

Multi-layered living

With very little wasted through the build, this former worker's cottage has been stylishly renovated to stay cool through the intense heat of a Brisbane summer.

WORDS Emma Scragg

PHOTOGRAPHY Lara Masselos

WHEN ARCHITECT STEPHANIE

Skyring returned to Queensland from London in 2000 she already knew she wanted to live in a “really urban place”. And so, she settled on a tiny 48-square-metre worker's cottage in Petrie Terrace, built in 1863. “Living and socialising in the old character houses and pubs in the UK taught me an appreciation of small spaces that we don't have in Brisbane,” reflects Stephanie. “Small spaces bring people together.”

Twelve years later though – now with husband Michael, and their daughter on the way – it was time to expand. “I wanted to separate the living and bedrooms and create something open plan without destroying the house,” she says. She retained the tiny

lounge and a stairwell, kept the original four rooms for bedrooms and extended the additional private spaces to the rear. Before the slab was added, the whole original timber house was raised to give sufficient head height to downstairs, without making the house too prominent in the streetscape. “I wanted it to remain a humble house at the front,” says Stephanie. Retaining the original brick fireplace limited the raise to 400 millimetres, and with the reconfigured rooms transformed it from a “kitchen fireplace to a lounge room fireplace”.

A stair of recycled hardwood spirals down to the new open plan living areas, cool and connected to the ground by a warm-hued polished concrete slab. As a

contrast to the upper level, “downstairs is modern and discreet”. Existing steel beams spanning the width of the space were left exposed and painted black against the new infill ceiling. Clever planning in the kitchen zone allowed for a large laundry/mud/bike/storage room, pantry and food preparation all within efficient reach of one another. An unusual three-layered kitchen



Storage is integrated wherever possible in the small house, including under the inbuilt seating in the new living space on the lower level. A hatch hidden in the timber panelling opens to the cool undercroft for ventilation in summer.



Remaining a humble cottage at the front, at the rear the house has been extended to accommodate two levels of living space plus a mezzanine study.



evolved to make the most of the space available; instead of constructing a wall and splashback behind the sink, she instead left it open to the pantry behind to create a ‘third’ preparation area. “It works really, really well,” says Stephanie.

By setting the extension further from the east boundary, morning sunshine sneaks down the side in winter. Curtains in the living room reduce heat gain in summer. Although the original upstairs rooms with single-skin timber walls can get warm on hot days, they cool quickly with breezes funnelled from the lower courtyard up the stairs and out through the secure front screen door and the loft space. In the

living room, a hatch hidden in the timber panelling opens to the cool undercroft for crossflow in an otherwise airflow ‘dead corner’. All in all, the house is a perfect retreat from Brisbane’s increasingly intense summers.

“There is no wasted space,” says Stephanie, adding that good use of space was an important consideration in all her designs. It means carefully integrating discreet storage wherever possible, such as in the stairwell where existing beams created an opportunity to incorporate cupboards on all sides, and in the living room a large storeroom hides behind secret doors in the timber panelling.

The inviting garden, fed by the rainwater tank and worm farm, feels much larger thanks to the thoughtful planting design. “When we remove the insect screens and open all the doors, the living spaces extend to the boundary, to bring the outside in. We don’t have a deck so the dining area is effectively a Clayton’s deck to become our indoor-outdoor space.” The back garden, main bedroom and loft are totally shaded from summer afternoon sun by a neighbouring tree; deciduous vines are growing over trellises to the east as a further buffer. While waiting for the front garden to establish, Stephanie successfully convinced council to dig up an existing bitumen



When the flyscreens are removed the dining space opens straight out into the garden. With no space for a deck, this room is a good proxy for indoor-outdoor living.



The original timber worker's cottage was raised 400mm to give sufficient head height, and allowed for the lower level to be converted into a new, private open plan living area.



By creating a new space downstairs, architect and homeowner Stephanie fulfilled her desire for an open plan living space without destroying the character of the house. The stonework foundation of the original fireplace and existing steel beams (painted black) have become features.



Where you might expect a splashback the kitchen is actually open to the pantry, which creates extra preparation space behind the sinks, making the most of the tight space available. The benchtop is of recycled hardwood. The house is all-electric, with induction for cooking.



↑ The house has no air conditioning and instead relies on plenty of ventilation, ceiling fans, and the shade from a neighbouring tree to keep the house cool in Brisbane’s increasingly hot summers.



↑ A small mezzanine study is built into the cathedral roof space over the new main bedroom. Openable windows help draw breezes from the garden up through the house.

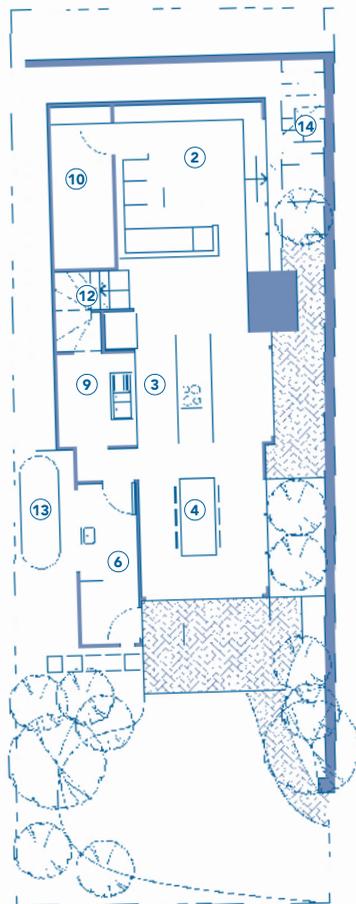
footpath for grass to reduce radiant heat. She is now campaigning for street trees.

