

MODERN GREEN HOMES

# Sanctuary

ISSUE  
59

BACKYARD  
BUILDS SPECIAL

## BACKYARD BONUS

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# A state of calm

LOCATION Northgate, QLD • WORDS Emma Scragg • PHOTOGRAPHY Andy Macpherson



## At a glance

- Multi-generational home with shared and private outdoor areas
- Accessible two-bedroom apartment downstairs
- Biophilic design with excellent connection to garden

**Inspired by Japanese architecture, this classic Queenslander in Brisbane has been transformed into a multi-generational oasis of calm.**

A fundamental principle of Japanese architecture is to emphasise humans' relationship to nature. Traditionally, Japanese homes fostered this connection through the inclusion of an 'engawa', a covered seating area or corridor opening onto the garden: a space neither indoors nor outdoors, but providing a transition between.

After several trips to Japan, the owners of Engawa House sought to capture this sense of blurred margins in renovations to their classic Queenslander in the Brisbane suburb of Northgate, creating a tranquil sanctuary that could accommodate a multi-generational family. The brief was to lift the house and build a fully self-contained, wheelchair-accessible two-bedroom apartment underneath.

The family had already established a Zen garden on site, but views to it were obstructed by a large deck across the rear of the house, with a bathroom in the

northern corner. The team at Brisbane architectural practice Arcke immediately saw a bold solution: renovation by subtraction.

"When we say to clients, 'we're going to take off your deck to make your indoor-outdoor connection work', we sometimes get mixed reactions," says Arcke's Kate Kennedy. "But this family came on board very quickly."

Beneath the unchanged roofline, the bathroom and northern half of the deck were removed entirely. The new double-height void above a sunken courtyard garden on the north corner is abundant with natural light and provides leafy views to the living spaces on both levels. "Full-height doors and fine balustrading rather than a deck give much more immediacy to the outdoors," says Kate.

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Blurred margins: the renovated original house upstairs and the new accessible garden flat downstairs share garden space and a mezzanine deck, and have been carefully designed for privacy too. A palette of restful greens was used for the paint, tiles and cabinetry throughout the multi-generational home.









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The coloured dados in the downstairs living space break up the interior walls and pick up the hues of the aggregate in the polished concrete. The flat was designed for ageing in place, with modest overnight accommodation provided for a carer.



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The flat's compact kitchen is at one end of the living space, with banks of louvres to admit light and breezes.

The owners agree: "We love looking from the top level of the house down into the courtyard garden, especially when it's raining. It's just so beautiful and calming – you feel like you're part of the garden landscape much more than previously." A new lower deck shared by both levels replaced the southern end of the original deck and is far better connected with the existing Zen garden than its previous incarnation. A small precast concrete plunge pool off the deck further extends the family's interaction with the landscape.

Upstairs, the front door was moved to the southern end of the front verandah to enhance flow to the living spaces and improve privacy for the bedrooms. A new bathroom and toilet near the entry replace the original bathroom and provide a buffer to the street. The existing kitchen was structurally sound and





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The front door to the upstairs home was moved to the southern end of the verandah to improve privacy to the bedrooms.



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The upstairs kitchen was updated with a new splashback, new cabinet fronts and a recycled blackbutt island bench. The original deck was removed and a void beyond the balustrade gives leafy views and abundant natural light.

functional and so was retained, with the addition of a new tiled splashback and new fronts for the cabinets. A recycled blackbutt island bench was installed, which extends to form a family dining table.

Downstairs is the self-contained garden level flat, designed for accessibility. The rooms are cool and serene, embedded into the garden with a mix of obscure glass – reminiscent of Japanese shoji screens – and clear glass to modulate light and views. Access to the flat is through the carport and along a path under the edge of the house above. The path, fringed with subtropical vegetation and tumbled stones, passes the shared laundry and the stairs to the main home.

