



FACT FILE

THE FAMILY

Adam Byak and Lisa Annese and their children Gabby, 11, Juliette, 9, and Christina, 4

THE BRIEF

To build a hi-tech family home that makes the most of its natural attributes

THE ARCHITECT

Hobbs Jamieson Architecture

THE BUILDER

Vanda Constructions

A The innovative box-like design sits in the middle of the block **B** Lisa Annese and Adam Byak **C** At the centre of the house is the kitchen **D** The new driveway provides a neighbour buffer **E** Airflow is increased with louver windows **F** Lisa chose all the bathroom fixtures and fittings **G** The main bedroom **H** Doors opening onto the outdoor area add another dimension to the open-plan living space

Clever thinking

Being butted up against a neighbour's property created light and privacy

It does not take a genius to understand why this family decided to build a new home rather than move. After living in a small house that was “falling to bits” for a few years, owners Lisa Annese and Adam Byak weighed up their options. Their house was positioned next to a reserve in a quiet street close to an arterial road in Roseville, and they loved their neighbourhood, which was scattered with families.

It was the kind of street where children could play in relative safety and the family’s “free range” rabbit would be returned if it managed to escape the yard, so they were reluctant to move on.

“Everyone here knows each others’ children and they all play together. Once you have lived here, it would be very hard to leave,” Lisa says.

However, after consulting architect Adam Hobbs from Hobbs Jamieson Architecture, they realised that renovating might not be the answer.

Smart move

The old house was butted up against its southern neighbour. This gave the occupants little access to natural light and little privacy for anyone either side of the fence. Knocking the old place down and starting from scratch opened up the possibilities in more ways than one.

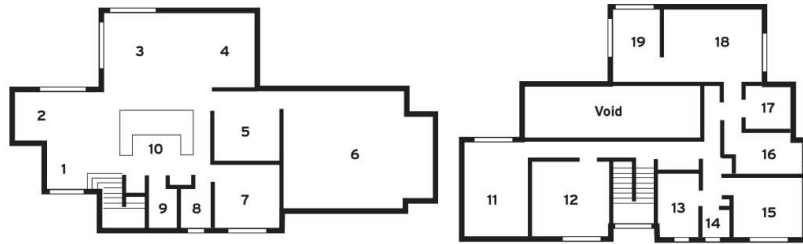


“We could re-position the house on the block, because it was on the wrong side,” David says.

In a street dominated by two-storey Federation houses, however, Adam’s design was a bold move.

Placing the house in the middle of the block, he opted for a series of timber clad “boxes” over two levels. This would give David and Lisa plenty of solar access from the north overlooking the reserve as well as an attractive driveway on the southern side to create a buffer between them and their neighbours.

Given its contemporary feel, Adam anticipated delays with council, but it was approved in three months. He puts this down to the pre-DA (development application)



GROUND FLOOR 1 Entry 2 Sitting room 3 Dining 4 Living 5 Laundry 6 Double garage 7 Study 8 Toilet 9 Pantry 10 Kitchen
FIRST FLOOR 11 Bedroom 12 Bedroom 13 Bathroom 14 Toilet 15 Bedroom 16 Ensuite 17 Walk-in robe 18 Main bedroom 19 Study



outside the square

issues, but the location was perfect. Cue an innovative solution with legs

meetings now available at many Sydney councils, where possible areas of dispute can be ironed out before the lengthy and costly process of approval has begun.

"Council liked the project, but they said we needed to present a strong case for the aesthetic of the project because it was not a double-storey Federation like all the others," Adam says.

"The presentation of that brief came back to the passive environmental attributes of the site."

Material choices

Apart from opening the northern side of the house to the sun, Adam has taken care in his choice of materials, using Australian timbers inside and out. In addition, the paints and carpets all have low VOC (volatile organic compound) emissions, which creates a healthier indoor environment. Energy-efficient fluorescent lighting with dimmers has also been installed.

With the kitchen at the centre of the design, Adam used the natural contours of the site to create different living zones while maintaining an open-plan design.

"With open plan, people picture one big space with everything in it, but even changing the level makes a difference," Adam says.

This works just as well for entertaining as it does for everyday family living.

"It was one of the driving principles – that ability to stand in the middle of the house and be in contact with anyone in the house," Adam says.

Given they have their own post-production company, Lisa and David paid particular attention to new technology. The house has been wired for sound as well as media access and networking throughout.

"We have prepared the house so the girls can do their university degrees at home if they want," Lisa says.

To make the renovation process a little easier for all concerned, everyone had specific areas of expertise. David took charge of lighting, media and entertainment, which includes a large screen that descends automatically from the ceiling in the living room.

Lisa focused on appliances, fittings and fixtures in the kitchen and bathroom.

"I notice different things to David, which is why demarcation worked well. We were lucky the things we cared about, the other was happy to let go," Lisa says.

All decisions were made prior to the start of building work and included in the specifications so that Lisa and David knew exactly how much it would cost.

Now they have an environment where the kids can be playing video games in the living room while adults can enjoy their own music directly outside.



Spirit levels

But this house is not just about interior spaces.

Given the block drops away from the street, Lisa and David were keen to have a flat grassed play area. Adam says this was the hardest part of the job.

After an 11-month building process, David and Lisa are delighted with their new residence.

The design works so well that every part of the house is used and there is no longer a sense of living in their neighbour's pocket.

David and Lisa have also retained the sense of community they so loved, which is just as well.

The rabbit still manages to get out. ■

Robyn Willis

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