Stephanie also minimised waste in the new build. Very little of the original fabric of the early cottage was demolished. Flooring removed for the stairwell was used to repair the remaining floor and the wall framing was retained as a screen to the stair. In the bathroom, the original hoop pine chamferboards and braced frame are a feature, revealed from behind fibro. The same large format tiles were used in both bathrooms to minimise waste and simplify cleaning and laundry tiles were remnants from a previous renovation.

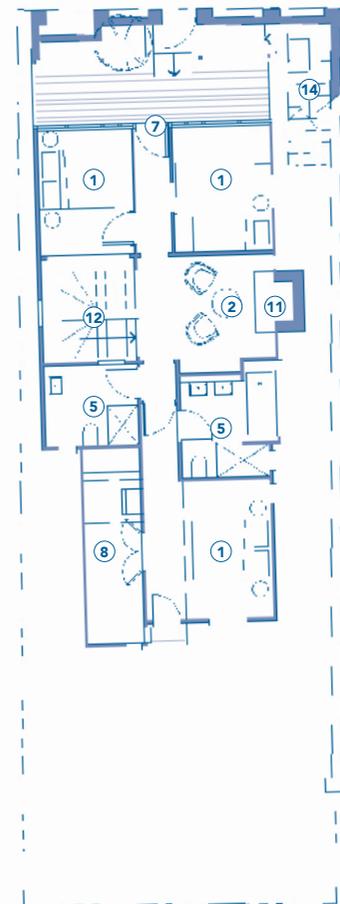
All the doors on the bedroom level and most of the windows are an eclectic mix of secondhand; as are all the pendant lights. Local plantation pine was used for the few new windows and doors. Re-milled salvaged timber has been used extensively as wall panelling, kitchen benches, bathroom cabinetry, furniture, screens and flooring upstairs. Stephanie had looked into recycled timber but found it was “too hard to get a uniform job lot”.

Although the rooms in Stephanie’s home are relatively small, each one has textural and spatial interest, as well as creative storage. “Kids really like it because of all the little spaces and places to hide.” Someday in the future, she would like to design another home with a larger backyard: “where we could have loads of family and friends around all of the time.” But for now, it fits her family like a glove. 5

GROUND FLOOR PLAN



UPPER FLOOR PLAN



LEGEND

- ① Bedroom
- ② Living
- ③ Kitchen
- ④ Dining
- ⑤ Bathroom
- ⑥ Laundry/store
- ⑦ Entry
- ⑧ WIR (study over)
- ⑨ Pantry
- ⑩ Store
- ⑪ Fireplace
- ⑫ Stairs
- ⑬ Rainwater
- ⑭ External stairs

Petrie Terrace Renovation

—Specifications

Credits

DESIGNER

Stephanie Skyring

BUILDER

Gibb Renovations

PROJECT TYPE

Renovation

PROJECT LOCATION

Brisbane

COST

\$600,000

SIZE

House 170 m²

Land 187 m²

Sustainable Features

HOT WATER

- Existing Edwards solar hot water system retained.

WATER SAVING

- 2000L slimline corrugated tank from Tankworks
- Water efficient fixtures and appliances.

PASSIVE DESIGN / HEATING & COOLING

- Design optimises natural light from the north and east
- Polished concrete slab on ground level for thermal mass, with curtains on windows to reduce heat loss in winter
- Large windows and doors opening to south, east and north to optimise cross flow ventilation
- Traditional central hallway maintained – with doors at north and south (in straight lines) to maximise cross ventilation
- Insulation in all walls and roof
- Roof eaves and awnings for shade and rain protection.

ACTIVE HEATING & COOLING

- Hunter Pacific Revolution ceiling fans to bedrooms and lounge, from Milton Lighting.

BUILDING MATERIALS

- Floors: polished concrete slab; recycled hardwood timber flooring in new extension from Big Red Shed; loft floor is Forbo Marmoleum
- Walls: external cladding fibre cement sheeting with timber battens to joins; vertical weatherboard detail is recycled hardwood, weatherboards from demolition yard
- Polyester insulation in walls and roof and under floor (uses recycled content) from Higgins Insulation
- Cabinetry: recycled hardwood from Big Red Shed used for kitchen benchtop and cabinetry doors/tops, stair balustrade, handrails
- Terracotta pavers from EcoOutdoor.

WINDOWS & GLAZING

- Timber feature doors to all internal rooms sourced from demolition yards
- New pine windows Envirowood Joinery from Finlayson
- Aluminium doors and windows Vantage Aluminium range from Bretts.

LIGHTING

- Thoughtful lighting design ensured appropriate lighting style for task and minimises the number of lights
- Lights on separate switches to avoid unnecessary lighting and excess energy use
- All LED lighting Milton Lighting, Lumen8 and pendant light shades demolition yards.

PAINTS, FINISHES & FLOOR COVERINGS

- Timber wall paints (internal and external). Resene; timber floor water borne clear finish, Bona Traffic
- Polished concrete floor HiperFloor Ozgrind
- Timber bench Treatex Traditional clear satin oil
- Bathroom tiles: The Tile Mob.

OTHER ESD FEATURES

- All-electric house with induction cooking
- Worm farms for composting household scraps into garden fertiliser
- Frog pond, native beehive and birdbath in garden to encourage biodiversity
- Bird nesting box on old timber flag pole (currently occupied by ringtail possum) still waiting for parrots to come back to inner city and take up residence
- Natives and flowering plant and tree species to encourage birds, butterflies and insects
- Choice of smaller house in inner-city location in higher density area enables walking to shops, cafés, restaurants, entertainment and other amenities to avoid using car.



With access through the back garden, the laundry on the lower level doubles as mud room and bike storage.

