

essential dream home

A world away



The house
To make a house that enriched the clients' lives while being as durable, timeless and green as possible.

Timeframe
Twelve months to design and 30 months to build.

Favourite features
Beauty and serenity, a place of retreat.

Insiders' tips
Go for quality not quantity.

Green points

- 10 kilowatts of photovoltaic cells allow the house to generate more energy than it uses.
- 45,000-litre rainwater tank, so self sufficient in water (with mains back-up).
- Passive cooling through use of thermal mass, clerestory windows and good cross ventilation.
- Extensive use of energy-efficient lighting.
- Recycled ironbark external timbers.

Architect:
Chris Bligh of Bligh Graham Architects (07) 3289 4566.

- 1 Roof gardens are visible from the front of the house.
- 2 The inner courtyard has a frangipani tree and a pool.
- 3 The rooms in the house vary from intimate to big, open spaces.
- 4 All the living areas include views to the neighbouring bush.

The owners of this city pad reap the benefits of having the bush at their door.

Words **Jane Burton Taylor**
Photos **Jon Linkins**

WHEN a couple consulted Brisbane architect Chris Bligh with a specific wish list, he came up with a design that would meet their needs and fulfil an architectural idea of a home on the threshold between city and bush.

The block the semi-retired couple had found was literally the last in a small housing estate on the edge of Brisbane. It was this position, next to a native reserve, that inspired Bligh to create a haven that was exposed to the elements and the bush.

They wanted a house that would be flexible and have high-quality finishes but be as green as possible, Bligh says. It also had

to incorporate some idiosyncratic spaces: a studio or craft room for her, a workshop for him and two garages, one large enough to house a boat or caravan.

Bligh came up with a design for a house with an internal courtyard hub, but also with one long side wall that breathed, linking all the living areas with views to the neighbouring bush.

"West of this house there is no more consolidated built fabric. It is acreage, then national park, so there is this sense of being on the edge of the city," Bligh says.

"I was keen for the house to amplify that boundary between city and bush. The idea of the wall is that it creates a sort of fragment of a city wall, like those in the hill towns of Italy, where country and city precincts meet."

This idea of overlapping country and city was followed through in the robust external materials of the house – primarily white masonry walls and timber – and in Bligh's use of roof gardens.

In terms of planning, the architect opted for three levels. The basement has high windows and serves as a workshop, the living area and main bedroom are on the central floor, while the top level has two more bedrooms plus a craft room. Entry to the house is via a short flight of steps.

"The main living courtyard space is raised up almost one metre above the ground level, so when you enter you step up," Bligh says.

"This gives a sense of leaving the world behind and walking into the heart of the house. It also allows the basement to have

clerestory windows to the park side, to give some air and light to that basement space."

Only when inside the house do the occupants see the idyllic inner courtyard, with a pool and a mature frangipani.

The sitting and dining space, and the main bedroom and ensuite, all open to this north-facing courtyard.

As with the rooms in the house, which range from cosy and intimate to double-height spaces, the openings between inside and out vary in size and in the way they are shaded or can be exposed via adjustable screens.

In the living space there are high-level windows and louvres to the courtyard, designed to regulate light or vent hot air.

Similarly, on the opposite park-side of

the room, there are deep bay windows with sliding timber batten screens. "They can fine-tune their sense of enclosure by opening or closing the screens," Bligh says.

The openings fit within the overall concept for the house as a junction or interface between the man-made city world and the country.

"The main living room is all about that threshold zone," Bligh says.

"The bay windows on one side overlook the park and out to the bush beyond. On the other side, sliding doors open up to a courtyard garden which acts as an inner sanctum."

On the top floor, above the front section of the house, the same theme is continued.

There are two bedrooms with windows backed by sliding timber screens and the craft room has a deck at one end and a large

screened window opening to the inner courtyard at the other.

In this room, the architect's long-term planning is most clearly evident. The room has a small kitchenette and a pull-down bed concealed in the wall.

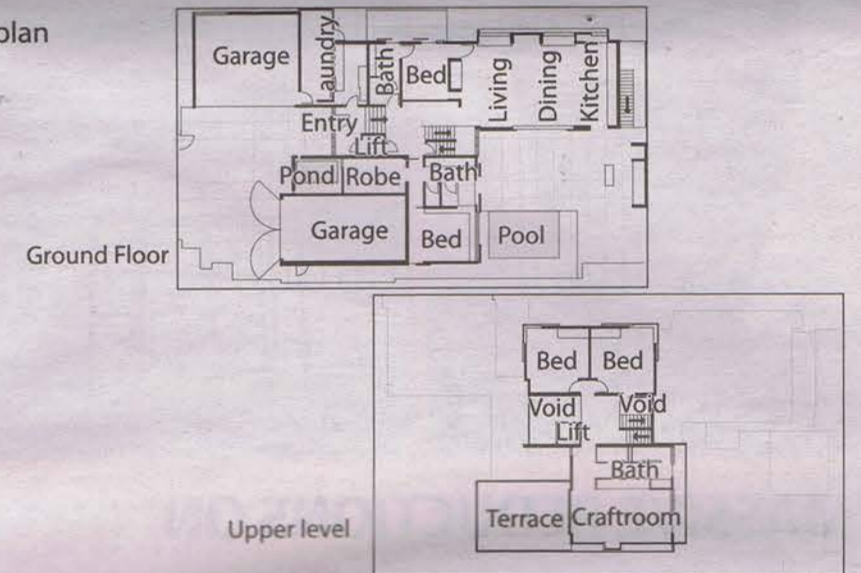
In the future, the room could be re-invented for a live-in carer.

Similarly, but also discreetly, Bligh has incorporated a lift beside the main entry with access to all three levels.

"They really wanted to be there until their last days," Bligh says, "so the house was designed for longevity and to be as flexible as possible."

This was the first time the owners had used an architect and they are delighted with their new home. So much so, they have commissioned Bligh Graham Architects for a philanthropic project – an outback art gallery – and for a house for their children.

Floor plan



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