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Flying FREE

This Sydney beach house combines enduring appeal with functionality, a necessity for a family of grown-up and very social children!

STORY & STYLING **HELEN ADAMS** PHOTOGRAPHY **SIMON WHITBREAD**

INDOOR/OUTDOOR LIVING The best of indoors and out come together in Joanne and Mark's elegant coastal home, which they share with their daughters, Annabel, Phoebe and Ruby. It's in this open-plan kitchen, living and outdoor space that the home's 'Bahamas meets the Hamptons' vibe is most apparent; one wall has been painted in a warm beige hue, providing a subtly coloured backdrop to comfy cane sofas, dotted with mushroom 'Georgia' embroidered cushions from Alfresco Emporium and 'Palm Print' cushions from Beachwood. >

Birds of a feather flock together, and couple Joanne and Mark designed their nest on Sydney's idyllic Northern Beaches as a welcoming space for their family to gather for years to come. As the parents of three daughters, Ruby and twins Annabel and Phoebe, all of whom are at university and who live at home for at least part of the year, their home reflects the necessity of creating a space that suits the lifestyles of several busy adults – a reality for many Australians.

The couple's search for a suitable home was a lengthy process, with their patience eventually paying off in the form of a 1970s blond-brick bungalow. "It's on a flat, north-facing block, protected from the wind, and close to the village's cafes and restaurants – everything our old house wasn't," explains Joanne. The dated three-bedroom house was livable, but with three grown children, the family needed more space, plus they were keen to open up the living area to take advantage of the backyard and pool. A parents' retreat was also high on the couple's wish list; "We were looking for an escape from our kids!" jokes Joanne.

The project was very much a local affair, with the couple approaching builder Mike Smit, who was building another house on the same street. The existing footprint of the home was retained, but a new level was added upstairs and bi-fold doors were installed at the rear. A work shed was converted into a self-contained unit, giving the children more space, with the potential for a wonderful guesthouse in the future.

Keen to stay involved in the construction, the family rented a house just across the road during the build. "I have to admit, I'm not an easy customer; I popped in every day," says Joanne. "But Mike was great and finished the house on time and on budget."

With the building under control, Joanne could turn her attention to the interiors, and was inspired by the home's beachy setting. "We were aiming for a 'Bahamas meets the Hamptons' feel, with a bit of Ralph Lauren thrown in – I've always loved the store's dark floors and white walls," explains Joanne. The downstairs level encapsulates this stylish look, with Dulux White on White walls offset by glossy dark flooring. Joanne also enlisted the help of interior designer Alanna Smit, who helped design the bedroom, ensuite and walk-in robe in the relaxing parents' retreat. Furnishings indoors and out are unfussy, with a simple palette of creams, touches of caramel and blue picking up on the coastal location. The renovated home may look and feel new, but in fact, most of the pristine furniture came from the couple's previous home. "I've always liked this look," says Joanne. "I had the same style of shutters 20 years ago!"

While this sumptuous family home offers plenty of space to escape the crowd, the family spends a lot of their time gathered in the open-plan living area, especially in summer, when bi-fold doors open up to the backyard and pool. And with a nest feathered just so, we can't imagine any of its inhabitants flying the coop any time soon.

KITCHEN {these pages} The new kitchen, designed by Joanne (pictured with twin daughters Annabel and Phoebe) and stocked with Miele appliances, was created in the original living space. "I wanted to be able to throw open the bi-folds and not be locked away in a tiny kitchen," she says. A self-confessed lover of white – "I get sick of pattern easily" – she admits there was no other option for her but white units and a CaesarStone benchtop in Snow, although Mark chose the black splashback. "If Mark had his way, he'd paint the whole house black," laughs Joanne. "We had different coloured samples up there for three months, but the black works well, as it's not as reflective as mirror but still reflects the outdoors." Beachwood 'Venice' bar stools pick up on the dark floors and link with the cane outdoor setting. >

