



# A NEW start

THIS GORGEOUS FAMILY HOME HAS EMERGED FROM THE BRISBANE FLOODS OF 2011, AND IS A TESTAMENT TO COMMUNITY, GOOD DESIGN AND SECOND CHANCES

STORY & STYLING ROSANNE PEACH PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN DOWNS

**RISING UP** Following the flooding of her inner-Brisbane cottage, homeowner Eliza renovated and elevated her abode, which now has a beautiful tree-house feel. A 'borrowed' landscape of established trees is framed by a huge window at the rear of the home, with bench seating below. "Everyone always gravitates to that point," says Eliza, who shares the home with her children, Eva, seven, and Hugo, five. "The kids have used that bench from the moment we moved in, as a stage, jumping platform, breakfast spot and just somewhere to sit and dangle their legs." The living room (below), which features a Jordan 'Wilfred' sofa and cushions by local designers Everingham and Watson, has been furnished with a light touch. Decorating steps up a notch in a seating nook near the stairs (opposite), with bespoke plywood hand-painted tiles by artist Georgina Forbes making an impact. The custom cushions are by Square Fox.>







Painted a watery blue, the front door of this Brisbane cottage tells a story of renewal and remembrance. The colour flows inside and streams along the lower half of the hallway, across doors and down the length of the Queenslander. In 2011, floodwaters took the same route, rising up the walls and swamping the home, the neighbourhood and many suburbs that line the Brisbane River. The owner of the cottage, Eliza, was living and working in Hong Kong when news of the floods broke. "I went to bed hoping it would be okay," recalls Eliza. "I got up early to watch the coverage and saw a journalist reporting from a boat outside our house! I thought, 'We've gone under!' They were in a boat. In our street!"

Family members sprang into action, project managing an army of helpers. "Dad said there were so many people just coming into the house with offers of help that there almost wasn't enough for people to do," says Eliza. "We were very grateful. It was an incredible response, with everyone just pitching in."

It was this strong sense of community that drew Eliza back to the urban village – and Australia – two years later, with daughter Eva and son Hugo. She had thought the once-flooded two-bedroom house, which was then rented out, would never be their family home. But could it be? "We missed out on a few auctions and realised, hang on, all we really want is to be in this area," says Eliza. "I chatted with our architect, and by lifting the house it became a real option."

It was no easy feat. The cottage was cramped, on a small lot, in a flood zone and character listed. "A large part of the design process was spent trying to minimise the impact of having to lift a small house so it wouldn't appear like it was floating high up in the sky like a mushroom," explains the home's architect, Matt Kennedy of Arcke. "That relationship to the ground level was really important. Eliza wanted the kids to be able to go out and kick a ball and for the dog to run around the yard. How do you achieve that when you've got a house that's floating in mid-air?"

The answer was a plinth at the back that grounds a new extension and allows for one-level living that flows out to a deck and steps down to a backyard pool. At the front, timber battens run horizontally, to seemingly pull the structure back to earth. The rooms at the front have been reordered to become kids' bedrooms, a playroom and bathroom. At the back is the family zone, with a parents' retreat perched on top under a floating roof, while the kitchen is deliberately placed as the connection point. "We had to be really creative about reinterpreting space," says Matt.

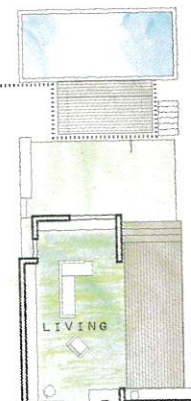
For Eliza, the end result feels anything but cramped. "Big windows, big doors that open right up, high ceilings and clever seating and storage make the space both really useable and beautiful," she says. "I love that there is no dead space, without us feeling like we are on top of each other." While big issues dominated the build, it is the small details, such as the framing of a tree as a living artwork, that they now appreciate every day.

**ENTRY** The front door (top left), painted in Dulux Palmer, recalls the floodwaters from six years ago, with the level preserved as a design feature in Dulux Preschool, running along the hallway. "The painter did joke that instead of it being a nice, carefully selected off-blue, it should probably be a dirty brown," says architect Matt.

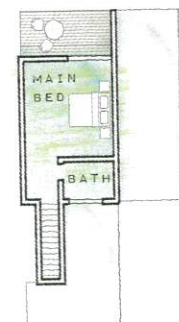
**OUTDOOR DINING** Beautiful big timber doors peel back to fuse the living room seamlessly with the outdoor deck (opposite), barbecue and main dining space, which is a drawcard year-round. The Eco Outdoor table is matched with chairs from Matt Blatt and custom cushions by Square Fox. The table runner is by Everingham and Watson. >

