

HOME & GARDEN

weekender.



Judith Whitfield



MODERN TOUCH: The cottage was opened up with new ideas. Pictures: Fabric Architecture



MODERN TOUCHES: Custom tables, smart cabinetry.



STUNNING: Blackbutt timber kitchen made by Loughlin Furniture.

Cottage reborn

HERE'S something quintessentially Australian about a cottage. Not the type with a thatched roof and chimney, but the beach shack kind: single storey, weatherboard, tin roof, a place to sit and watch the world go by.

This 1960s cottage in Toukley epitomises those vibes, but has undergone a renovation and extension in order to modernise the experience.

Undertaken in two stages, the Woodworker's Cottage and Woodworker's Barn, owners Rob and Jess Loughlin were raising their family in the dwelling when they decided it was time to make improvements. They approached Brent Fitzpatrick at Fabric Architecture to work on a new vision, without losing its original charm.

In simple terms, the brief was to "transform a dark and disconnected house into a light-filled coastal home," Fitzpatrick said.

"It was a three-bedroom, super dark super pokey rabbit warren with rooms everywhere. There was no connection to the sunroom at back, there was a large laundry, and a dark kitchen at the centre."

"They found they needed a bit more space after a couple of years, plus a rumpus area or retreat, as well as additional storage."

With no need to adjust the original footprint of the home, it was realised that the improved orientation could be made through internal renovations and readjustments, a small addition, plus some cosmetic work on the facade. The garage was to be overhauled to create the additional space required, whether it be a rumpus room, parent's retreat or even converted back into a garage if needed.

The Loughlins run a boutique furniture and woodwork company called Loughlin Furniture, and so their own designs and ideas were integral to the overall look and feel of the renovation.

Working with Hudson Lane builders, Brent, Rob and Jess developed mood boards and designs until it all came together and building began. The Loughlins' experience and skill as master craftsmen transformed drawings on paper into something quite special. Their exquisite timber joinery is evident throughout the build.

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FRESH LOOK: Colorbond roofing and Weathertex cladding.



THE BARN: A special project in itself, a great family space.

A case in point are the unique barn doors on steel rails which connect the central living area to the laundry, main bathroom and extra bedroom.

"The barn door idea came from a discussion with Rob onsite," Fitzpatrick said. "Once the walls were framed up and the spaces could be seen and felt, he suggested barn doors on one continuous track."

The result is a connected, yet concealed passage which doesn't detract from the overall aesthetic.

A stunning Blackbutt timber kitchen island with inbuilt shelving was also made by Loughlin, as well as the overhead cupboards and custom pantry handle. Splash-back tiling from Beaumont Tiles adds a contemporary geometric element to tie in with the angled lines and lighten the corner wall. Plenty of custom-built furniture - dining table, coffee table, bookshelves and sideboards were made for the space by Loughlin.

The woodwork continues in the bedrooms and beyond. The shiplap on the walls, the beside tables, and bathroom vanity and joinery were completed by hand. The room feels airy and uncrowded. The home is easy to heat and cool and clever use of louver windows in both cottage and barn allow summer breezes in.

"The master bedroom and en suite were design to feel as spacious and luxe as possible in the relatively small space," Fitzpatrick said. "A long robe wraps one wall and continues into the open style en suite. These two tricks blend spaces together and help create the illusion of space."

The steep pitched barn is also a perfect showcase of the timber expertise shown in the main house. The Tasmanian oak barn doors with matching awning are a continuation of the theme; a loft area is accessed by American oak staircase. Velux skylights were added to flood the space with natural light and the polished concrete flooring makes for a robust foundation.

Colorbond roofing and Weathertex cladding refreshed the facade, yet allowing the low-scale home to complement the other fishermen's cottages lining the street. With towering gums and room in the backyard for a kick or catch, it's entirely liveable, not overtly flashy and oozing with character.

"It's not often the end result is better than what we anticipate, but this was one of those projects," Fitzpatrick said. "It's all credit to the client's passion, craftsmanship and style."

The Loughlins decided to sell the property and move closer to the beach. It sold quickly, much more than a humble cottage.



CUSTOM-MADE: In built cabinetry.



CLEVER: En suite in master bedroom.

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