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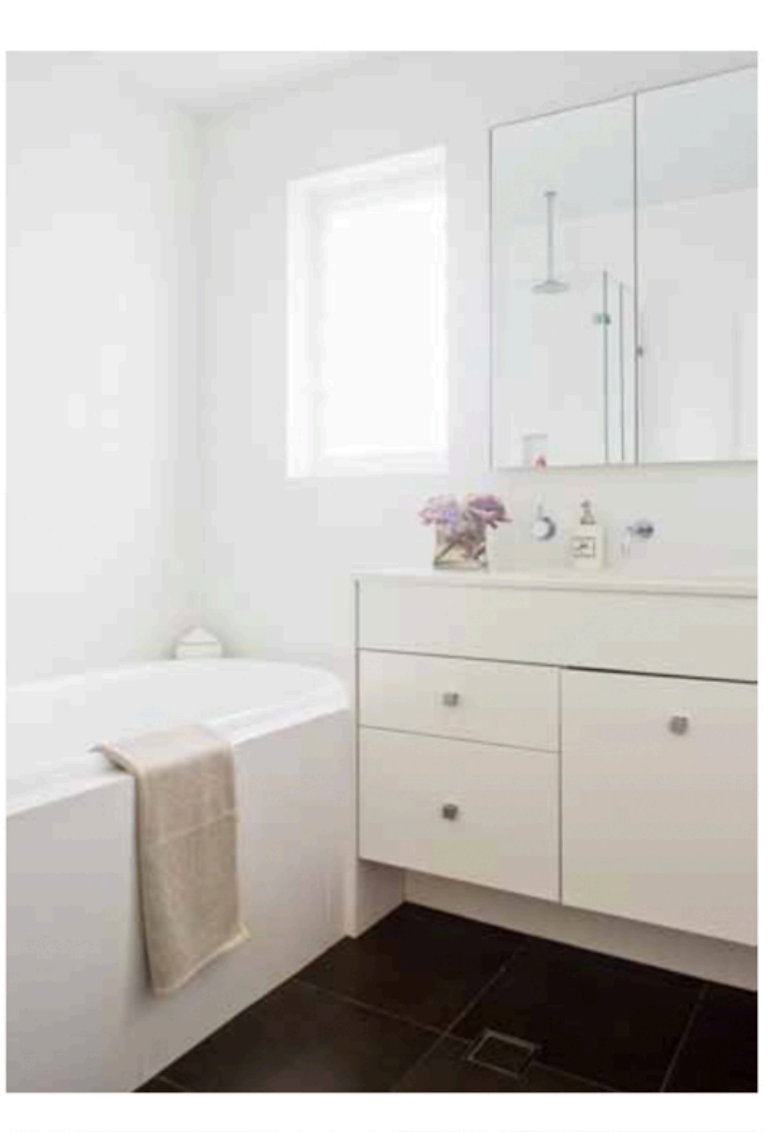
LIVING AREA {above} Bordered by the dining area, kitchen and sunroom, the living area is clearly defined as an inviting zone in which to relax by the family's well-loved sofas, which have been given a facelift with new covers. For a similar sofa, try the 'Tennyson' rolled-arm sofa from Oz Design Furniture; visit ozdesignfurniture.com.au. A collection of blue patterned scatter cushions, including 'Georgia' embroidered cushions from Alfresco Emporium, add a splash of colour against the neutral surrounds.

