



# natural BEAUTY

A couple's love and labour has turned a modest '70s cottage into a stunning eco-friendly family home

STORY ROSEMARY RYAN STYLING RACHEL PETERS  
PHOTOGRAPHY SIMON WHITBREAD

Raw materials are allowed to shine in Kim and her family's cleverly renovated home, from the weathered ironbark deck (opposite) that stretches along the north-facing side of the rear extension, to the polished concrete flooring, which flows from the open-plan living area out to the courtyard (this page). "We wanted an outdoor area that was part of the house and truly undercover – we eat out here a lot," says Kim, whose daughter Emma is pictured. This stunning space is dominated by a wall of silvertop ash, cleverly disguising a double garage. A bird nest-like pendant light from Mance Design takes centrestage over a teak table from Oishi in Sydney, teamed with retro-chic replica US Navy chairs (try Matt Blatt for similar). >



Opening the door to her beachside home in Newcastle on the New South Wales coastline instantly makes lawyer and internet entrepreneur Kim feel like she's on vacation. Located on a landmark bluff, the home, which Kim shares with her husband and their three children, is a serene blend of timber, polished concrete and glass, all combined in an eco-smart, contemporary design that guarantees a delicious breeze on sultry summer days. "I love it," says Kim simply. "Just driving down the hill towards home, my shoulders relax. It's like being on a permanent holiday, living here."

Kim and her husband had been house-hunting for seven years before they finally found this home, five years ago. It was a modest three-bedroom 1970s red brick cottage – "pretty ordinary," as Kim describes it – but boasting the drawcards of a dream location and a 700-square-metre block, allowing plenty of room to expand. With Kim's husband – an accountant who's very handy on the tools – assisting in the construction, the couple set about extending and transforming the property into the relaxed, sustainable and low-fuss family home they had envisioned. "We moved from a renovated bigger home into this little box and lived here while we did the extension, so a bit of angst came with that," explains Kim whose children, Tom, Lucy and Emma, were then aged 12, 14 and 17. "But we promised the kids it would be fantastic."

After an 18-month renovation, the home is indeed fantastic. From the street, it remains understated, belying the spectacular modern

space stretching beyond the front door. The original structure was retained but completely gutted; it now houses the kids' bedrooms and bathroom, and the master bedroom and ensuite. A new section was added to the rear, running the length of the southern boundary, which in turn doubles the living space. Inside, new and old have been seamlessly integrated, connected via a structural bridge and hallway, laid with honey-coloured blackbutt flooring. This thoroughfare opens out to an expansive living area flooded with light, which encapsulates the understated simplicity Kim was after.

Even before settling on the purchase of the property, Kim, who previously ran a homewares business in Newcastle and now runs design blog DesignHunter.net, had enlisted local architect Shane Blue of Bourne Blue Architecture. She had long admired his style of combining raw materials, and his expertise in designing sustainable homes. In addition to a raw polished concrete floor, the finished home is rich with tactile timbers: New Guinea rosewood, silvertop ash, ironbark, blackbutt and limed hoop pine. "I get such a kick out of walking out the back and seeing all that timber, and a space that's so open to the outdoors – all green and leafy," says Kim.

Now, Kim has dipped back into the law profession, launching a legal website, LawCorner, that sees her working from home. But whatever she's immersed in, Kim relishes every day of spending time in her beautiful home. "It's an amazing feeling," she says. "You do a lot of work and then at the end it's everything you'd hoped it would be."

**KITCHEN** With any messy prep hidden in the scullery, the front of the kitchen is all clean lines, with sleek Scandinavian-influenced hoop pine cabinetry by Magnet Kitchens. The large bench in extra-thick Caesarstone, teamed with Tolix stools, is a favourite spot for the kids to perch, while the teak dining table from Oishi is big enough to entertain a crowd. "This is actually an extension table but it's up all the time because we've always got people here," says Kim, who chose a David Trubridge pendant to complement the hoop pine ceilings and cabinets. The ceilings are stepped up from the front of the block, a clever architectural trick to provide visual interest and reduce the extension's visibility from the front of the house. >

"Choosing a builder with the same commitment to details was a lifesaver" - Kim

**HALLWAY**

The home's earthy, modern interior, with its blend of wood, concrete and glass, exudes a relaxed barefoot coastal aesthetic. A rich, honey-hued blackbutt bench and floorboards stretch from the front entry, giving way to polished concrete as it opens into the living area.



