


home casual luxury

A photograph of a modern beach house at dusk. The house features large glass windows and doors, revealing a well-lit interior with a sofa and a television. A wooden deck with a dining table and chairs is visible in the foreground. A large tree is on the left side of the frame.

casual luxury

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Designed to maximise a stunning seaside location, Nellies is the kind of beach house we'd all love to call our own. With inspired architecture and a sense of casual luxury, the Pacific Palms development surpassed the hopes of two families seeking a beachside holiday haven south of Forster.



The smell of the sea, the feel of coastal breezes and the sight of waves crashing on the shore line below - Nellies is a quintessential Australian beach house. More than fulfilling its design brief of "upmarket camping" the home is deeply connected to the local environment, while offering a casual luxury far superior to the average tent lifestyle.

Nestled in the sand dunes behind Boomerang Beach, you can just see the angled roof lines from the sand.

With lightweight architecture and a natural feel, the eastern façade seems to lightly perch atop the dune rather than be anchored to it.

Stunning without being pretentious, Nellies also boasts a clever design, creating two mirror-reverse dwellings within challenging space constraints.

Using a shared central wall as a 'service spine,' it's a stylish dual occupancy development that doesn't compromise privacy.

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OVE: The steepness of the site is only appreciated at street level, with a rise leading to the two single garages with an internal loft space.

BELOW: The centre of the living room appears like a giant light-well, thanks to high timber-framed window panels which connect the walls to the raised ceilings.



A joint project between two families, co-owner Tim Ryan attributes the design success to Bourne + Blue Architecture, in utilising the beachfront site to its greatest potential.

That potential was tied to the dwellings' purpose as much as their visual aesthetic, providing holiday homes which could also be rented out for much of the year.

"As the BCA (Building Code of Australia) and local council constraints on the site would only allow one single garage at the front for each dwelling we had to limit our floor area to 124sqm - which was another constraint of the BCA," Tim explained of the tight space limits.

With the design brief also specifying low-maintenance as a priority, Tim said the building was treated "as though it was a boat in many ways" with marine grade fittings and fibreglass chosen for durability.

The steepness of the site is only appreciated at street level, with a rise leading to those two single garages, each with an internal loft space ingeniously designed by the builder, Danny Godwin.

Used to store private belongings such as surfboards, the loft ensures the owners can enjoy occasional weekend visits with as little packing and fuss as possible.

Entry to the two properties is via walkways at opposing sides, with landing style steps minimising the impact of the ascent. Side plantings of Australian natives and a brush-style fence provide both ambiance and privacy to the entry level courtyard.

This is where the house design has its 'wow' factor, with extensive use of glass, exterior brushbox timber with a Satin Intergrain finish and sections of compressed fibreboard cladding, mainly on the second storey. Finished in a eucalypt green hue, the colour lessens the impact of the upper level by blending it with the sky and bush, while the timber has a more grounded feel.

Aside from operating as a functional area to connect the pavilions, the entry courtyard provides a sense of space and flow thanks to its uniform decking.

Placed to maximise the stunning beach views, the external view of the living zone appears like three interwoven boxes, with the highest featuring a dramatic sloping roof.

One wall has a bank of louvres, which assist ventilation in the dining area, while the second shape accents the fibreboard cladding. The third

'box' features timber, with the steel flue of the internal wood fire rising outside its roof line, only to re-enter the angled roof above.

Simple yet dramatic, the varying textures and angles add dimension and visual interest, elevating the living quarters beyond a simple cube.

Accessing the room via an oversized sliding door, the flooring is again Brushbox timber, marrying interior and exterior textures.

The centre of the living room appears like a giant light-well, thanks to high timber-framed window panels which connect the walls to the raised ceiling.

White in-built cabinetry around the contemporary wood fire provides sleek storage on one wall, facing the kitchen on the far side of the room.

Providing both warmth and atmosphere on windy winter afternoons, it's hard to imagine the room without the fire as a focal point, a feature on the must-have list of Tim's wife Catherine.

The galley kitchen has an overall white theme, with Baumatic appliances sourced from Winning Appliances at Newcastle. Both an impressive front kitchen bench top and nearby dining table have been fashioned in the same timber as the flooring, adding warmth to the minimalist space.

"We just wanted to make it look like it was almost part of the floor," Tim said of the flowing lines of the bench top.

Repetition of natural textures and colours, teamed with a white background provide the bulk of the property's interior palette, creating beach house simplicity while exaggerating the sense of space.

The one colour exception in the living area is the over-sized black modular couch which was bought at Sydney's, Space Furniture.

Teamed with bright cushions and a shaggy floor rug, the couch provides room for the whole family and creates a hallway effect in the open plan space, leading out towards the beach.

With the house used primarily by other holidaymakers, Tim said black has proven a sound colour choice.

"We get there two or three times a year but it's a family holiday place and so many kids have been through that place," he said.

With direct access to Boomerang Beach via wide, winding timber steps, the popularity is understandable. Tim said the dune is currently being rejuvenated and saltbush removed, with hopes the beach trail will eventually resemble a nature walk.