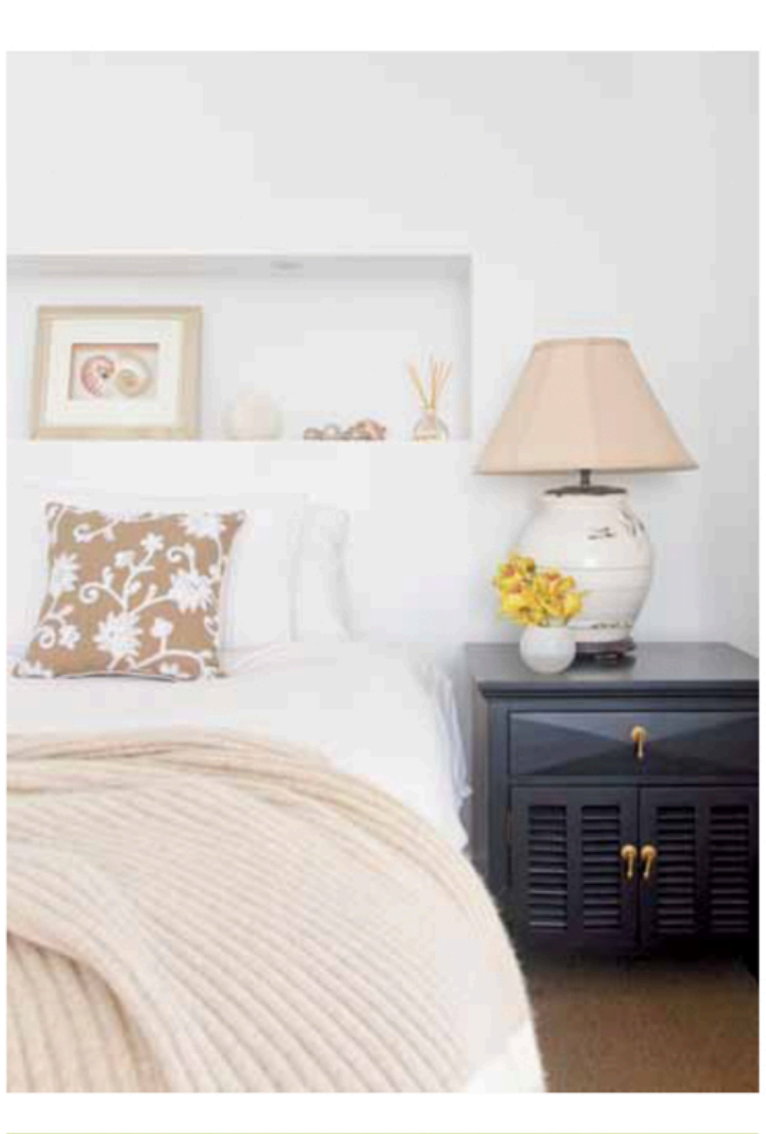
DINING AREA {right} The dining area's classic style owes much to the iconic Hans Wegner 'Wishbone' chairs that Joanne bought at auction; Designcraft stock this shapely design classic in a variety of finishes – visit designcraft.net.au. The natural fibre rug from The Natural Floorcovering Centre introduces texture and complements the rich caramel and chocolate tones of the dining setting. The custom-made console from Beachwood is an ideal spot for a cluster of family photos and fresh flowers.