**SCULLERY** Stainless-steel benches and shelving give this space a commercial kitchen feel, all hidden behind a sliding door. "Our previous house was open plan as well and as soon as you had dinner the dirty dishes were in full view," says Kim. "With the scullery, you just close the door on it all. Fantastic!"



**BENCHTOP**  
40mm engineered stone surface in Organic White, \$500/sqm, Caesarstone.

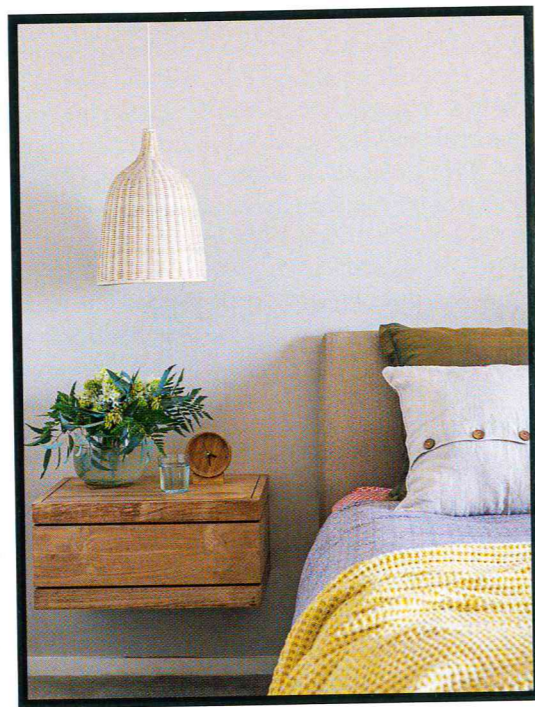


**VANITY**  
 'Godmorgon/Odensvik'  
 washstand with  
 2 drawers in White  
 Stained Oak Effect,  
 \$549, Ikea.

"There isn't a thing that is not exactly how I wanted it" - Kim

**MAIN BATHROOM (top left)** In the main bathroom, - the kids' domain - a simple oak-look vanity with twin basins and a mirror, both from Ikea, create a stylish but inexpensive bathroom look. The tiles, from Tile Warehouse, are used here and in the ensuite, to create a connection between the two spaces.