#### FLOOR PLAN

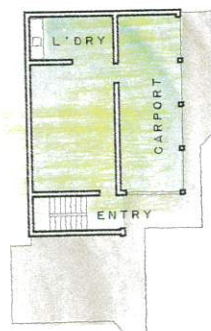
##### FIRST FLOOR



##### SECOND FLOOR



##### GROUND FLOOR



"WHEN IT'S *open*, THE *deck* READS AS AN EXTENSION OF THE LIVING ROOM. IT FEELS A LOT *larger* – WITH ALL THAT *light* AND WIDTH FROM THE DECK" ~ MATT KENNEDY, ARCHITECT



**WE LOVE...**  
*under-stair storage*

Love it, share it, pin it – this storage solution is ingenious! To encourage light, the home's architect, Matt Kennedy, narrowed the kitchen to a galley and then put everything else under the stairs. "It allowed for an efficiency of the floor plan so that a generosity of space could be carried to the living areas," he explains. A pull-out pantry pops out, as do loads of drawers for mainly food items. It's textbook golden triangle design at its best.



"THE KITCHEN HAS  
*created* A REAL HUB  
WHERE YOU CAN BE  
*connected* TO  
EVERYBODY" ~ ELIZA



**KITCHEN** The kitchen (top right & opposite) links the old and new parts of the home. "By narrowing that connection and creating a thinner, more delicate bridge in the form of the galley kitchen, it allowed the north-eastern aspect to be introduced," says architect Matt. "It's all about bringing in more light." Eliza (pictured opposite) is thrilled with the result, which is also a hit with the family. "It works better than I ever imagined it would," she says. "People just come and sit on the stairs, the window seat at the foot of the stairs or the stools and talk while I'm cooking." The warmth of the home's timber palette is best expressed in this space, where plywood joinery meets oak floors, and windows and doors are framed in New Guinea rosewood. 'Kav' pendant lights from Dezion Studio artfully balance the simple palette while the kitchen, which acts as a light well, overlooks a courtyard (left).

**ENTRY** The red antique Chinese bureau (top left), brought back from Hong Kong, makes for a colourful point to mark the transition from the bedrooms to the living quarters. It's paired with a vibrant artwork, 'Awelye', by Betty Mbitjana. >





**PLAYROOM** The front room of the original cottage has been transformed into a playroom (above) that can be opened up for easy access and closed off with a giant plywood sliding door for movie or music times. The size and flexibility mean it doubles as a guest room when needed. A rug from Temple & Webster keeps things comfy.

**BATHROOM** The children's bathroom (top right) is simple and functional. But the detailing – bevelled edges on subway tiles, the upward flow of colour on the floor and the Astra Walker black tapware – is what makes simple special. The kids chose the striking panda shower curtain from Society 6.

**HUGO'S ROOM** Five-year-old Hugo's room (right) is a calm retreat – that is, until he and his knitted superhero friend from Cocoon Petite Living jump into action. The throw from Sheets On The Line works in with the muted hues while the neat side table, a hamper from Plyroom, provides a landing spot for Hugo's other favourite things.



“LIVING HERE IS AS MUCH ABOUT THE *area* AS IT IS ABOUT THE HOUSE. WE *feel lucky* TO HAVE THIS COMMUNITY” ~ ELIZA



**MAIN BEDROOM** A treescape affords the upstairs bedroom a serene view, light and privacy. “It’s like living in the treetops,” says Eliza of the room, painted in Wattyl Calcium. “In this high-density, inner-city area we are so lucky to have this feeling of green and light, which makes you happy. It’s good for the soul.” The relaxed linen and pompom-edged throw, all from Sheets On The Line, provide cool, contrasting colour. A plywood ceiling floats above the bedroom and ensuite. >





"I love ALL OF THOSE patterns  
THAT ARE HAPPENING WITH THE  
timber, IT'S BEAUTIFUL" ~ ELIZA

**EXTERIOR** The bespoke pool fence in blackbutt repeats the vertical lines of the home's striking architecture. Bean bags by Square Fox provide extra seating.

#### CONTACTS

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#### INSIDE STORY

ELIZA'S HOME

##### Who lives here?

Eliza, a career consultant; daughter Eva, seven; son Hugo, five; and Peppa the dog.

##### Best investment in the renovation?

Eliza: "I definitely had joinery creep. We started with more, pulled lots of it out, then as we got closer to the end, lots of it went back in. They said, 'You say you'll go back and put it in but you won't.' It's the thing I love the most. It makes it feel more homely but also, in any small house, the more storage the better!"

##### Style lessons?

"It was really important to me that we retained as much of the integrity of the old cottage as possible. The architect incorporated that with the other part of the brief, which was for a clean, modern style."



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1. Deep blue linen from Sheets On The Line.
2. Eva (centre) and Hugo (right) enjoy some chill time with cousins Elke and Neko.
3. Pieris japonica freshens the indoors.
4. Custom cushions from Square Fox.
5. For a similar rug, try Armadillo & Co.
6. Front door painted in Dulux Palmer.
7. Hand-painted tiles by artist Georgina Forbes.