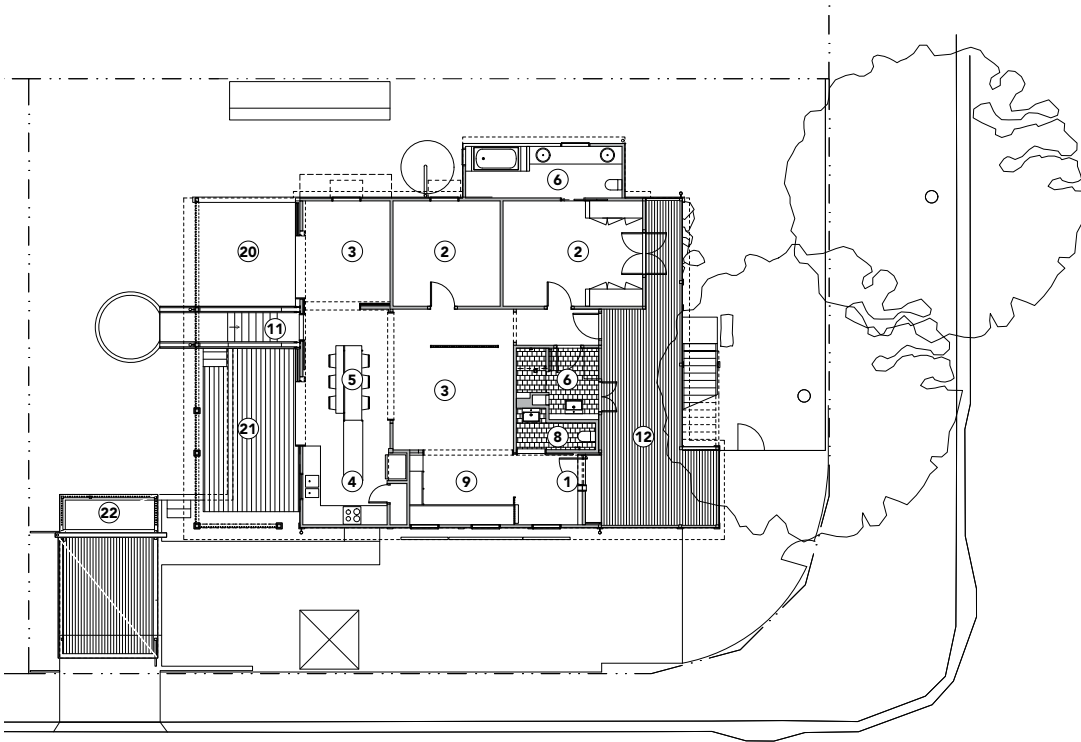
Biophilic design was paramount when planning the home and architect Matt Kennedy sought out every opportunity to

bring nature in. “By opening up the entire back aspect and using every bit of glazing to create vistas, you have this sense of being in greenery when you inhabit the house,” he says. Downstairs, the spaces are recessed to allow the garden to extend under the footprint of the main house, and the interiors throughout are decked out with leafy potted plants.

To further enhance the sense of serenity created by the garden, a palette of restful greens was used for the paint, tiles and cabinetry throughout the home. “The green interior was about keeping it cool, calm and liveable, reflecting the green of the outside,” says Kate. The darker green dados break up the interior walls and pick up the colour of the aggregate in the polished concrete downstairs; they also extend outdoors. Hardwood timber details inside and out offset the colour scheme perfectly.

The owners couldn’t be happier with the renovation: “It’s a very calming, beautiful space. Visitors comment on the connection between inside and outside, and how peaceful and Zen it is.” The downstairs apartment has adapted organically to many uses: most recently, its accessibility meant they could provide temporary accommodation to a person who is a wheelchair user while their home was repaired after Brisbane’s floods. It’s likely to house elderly parents in the future, and one day, the couple themselves: “This is our forever home. We have great neighbours and community here. We will move downstairs and age in place when we feel it’s the right time,” they say. More immediately, however, their son has placed dibs on downstairs for when he is a teenager. ⑤

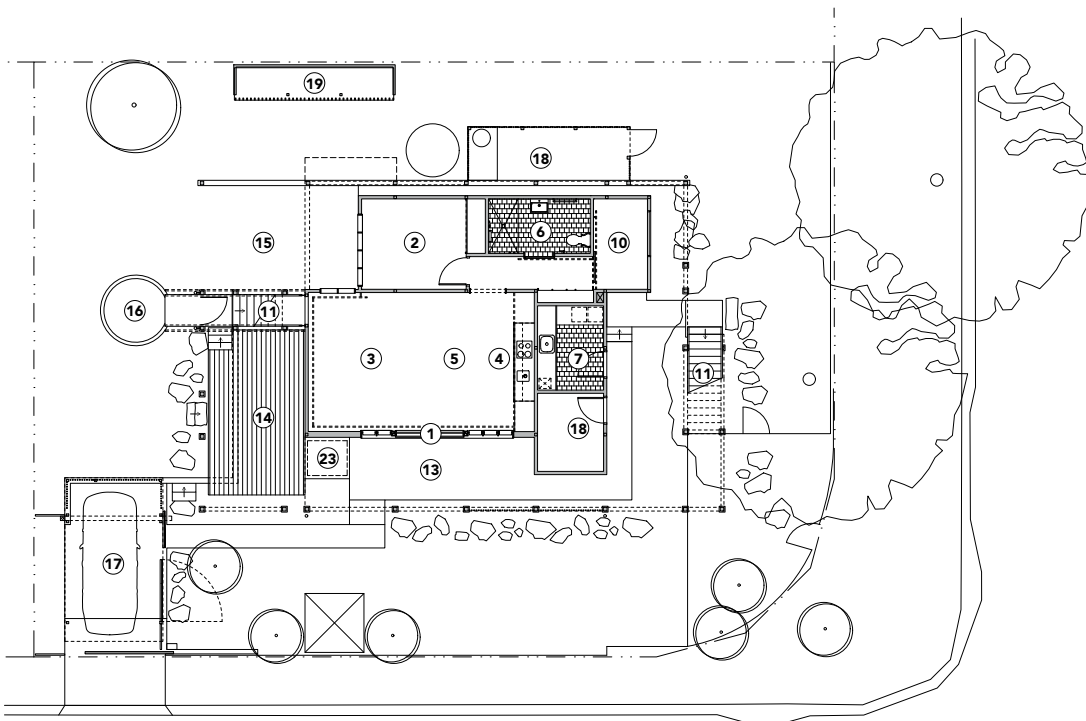
## FIRST FLOOR PLAN (HOUSE)