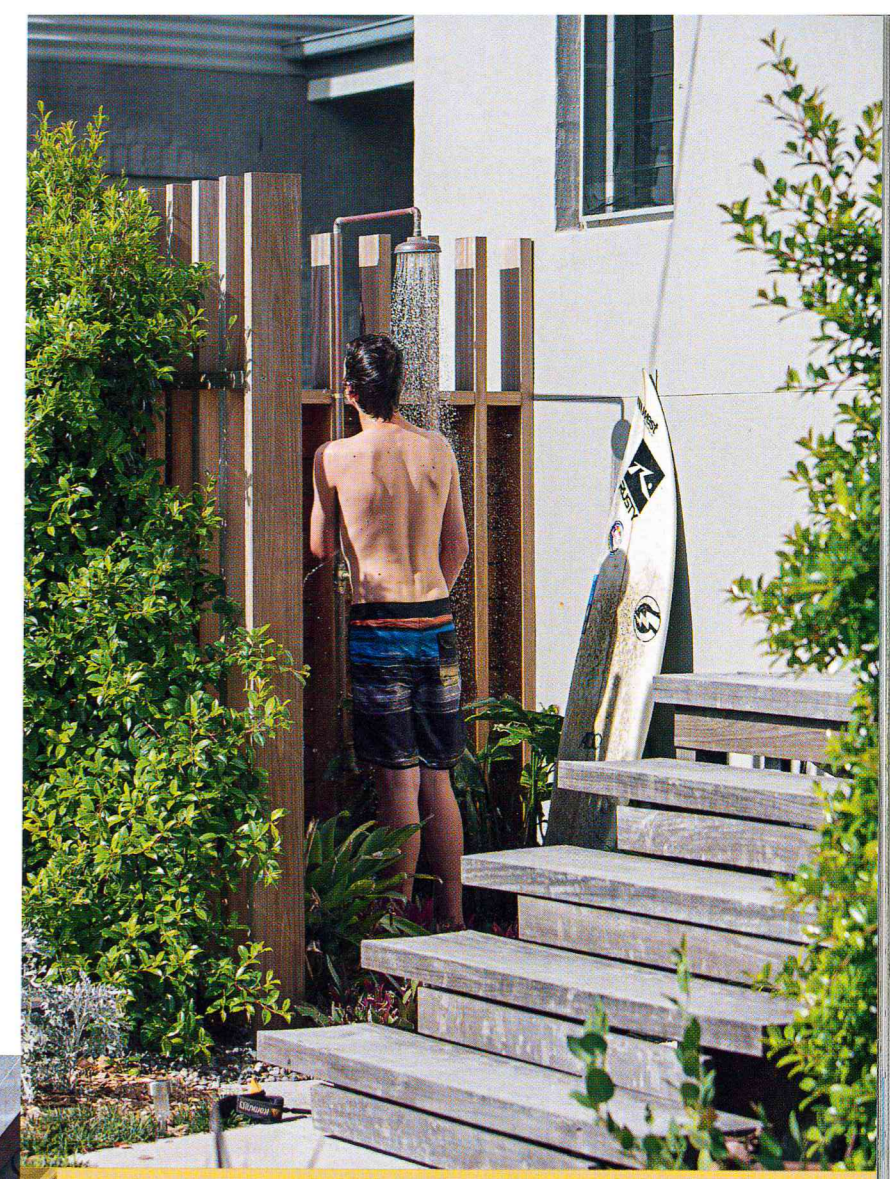
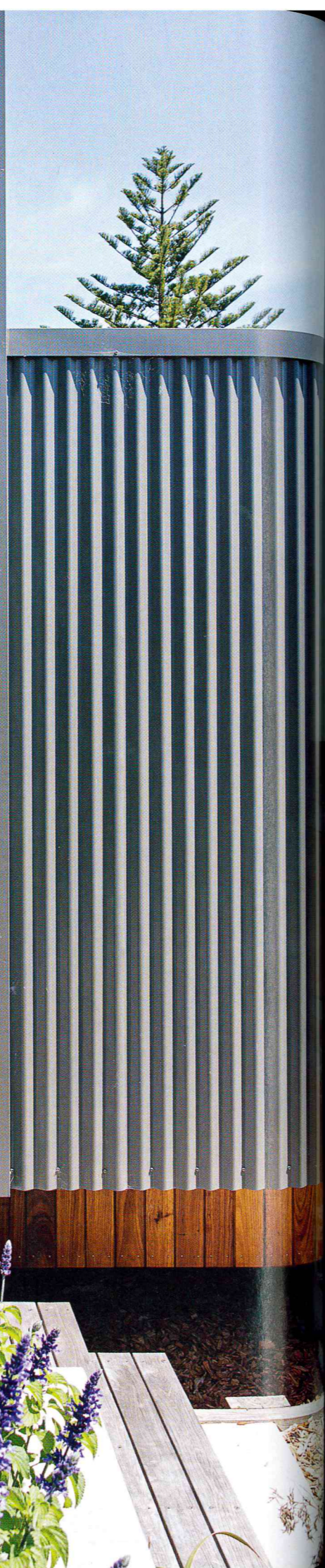
**ENSUITE (right)** The peaceful vibe of the master bedroom flows into the ensuite, with its simple grey and white palette, punctuated by a 'Pixel' towel from Citta Design, and luxurious bathtub sourced from Renovation Boys. Another layer of the tropical escape feel is added with an antique Balinese door, positioned beyond the window, bought when Kim owned homewares store Habitat in Newcastle. The handy teak stool is also from Habitat.