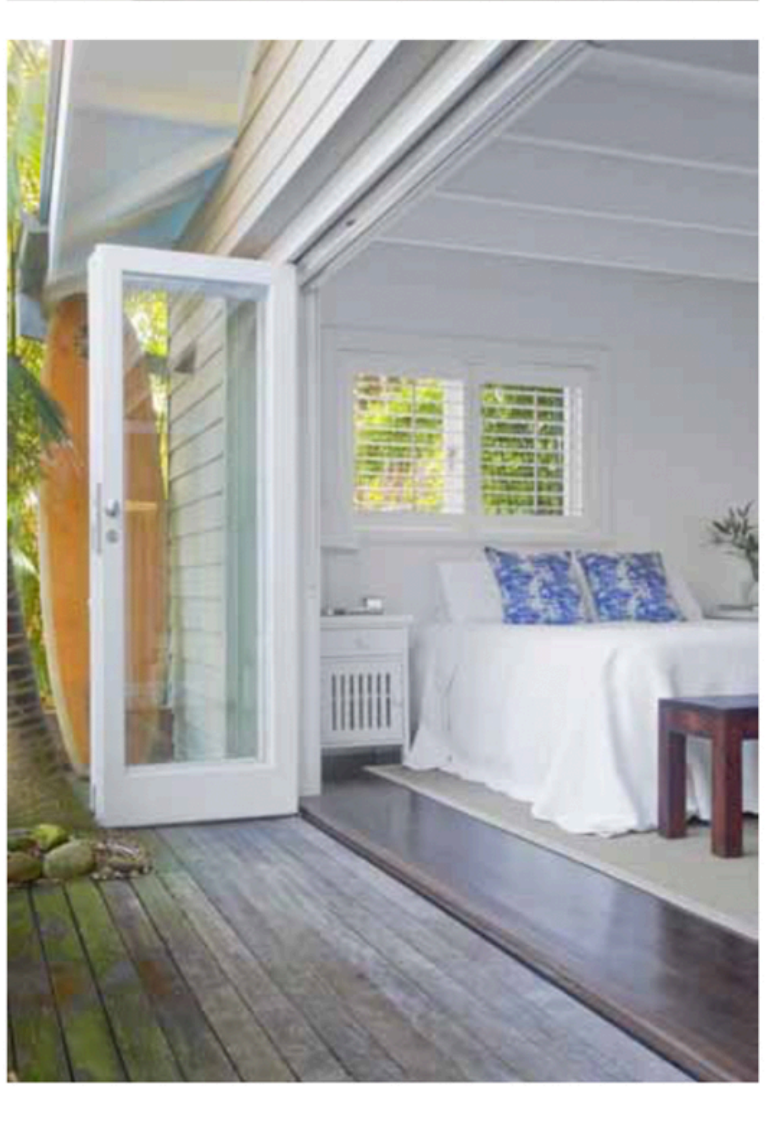
we love...

chasing the sun

Harsh weather needn't limit the time the family spends outdoors with this part-open, part-enclosed seating area the perfect solution. "We live in the sunroom. It's totally protected from winter winds, and cool in summer thanks to overhead fans. The whole place opens up so we can all be in the one area," explains Joanne. The colonial-style shutters, tropical-print cushions and cane seating epitomise Joanne's chic yet comfortable style; for similar cane furniture, check out the range at Islander Imports – visit islanderimports.com.au. >







BATHROOM {top left} The main bathroom was given a makeover before the rest of the house was tackled. Originally a separate WC and bathroom, the room was made much bigger by removing the wall between the two. Joanne's love of neutrals was the inspiration behind the room's clean and simple look; "I haven't changed my style for years – I had practically the same bathroom in the old house," she admits.

MASTER BEDROOM {top right} A recessed shelf behind the bed acts as a display area and a handy storage nook. A wheat-coloured cushion and throw from Alfresco Emporium pick up the neutral tones of the lampshade and souvenirs from the beach, while the ebony bedside cabinet offers a sophisticated contrast; for a similar cabinet, try the 'Louvre' bedside table from Orson & Blake; visit orsonandblake.com.au.

GUEST HOUSE {left & opposite} With its own small kitchen and bathroom, this converted work shed is fully self-contained, but with bi-fold doors that connect it to the pool and keep the space airy and light-filled. The flooring and wall colour have been kept the same as those in the main house for continuity, with blue used as an accent colour for a fresh finish. A sisal rug ups the comfort factor; try The Natural Floorcovering Centre for a similar rug (turn to page 31 for details). >

Inside story

Who lives here? Joanne and Mark; their daughters, Annabel, Phoebe and Ruby; and English staffy, Baby.
Do you entertain at home? Joanne: "The kids entertain more than we do. They're constantly having friends over, so the house always seems to be full of young adults."
How do you relax? "I read, usually looking for inspiration from homes magazines. Mark and I like to go out on his motorbike – I go on the back!"
Where do you holiday? "I love to travel, especially to Italy. It's hard to beat the climate, food and architecture. One day I'm hoping to visit upstate New York for inspiration for the house."
Is there anything left to do? "The walls are still bare as we need to find some artwork, especially for the dining room."
Were you tempted to use more colour? "No. I tried it in our old house and had to paint over the top of it a month later – I couldn't stand it! I'm definitely a neutral person. I like to bring in texture with rugs and accessories."
Best advice for would-be renovators? "Collect information along the way, such as photos from magazines. Have a good rapport with your builder. Plus, move out! We once lived through a reno with five of us squashed in one room, and I wouldn't recommend it."