### LEGEND

- ① Entry
- ② Bedroom
- ③ Living
- ④ Kitchen
- ⑤ Dining
- ⑥ Bathroom
- ⑦ Shared laundry
- ⑧ Toilet
- ⑨ Study
- ⑩ Nook/small bedroom
- ⑪ Stairs
- ⑫ Verandah
- ⑬ Patio
- ⑭ Shared deck
- ⑮ Sunken courtyard garden
- ⑯ Pool
- ⑰ Carport
- ⑱ Store
- ⑲ Shed
- ⑳ Void to courtyard
- ㉑ Void to deck
- ㉒ Green roof
- ㉓ Provision for future lift from garden flat to deck

## GROUND FLOOR PLAN (GARDEN FLAT)



# HOUSE SPECIFICATIONS

## HOT WATER

- Retained existing gas hot water system

## RENEWABLE ENERGY

- 4kW solar PV system with Xantrex inverter

## WATER SAVING

- Existing 4,500L rainwater tank retained and relocated for garden use
- Astra Walker Australian-made brass tapware (WELS 3-5 star)

## PASSIVE DESIGN, HEATING & COOLING

- Openings and glazing designed to maximise cross ventilation
- Overhang to north-west elevation and western corner plus screening plants and carport to block hot afternoon sun
- Thurlow external custom blinds for shading and privacy to street-facing south-west elevation; verandah to south-east street frontage
- Insulated building envelope retains warmth in winter
- Concrete slab to downstairs for thermal mass (mainly to facilitate cooling in summer)

## ACTIVE HEATING & COOLING

- Big Ass Fans Haiku energy-efficient ceiling fans in bedrooms
- Mitsubishi Electric ducted reverse-cycle air conditioner

## BUILDING MATERIALS

- Timber frame construction
- Lysaght Zinalume roof
- Polished concrete slab and fibre cement cladding to lower level
- Existing pine flooring to upper level retained and refinished
- Insulation: Bradford Anticon 60 blanket to ceiling (R1.3), Bradford Gold batts to framed external walls and wet areas (R1.5)
- Recycled blackbutt for feature screens, cabinetry trims and kitchen island bench
- Retained kitchen carcasses, sink and reconstituted stone benchtop around sink
- Blackbutt decking from Urbanline Architectural

## WINDOWS & GLAZING

- Retained most existing upper-level doors and windows
- Timber-framed doors and windows with low-e glass for new glazing to rear and lower level
- Breezway louvres to laundry and lower level living room and bedroom

## LIGHTING

- All LED lighting (upgraded from halogen)

## PAINTS, FINISHES & FLOOR COVERINGS

- Dulux Wash&Wear low-VOC and low odour internal and external paints
- Dulux Intergrain Enviropro satin finish to internal timber
- Cutex oil to external timbers
- Fiddes Hard Wax Oil to timber flooring

## OTHER ESD FEATURES

- Designed for flexible, multi-generational living with family home upstairs and self-contained accessible apartment downstairs
- Careful design for privacy
- Biophilic design with strong connections between interior and garden spaces
- Green roof to carport
- Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV (plug-in hybrid electric vehicle)

## DESIGNER

Matt Kennedy,  
Architect Arcke

## BUILDER

Mair Constructions

## PROJECT TYPE

Renovation

## LOCATION

Northgate, QLD  
(Turrball & Jagera Country)

## SIZE

Upper level 100m<sup>2</sup>  
Lower level 77m<sup>2</sup>  
Deck and covered  
walkways 44m<sup>2</sup>  
Verandah 28m<sup>2</sup>  
Land 522m<sup>2</sup>

## ENERGY RATING

6.5 Stars

## ENERGY ASSESSOR

Nada Jovanovic



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The original carport was replaced with a new single carport at the rear of the block, with direct access to the downstairs flat. The single carport was a conscious decision in order to deprioritise car travel, and it also preserved more garden space. A small green roof adds to the green views from upstairs.