



## Merger plans

Old and new sections connect seamlessly, allowing more space for the family to be together

**W**hen your kitchen looks like something out of a museum, it's probably time to update.

"My sister visited the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney and it had a display of a recreated 1950s kitchen. She told me my kitchen looked like that display," says the owner of this Highgate Hill house.

Although he wasn't enamoured of his outdated kitchen, it wasn't the reason the owner decided to renovate the home he had lived in for 15 years. He'd moved in as a bachelor but when life changed, and marriage and a child came along, it soon became clear the house had to change too.

"Being an original Queenslander, it was very traditional – up on stilts, no back deck and verandas enclosed from way back when," the owner says.

"Our brief was for plans that would give us a decent amount of space to live in, provide an entertainment area and to expand what was about 80sq m of floor space."

This brief was given to architect Nicole Weston, who faced something of a challenge trying to find that extra floor area on the 435sq m block.

"The original house is kept intact, so it turned out to be a build-in-under scenario," Nicole says. "It's a tight footprint."

Upstairs, the main bedroom has been kept in its original location and updated with a walk-in wardrobe and ensuite.

A new bedroom was formed out of the sleep-out that was "a shonky enclosed veranda",

Nicole says, and an existing toilet at the back of the house was kept as a powder room.

"We hacked off the old kitchen that was stuck on the back of the house and replaced it with a living area, and then put on a deck out the back," says Nicole, making the process of transforming the rear area of the house sound easy. What had to happen to get the deck and back garden to line up seems anything but straightforward.

"The slope of the site was severe, so we raised the backyard 2m to get it level with the new back veranda," Nicole says.

Now it's easier to access and so enjoy the outdoor space.

"The other nice thing is that we get to enjoy the views," the owner says. "Although we have a relatively high block, the way the house was originally, it was virtually impossible to get any views."

There's no hiding the views now – Nicole has opened up the house so that there's a sightline through the house from the entry, past the kitchen down to a door opening on to the deck. Although it's a small block and space is at a premium, using the length of the house in this way has created a sense of openness, while also making a smooth transition from the old house to the new section.

Downstairs is entirely new and consists of a study that could also serve as a guest bedroom as it's well separated from the rest of the house for privacy.

The owner says Nicole has successfully merged the old and new parts of the house.



**LEVEL BEST ...** the extended house has views and aligns with the backyard. **Photographs //** Richard Waugh

This would be in part a result of Nicole's focus on the simple yet elegant details of the original house, such as the decorative plaster ceilings, now painted a fresh white, and the light fittings, cleaned and repaired. Under foot, the original blue gum hardwood floors are polished and contrast nicely with the white paintwork.

So although the owner holds no sentimental



connection with that museum piece of a kitchen, there were some parts of the house worth keeping, and they're the elements that work best with the modern updates.

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