



Louvre affair

An original bungalow now has a light and breezy window on the world.

1 The new kitchen-living room opens through bi-fold doors to the terrace. A wall of louvres overlooks the garden.

2 The kitchen includes an informal breakfast counter and high bar-style bench.

3 A new deck on the original bungalow captures northern views.

4 Part of the original two-car garage is now a two-level studio-cum-quest room.

5 A covered walkway runs the length of the new addition.

6 Water from rainwater tanks tucked under the deck is used to flush the toilet in the bathroom.

Words **Jane Burton Taylor**
Photos **Marco Del Grande**

WHEN architect Caroline Pidcock was first called in to look at her client's 1912 bungalow in Sydney's inner west, the owner was already well acquainted with the home's good and bad points.

She had lived there for two years before opting to renovate and knew exactly what she wanted to keep and change. Most importantly, she wanted to keep the original house - on a deep battle-axe block with northern views to the CBD skyline - virtually intact. She loved its high ceilings, stained glass and timber floors. But what the old house lacked was a living room connected to the garden: a place where she could cook, entertain and see out, all at the same time.

"I wanted a space that would welcome family and friends but which was also private and comforting, intimate enough for me," she says.

Pidcock decided to locate the new living room on free land at the southern, street-side end of the house. In her revamp, she converted the poky room that had been a kitchen into a study. She then opened up an old enclosed veranda and stitched the new addition on the eastern boundary, opening

it via bifold doors to an eating space at the end, and via a wall of glass louvres on the western side, to a covered walkway and garden.

"It just made sense to make the family room here, connected to the garden," Pidcock says, standing in the room looking out to a lawn and, beyond, a recently planted bed of native shrubs. "We solved the problem of the sun by lifting up the roof to the north. That also allowed us to catch ventilation [via operable windows directly under the roof]."

The room works in practical terms, too. There is a concealed laundry in the back wall and the kitchen is enclosed on three sides: with a stove and work area along one wall, an informal breakfast counter and a high, bar-style bench.

"When everyone is here, this is where they congregate," the owner says. "My brothers just stand there [at the high bench]. I think they think it's a bar; they just stand at the bar talking."

This contemporary addition is now really the social part of the house, the place where the owner connects with family, friends and the wider world.

"When you are in the original house, you really feel you are in the house," Pidcock says. "This was about being in a space that was more open. You have a view. You can see the entry and who is coming."

This addition looks out towards the garage, which has been changed in the renovation as well. Originally it was a two-car garage, but Pidcock has converted one side of it into a two-level studio.

"It is all lightweight so it could be changed if a second car space is needed," she says.

The ground floor was intended as the owner's sewing room and the upper for storage. But it has ended up serving as accommodation at short notice and a favourite play hideout for the younger members of the extended family.

"The children head straight out here," the owner says. "It is perfect because they are separate but we can see them and they can see us."

Another change was the addition of a deck at the northern end of the house to savour the long-distance view toward the airport and city.

"You can see aeroplanes take off but there is no airport noise," Pidcock says.

This deck, which runs across half the front of the house and wraps around, connecting back to a side garden, serves another function as well.

"It gave us the perfect place for the water tanks," Pidcock says. "We put two 5000-litre tanks under this deck."

Walking back down the side of the house, the owner points out the thriving passionfruit and local native trees she has planted along the boundary and the fruit trees beside the house. Her herb and vegetable garden are on the other side, as are her compost bin and worm farm. She has also planted several frangipani, a jacaranda and an Illawarra flame tree.

"I am reproducing my childhood in Grafton; some of the trees are even from Grafton," she says.

The garden was a part of the original brief. The owner wanted the house to open up to the garden and to secure water for it to grow. Pidcock has achieved all this and today her client seems almost as pleased with her patch of turf as she is with her newly renovated home.

"This is one of the greatest pleasures," she says, "to walk out here in my bare feet on the grass when it is wet." She also admires the way the contemporary addition complements the much-loved original house. "It honours the original design," she says.

The aim

To create a space where I can be comfortable on my own or with lots of friends and family.

How long

One year to design and get a DA and three months to build.

Favourite features

The link between inside and outside; I can just open the louvres and there is the garden. Family and party friendliness.

Insider's tip

Connect with local tradesmen.

Green points

- Reuse of existing house.
- Water tanks for toilets, laundry and garden.
- Native plants combined with vegetable, herb and fruit garden.
- Low-emission paints.
- Natural oils on floors in original house.
- Passive solar design and cross ventilation.
- Five-star instantaneous gas hot water.

Architect

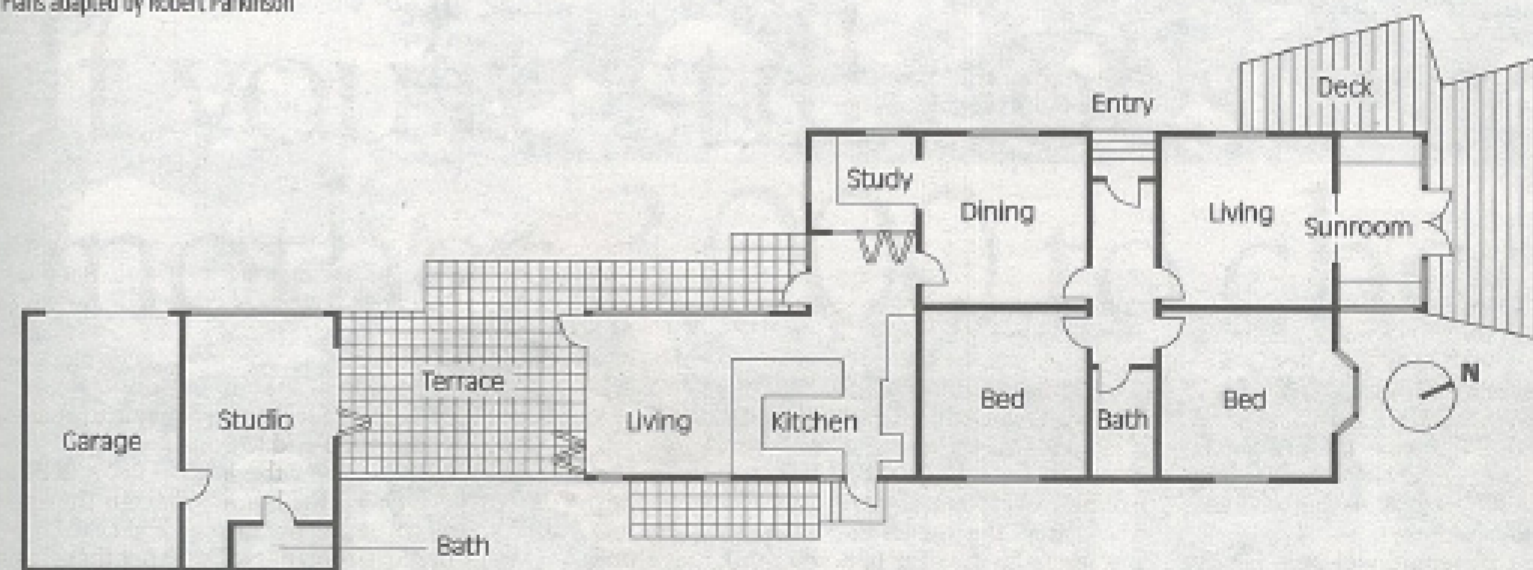
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Builder

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Plans adapted by Robert Parkinson



Gotta light?

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