**MASTER BEDROOM (above & opposite)** With natural-hued Stainmaster carpet underfoot, billowing floor-to-ceiling curtains wafting onto a private balcony, and some clever sound-reduction technology, the master bedroom has a serene beachside vibe. "We have acoustic insulation in the walls, which means there's less noise from the kids," says Kim. "It's all about having a little sanctuary." Indian-themed bedlinen from Bed Bath N' Table is complemented by a yellow Citta Design throw and cushions from Jasmine Hall on the custom-made bed from Habitat. Natural tones of Dulux Beige Royal cover the walls.



**WE LOVE**  
*Practical & pretty*  
 Kim has an eye for interior design that's user-friendly as well as beautiful - her choice of Ikea pendant lights over the bedside tables is a case in point. "I love that I can quickly clean the tops without having to be moving lamps," says Kim. "I wanted things to be low-maintenance. I'm thankful for those small things that make your life that little bit easier."



“There’s just something about the northern orientation and the sea breeze” - Kim



**DECK (opposite & top left)** A wall of sliding doors connects the new section of the home with a long deck in weathered ironbark. Furniture from Cane-line, accessorised with a fun yellow planter from Adairs, creates a lovely spot to relax.

**FRONT ENTRY (top right)** Beachside living means the outdoor shower at the foot of the home’s entry gets a constant workout. “We come back from the beach and get straight under the shower,” says Kim. The ironbark steps, finished to have a naturally weathered driftwood look, double as a clever storage area, with surfboards tucked underneath.

**LIVING ROOM (left)** Kim asked architect Shane Blue to incorporate as many eco-friendly attributes as possible in the home. They include louvres for cross-ventilation, thermal mass in the concrete floor, rainwater harvesting and solar panels. Fixed awnings above the deck are positioned to allow the sun to heat the concrete flooring in winter but protect it from hot rays in summer. “It’s brilliant,” says Kim. “The house is built so well for the climate, it feels beautiful all year round.” >

## CONTACTS

*Architect*  
Shane Blue,  
Bourne Blue Architecture,  
(02) 4929 1450,  
bourneblue.com.au.

*Builder*  
J&K O'Connell Builders,  
(02) 4945 2445.

**PAINT**  
Wash & Wear 101  
Barrier Technology  
in Vivid White,  
\$74.95/4L, Dulux.



**TV ROOM** The separate TV room was an important inclusion for Kim. "It's pretty well the kids' domain, somewhere they can play games and watch movies away from the main living area," says Kim. "Plus we have a sofa bed in there, so it doubles as the guest room." A built-in desk provides a space for homework.

## INSIDE STORY

### *Who lives here?*

Kim, lawyer, founder of legal website LawCorner, and interior design blogger at DesignHunter.net; her accountant husband; their three children, Tom, 16, Lucy, 18, Emma, 21; and rabbit Flash.

### *What were the biggest challenges?*

Kim: "Living through it! It was a bit squeezey for the family. And the ceiling [in the living room] was a nightmare. It's on multi-levels, and getting the panels to line up was hard."

### *Your favourite part of the home?*

"It's hard to choose. I love the sanctuary of our bedroom but also the back of the home with those beautiful timber doors that open to the backyard."

### *What was top of your brief?*

"As many eco-friendly attributes as possible. We wanted a sustainable and low-maintenance home with that warm, earthy, tactile aesthetic. And all pretty much on one level."

### *Favourite interiors haunt?*

"There are great places in Newcastle but I still like to go to Sydney. Koskela is a favourite."

### *What is still to come?*

"The living room is a work in progress. I'd like some Aboriginal art there but I'd like to go myself to get it rather than just buy it in a shop."



Cushions from Citta Design and Emily Ziz add a twist of lemon on the modular sofa from Lounge.



A swish ceramic light by Szilvia Gyorgy hangs in the powder room.

## PLANS

