

# Sanctuary

MODERN GREEN HOMES

ISSUE  
64

Prefab & modular supplier guide; reclaimed timber treasure trove;  
joey sanctuary bushfire rebuild; sweet syrups from foraged flora

**PREFAB  
POWER**

**OFFSITE  
CONSTRUCTION  
GATHERS PACE**

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**One of two e-scooters from Voltrium,  
with a total prize value of \$6,500**

Offer open to Australian residents. Details page 81

# So simple

LOCATION West Hobart, TAS • WORDS Chris Crerar • PHOTOGRAPHY Natalie Mendham



## At a glance

- Small-scale renovation of a classic weatherboard home
- New staircase doubles as a passive solar heat trap
- Energy rating increased from around 1.5 to 6 Stars
- Integrated permaculture garden

**A minimal renovation and tiny but targeted extension to Penny and Adam’s West Hobart home delivers a homely, grounded result.**

The conventional wisdom when renovating period homes is usually to prioritise perceived market expectations and resale value. This often means large extensions tacked onto the back of the original home, with more of an eye for the real estate listing than for the needs of the current occupants.

What if we chose to do things differently though? What might a renovation look like if we focused more on meeting our needs within the original structure and improving its liveability and efficiency, rather than choosing to extend?

Obviously, our needs change over time and sometimes an extension is the only option. But as Penny and Adam discovered when embarking on the renovation of their 1900s home in West Hobart, a considered ‘less is more’ approach can deliver more than we might have hoped for, while respecting the worthwhile qualities of the original home.

Wanting to cycle and walk where possible and remain as a one-car family, Penny and Adam gave themselves a strict limit of Hobart’s inner suburbs when hunting for a house back in 2016. An agent alerted them to one “rather unloved”

home, suggesting they look past the mess. They loved the views, the size, the home’s good feeling and its convenient location, and took the plunge, settling in and getting to know the place for just under a year before beginning their renovation plans.

Having engaged Hannah Moloney of Good Life Permaculture [*Ed note: see Renew 163 for a profile of Hannah*] to design a garden, the seed was sown for a values-aligned renovation. Hannah directed Adam and Penny to building designer Jane Hilliard at Designful, whose philosophy centres on needs rather than wants, and the concept of ‘enoughness’.

With a brief as simple as relocating an internal stairwell, removing a wall to enlarge the living area and – importantly – making the house lighter and warmer, Jane knew she was working with Designful’s favourite kind of clients. “I do like projects that are a bit of a challenge, trying to work with what’s existing and not going overboard; honouring what’s there,” she says. “There is a tendency to feel like you have to knock half of it down and build a whole new thing. You just don’t always have to do that.”

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The new stairwell extension built onto the northern facade of the house replaces a draughty internal staircase and doubles as a passive solar heat trap.





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Minor layout changes were made to improve the flow and connection between the kitchen and indoor and outdoor living spaces.

The changes to the original layout of the home are minimal but significant. Doors from the central hallway into the dining room and kitchen were closed off, a wall between the dining and living areas was removed and the kitchen was reorientated to create flow and connection to the newly opened living space. In the south-west corner, the bathroom and laundry (which doubles as a mudroom) were reorganised for a more efficient use of space.

The modest stairwell extension built onto the north face of the home, barely visible from the street, is a triumph of a little achieving a lot. Not only did it allow the removal of the draughty internal staircase down to the lower-level apartment (which will be renovated as a future project), but the addition of

large double-glazed windows opposite openings into the kitchen and dining area welcomes in extra light and sun. Importantly, the sun shines directly onto what was once the external brick wall, dramatically increasing the home's passive solar gain by turning this wall into a thermal heat bank. A window seat built into the top of the stairwell now makes a bright and warm place to relax while remaining connected to activity in the kitchen.

The addition of the north-facing windows also means the elevated house now has great visual connections to its surroundings to the west, north and east. "You can sit in the window seat and feel like you're outside," says Penny.