Whether you choose to follow the path or admire the beach views from the front alfresco area, the spot is hard to beat.

Australian natives such as Banksia have been planted here for privacy and protection from the



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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The pavilion style home has an upstairs parents retreat, also ideal during group visits to the holiday house, timber decking provides a streamlined look between buildings, extensive use of glass allows light to flood in at the beachfront property. OPPOSITE: The outdoor bathroom is concealed by a garage roller door when the house isn't in use.





elements, particularly from gusty coastal winds.

Continuing the idea of the central spine of the home, the dividing wall of the beachfront courtyard features in-built seating on either side, complemented by outdoor tables perfect for barbecue dinners.

With the design brief also specifying low-maintenance as a priority, Tim said the building was treated "as though it was a boat in many ways" with marine grade fittings and fibreglass chosen for durability.

While the exterior timberwork requires occasional maintenance, the fibreglass and copper roofing are particularly robust.

The inevitable tracking of sand up the beach stairs has proven to be no great problem, with two central outdoor showering areas helping curb sand indoors.

Tim said adults rinse off at a shower near the courtyard, while the kids love the nearby outdoor bathroom.

Concealed by a garage roller door when the

house isn't in use, this bathroom is reminiscent of surf club facilities, with a central vanity separating the toilet and shower areas. Three timber panels beneath the shower remove to reveal a deep bath underneath, with visiting kids known to jump in there together to rinse off the sand.

Especially easy to keep clean, the entire bathroom can even be hosed down.

For sand that does end up indoors on the brushbox or polished yellow-tongue flooring, Tim remains nonchalant.

"The whole idea is that it's not a precious little area where you've got to really take a lot of care," Tim said. "It's a beach house - you're going to put sand everywhere, you might (as well) have surfaces that are easy to sweep up and keep clean."

While extended stays may necessitate use of the full-sized laundry, hanging space has been isolated to the far courtyard, adjacent to the bunk room.

Considering the fact Tim and Cath have



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ABOVE: Clever design has made the most of limited space. BELOW LEFT: An inbuilt bunk has a lounge underneath that also converts to extra beds when needed
BELOW RIGHT: The kitchen benchtop features the same timber as the flooring.



four kids, and the amount of families who visit Nellies, bedroom layout has proved especially important when allowing for larger numbers.

While it wouldn't probably be considered big enough as a permanent bedroom, a narrow room opening to the courtyard has been fitted with a bunk for those times when extra beds are needed.

Sometimes used by two kids if one of Tim's children has a friend visiting, the room provides the option for additional privacy.

Adults seeking privacy usually head to the upstairs parents' retreat, which features a bedroom and ensuite in a good-sized space. Tim said couples without kids or those who have older children generally gravitate to this separate room.

Back downstairs a split-level design best suits younger families, with parents separated from the kids by an interconnecting door.

A few steps down from the main bedroom and ensuite, there's a clever double loft bed, which forms the bulkhead for an in-built bunk below.

The bunk is complemented by an in-built lounge underneath, which can also be transformed into extra beds when needed.

Again modelled on a boat's efficient use of space, Tim said this room allows the kids to bunk in together, while still being able to reach parents nearby.

While the quarters have been designed with families in mind Tim said the rooms are versatile, accommodating holiday groups with varying requirements.

With Tim project managing the 2004 construction as well as installing audio and computer cabling, he had the chance to work alongside builder Danny Godwin and his team.

It was during a group chat about the local area that Tim learned about Pacific Palms' history, leading to the naming of the property.

Wanting to tie the beach house to the local area, the name Nellies was chosen after Nellies Rock. After a little more research it was discovered that Nellies Rock was named after a German lady, one of the first settlers in the area, who used to stand on the rock each day, catching fish.

With the two properties dubbed Nellies North and Nellies South, sign writing strips on the glass sliding doors bear the relevant name, a nice personal touch by Tim's graphic designer

brother, Peter.

Extensive use of glass has been an obvious material choice considering the location, bathing the properties in light.

"If there's a negative to Nellies it's that you don't get to sleep in," Tim said "because every room is so light. But we kind of figure, it's a beach house by design, you don't want to be sleeping in to 10 o'clock. It's a place for siestas but not to sleep in."

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Approaching four years since construction, Tim has since worked with architects Shane Bourne and Rachael Blue on other projects, and remains in contact with builder Danny Godwin, his team and landscaper, Sally Cooke to ensure the house stays in peak condition.

Considering the space constraints, site gradient and decision to build as a partnership, Tim feels fortunate that the project flowed so smoothly, with everyone involved still enjoying the occasional get together at the property.

"The whole process of Nellies is quite special in that regard, there's a real connection to the craftsmen that made it and the architects that designed it and the partnership - Mick (Michael Summers) and Louise (Slavin) have been lifelong friends."

Having happily defied any building challenges, Tim said there's just one thing he would change about the house design, with an alteration being considered.

"...The only thing that we could have done differently is to give a bit of shade and weather protection on that central deck to make it a bit more liveable - but there's also something really nice about the openness of walking out there."

Happy with the overall design and the comfort level the house offers, it's a place the Ryan family returns to when possible - just as the name of the beach implies.

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