GARDEN {below} Landscape gardener Adam Linton transformed what was flat turf at the front and back of the house into a lush Balinese garden complete with bamboo, tropical foliage and water features.

POOL Halving the size of the pool, which was formerly large and kidney shaped, freed up deck space, with white Adirondack chairs from Ocean Country Furniture setting the scene for relaxation.

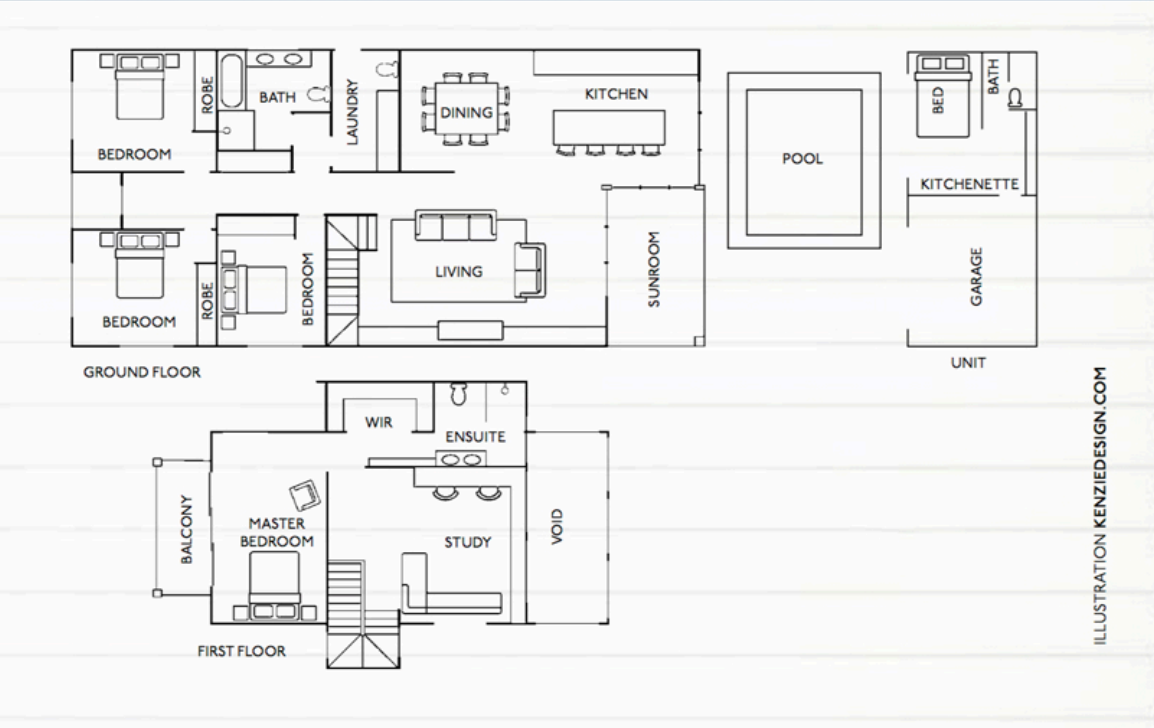


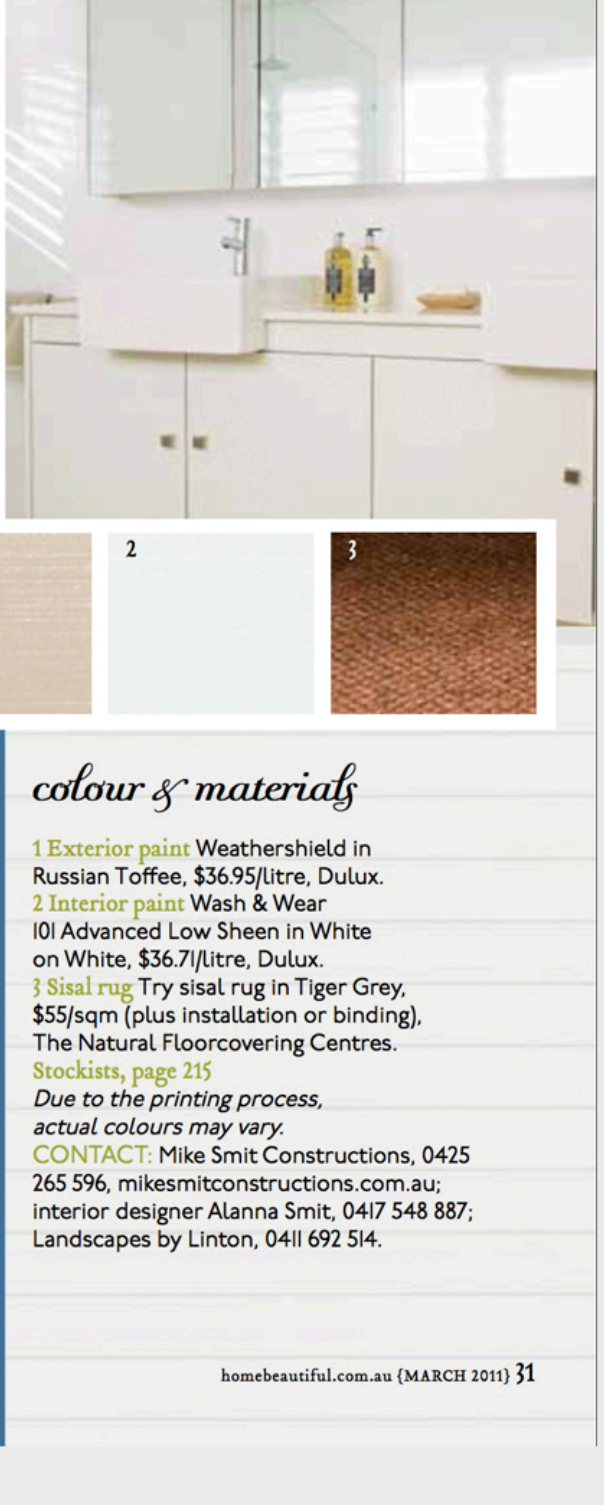
ILLUSTRATION KENZIEDESIGN.COM

OUTDOOR SEATING {right} A bench seat, backed by a screen to provide privacy, was built to create extra seating for when friends visit. A palette of blue and white, with embroidered cushions from Alfresco Emporium, brings a nautical touch to the deck.

ENSUITE {below right} Joanne's pared-back style carries through to the ensuite, which features marble floor tiles in warm beige. Extra-tall mirrored cabinets and a large custom-made vanity unit, built by Mike Smit Constructions, keep clutter at bay.

"I'm definitely A NEUTRAL PERSON. I LIKE TO BRING IN TEXTURE WITH RUGS AND ACCESSORIES"

fave find
The wicker chest in the hallway adds texture to the neutral decor. Seek similar chest. Price: $445/100cm x 50cm x 50cm. Find: Abode Bazzar, (02) 9958 2108.



SUNROOM {above left} Cane furniture and a tonal scheme of creamy off-white, oatmeal and zesty lime green reflect the home's coastal surroundings.

LAUNDRY {left} Designed by interior designer Alanna Smit – "Cabinetry is her forte," says Joanne – a combination of cupboards and open shelving meets the demands of the family of five and makes the laundry an organised space.

colour & materials

1 Exterior paint Weathershield in Russian Toffee, $36.95/litre, Dulux.
2 Interior paint Wash & Wear 101 Advanced Low Sheen in White on White, $36.71/litre, Dulux.
3 Sisal rug Try sisal rug in Tiger Grey, $55/sqm (plus installation or binding), The Natural Floorcovering Centres.
Stockists, page 215
Due to the printing process, actual colours may vary.
CONTACT: Mike Smit Constructions, 0425 265 596, mikesmitconstructions.com.au; interior designer Alanna Smit, 0417 548 887; Landscapes by Linton, 0411 692 514.