The couple speak affectionately about their neighbours and say that connection

to community is very important to them. Integral to these values is the considered redesign of the home's outdoor living spaces. Now thoughtfully connected to the interior spaces, they also enable regular contact with neighbours. "We have conversations over the fence all the time," says Adam.

There's something extremely grounded and comforting about Penny and Adam's renovation of their classic Tasmanian weatherboard home. From the extension's cladding of Zinalume and spotted gum, to the repurposing of an old sideboard into a kitchen cabinet and the colourful interior paints, the couple's choices point to great respect for the historic suburb and the home itself.

Penny says that choosing quality materials that would last, along with



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Penny and Adam didn't shy away from bold colours for their renovation.

the choice of bold interior colours, was like “pushing against the tide” of the renovating-to-sell mindset. “The colours we chose are all about what sort of rooms we want to live in, not what we think a future buyer in ten years will like,” she says. “The value of a house is not just monetary. Value is also about how happy you are in your home.”

Theirs is a renovation that has chosen to build in, rather than buy in, extra layers of homeliness. It didn't require new furniture to match crisp white walls and polished surfaces. It may have been completed only a couple of years ago, but there's already a comfortable lived-in feel that almost makes the renovation invisible.

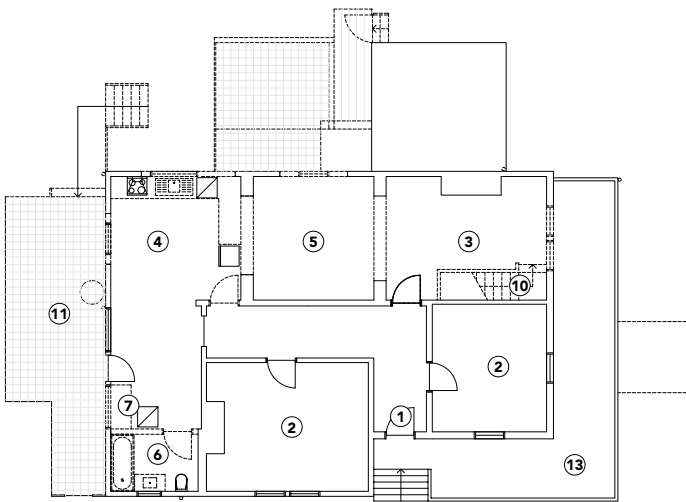
“The home is a reflection of Adam and Penny's values and personalities,” says Jane. “It's not out of a glossy interiors magazine.” ⑤



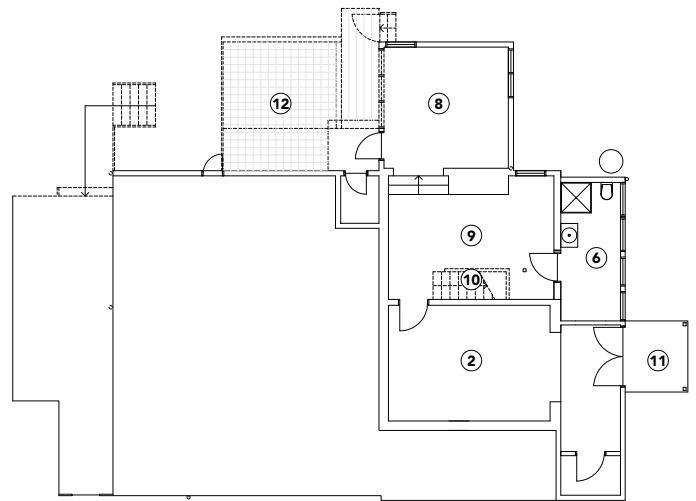


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 Windows in the new stairwell align with openings in the original external wall, flooding the living spaces with light. Now enclosed within the building envelope, the brick wall acts as a thermal heat bank to regulate the home's internal temperature (see Insights, opposite).

