs and at the back to enclose the deck. Smaller details, though, provide the interest, tying together a subtropical theme.

"Red, stained plywood at the front entrance is repeated in the link between the deck roof and house," says Chris. "At night, these create glowing red lantern-like structures."

Other interesting features include the juliet balcony added to a bedroom at the rear of the home.

"The old deck finished in front of this bedroom's french doors. The new deck is shorter and the juliet balcony provides a connection between the room and the garden," says Chris.

Reducing the amount of deck had a two-fold effect because it also allows more sunlight to reach the ground floor.

"The guest room is in constant use, and during this winter, it has been quite warm," says the owner. This illustrates how Chris has used the northern aspect at the back to its full advantage.

He has ensured that the lawn levels out seamlessly from the deck, bridging the gap between garden and interior.

"The northern aspect out the back is where all the action is," says Chris. "And there is now a better sense of indoor/outdoor space merging."

Although things seem truly integrated, the owner is happily surprised by how guests and family will occupy all types of spaces throughout the home, showing that it still functions as a structure with defined spaces for privacy and retreat.

This is not surprising since he has been awarded the 2008 Australian Institute of Architects' Robin Dods Award for the best residential structure in Queensland. The award recognised his achievement in designing a house at Samford but the attention to detail seen in that home can also be seen in the work put into this New Farm renovation.

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