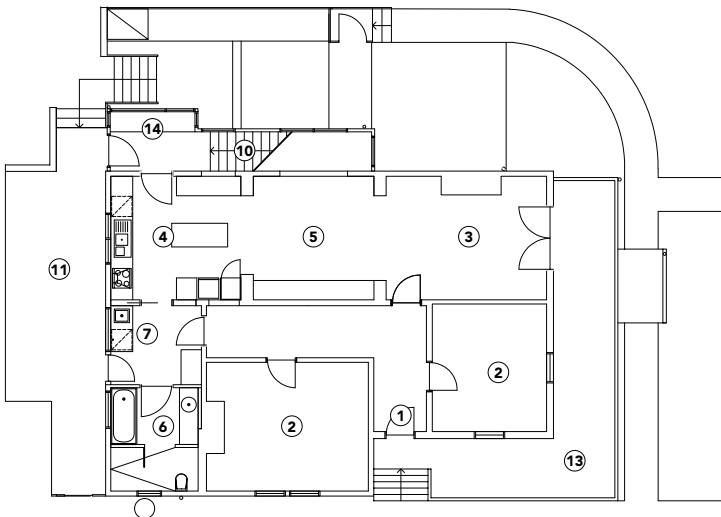
ORIGINAL UPPER FLOOR PLAN



ORIGINAL LOWER FLOOR PLAN



NEW UPPER FLOOR PLAN



LEGEND

- |            |               |
|------------|---------------|
| ① Entry    | ⑧ Study       |
| ② Bedroom  | ⑨ Rumpus      |
| ③ Living   | ⑩ Stairs      |
| ④ Kitchen  | ⑪ Deck        |
| ⑤ Dining   | ⑫ Courtyard   |
| ⑥ Bathroom | ⑬ Verandah    |
| ⑦ Laundry  | ⑭ Window seat |

# HOUSE SPECIFICATIONS

## HOT WATER

- Sanden 250L heat pump

## RENEWABLE ENERGY

- 7kW solar PV system

## WATER SAVING

- Faucet Strommen (Australian-made) and Phoenix water-efficient tapware

## PASSIVE DESIGN, HEATING & COOLING

- New stairwell extension designed as a passive solar heat trap
- Existing brick external wall enclosed as thermal mass
- Increased double glazing to north
- Layout reconfigured for cross ventilation

## ACTIVE HEATING & COOLING

- Fujitsu ducted reverse-cycle air conditioner
- Esse 700 Vista wood heater

## BUILDING MATERIALS

- Timber frame construction to new stairwell extension
- Zincalume and spotted gum shiplap cladding to new stairwell; existing weatherboards patched to make good

- Existing Tasmanian oak floorboards refurbished and patched where necessary
- Insulation: Bradford high-performance batts to ceiling (R5), walls (R2.5) and under floor (R4)
- Reclaimed Tasmanian oak benchtops

## WINDOWS & GLAZING

- New Tasmanian oak-framed, double-glazed windows to stairwell extension

## LIGHTING

- LED lighting throughout

## COOKING

- AEG 60cm induction cooktop and electric oven

## OTHER ESD FEATURES

- Small layout changes to upper level of existing house, plus upgrading of insulation and draught sealing wherever possible, led to vastly improved flow, sunlight and thermal comfort
- Permaculture garden design by Good Life Permaculture integrated into building design process
- Owners ride electric bikes and pushbikes to work and amenities

## DESIGNER

Designful

## BUILDER

Thinkhouse

## PROJECT TYPE

Renovation

## LOCATION

West Hobart, TAS  
(Muwinina Country)

## COST

\$187,000

## SIZE

House 161m<sup>2</sup> (including  
downstairs apartment)  
Land 549m<sup>2</sup>

## ENERGY RATING

6 Stars

## ENERGY ASSESSOR

Designful



## INSIGHTS

“The new staircase connecting the house with the apartment below was positioned and designed to be a passive solar heat trap, with large north-facing double-glazed windows to admit sun. By enclosing the downstairs brick wall in the stairwell, the thermal mass was increased. The home now gets much more northern sun, and the exposed bricks soak it up and release it into the upper living level.”

Jane Hilliard, designer