

Toby Johnstone

Renovate or Rebuild



Sold on a size that fits all

A Rozelle family has minimised a cottage's footprint for maximum use of living spaces.

A lot of renovations are land-grabbing, space-maximising, boundary-pushing projects. So why did Megan Ripper and Glenn Elliott in Rozelle spend nearly \$800,000 on a renovation that reduced the footprint of their house? After seeing the end product of their four-year renovation (including stops and starts), Ripper and Elliott have come to appreciate that it's not about how much space you have but how you use it.

OUT WITH THE OLD

The couple bought the two-bedroom property in 2006 for \$820,000. It was a sandstone cottage that had been renovated in the 1980s. However, the previous renovation was not to their taste.

A series of lean-to structures had been added at the back of the property, housing the dining and kitchen area as well as a bathroom.

This dramatically reduced the size of the backyard to the point that it was unusable.

According to Ripper, it was "just a little damp, dark, concrete courtyard" when they originally bought the property.

The other cheap addition from the 1980s was the timber-clad upper floor that served as the main bedroom. This is where the couple spent all their time before the renovation. "The way we used the property when we first bought it meant that it was probably Rozelle's biggest one-bedroom house," Ripper says, laughing.

"The upstairs was the one redeeming feature as it had a fantastic view of the district surrounds, some views of the top of the Harbour Bridge and the city... the rest of the house was pretty diabolical at that stage."

The issue faced by these renovators was not a lack of space but a lack of usable space.

Architect Christopher Polly was given the task of turning what was, in essence, a dysfunctional one-bedroom house into a three-bed, two-bath contemporary home to suit what was fast becoming a young family.

ROCK BOTTOM

Most of the setbacks during construction were because of the stone base on which the property stood. "We've basically built a house on a rock, which means that there were always going to be small additional costs involving minor excavations," Ripper says.

The biggest issue was the retaining wall, which was a rock shelf that changed in profile several times along the length of the property. Remedying this was difficult as the gap between the wall and the neighbour's wall was so small that wheelbarrows could not be used to transport materials.

COSTS

▶ Preliminaries	\$116,600
▶ Demolition	\$16,000
▶ Concrete and formwork	\$5000
▶ Brickwork and blockwork	\$43,800
▶ Steel	\$19,700
▶ Roofing	\$16,500
▶ Carpenter	\$44,500
▶ Timber and hardware	\$32,900
▶ Joinery	\$52,000
▶ Plasterboard and insulation	\$26,000
▶ Windows and fixed glazing	\$44,500
▶ Floor finishes	\$12,700
▶ Painting	\$17,000
▶ Tiling	\$10,000
▶ Electrical and lighting	\$28,400
▶ Hydraulics and plumbing	\$56,500
▶ Mechanical	\$6600
▶ Builder's margin	\$35,000
▶ Appliances, fixtures and fittings	\$28,000
▶ Landscaping, paving and fences	\$27,300
SUBTOTAL	\$639,000
▶ Architect	\$64,000
▶ Consultants	\$17,000
SUBTOTAL	\$720,000
▶ GST	\$72,000
TOTAL	\$792,000

Although construction was slowed by three weeks, it could have been a lot worse if the neighbours (who were planning works on their home) weren't as patient and co-operative as they were throughout the build.

Apart from these delays, Polly's vision for the property came together quite smoothly, as evidenced by the end product.

CLEANING UP

Well experienced in remedying the mistakes by renovators before him, the first thing Polly did was scale the house back to a clean rectangle. This meant getting rid of the lean-tos at the back to create a clearly proportioned outdoor space. Due to the addition of a large skylight, downstairs is now an open-plan space that fills with light and incorporates the dining, living and kitchen areas.

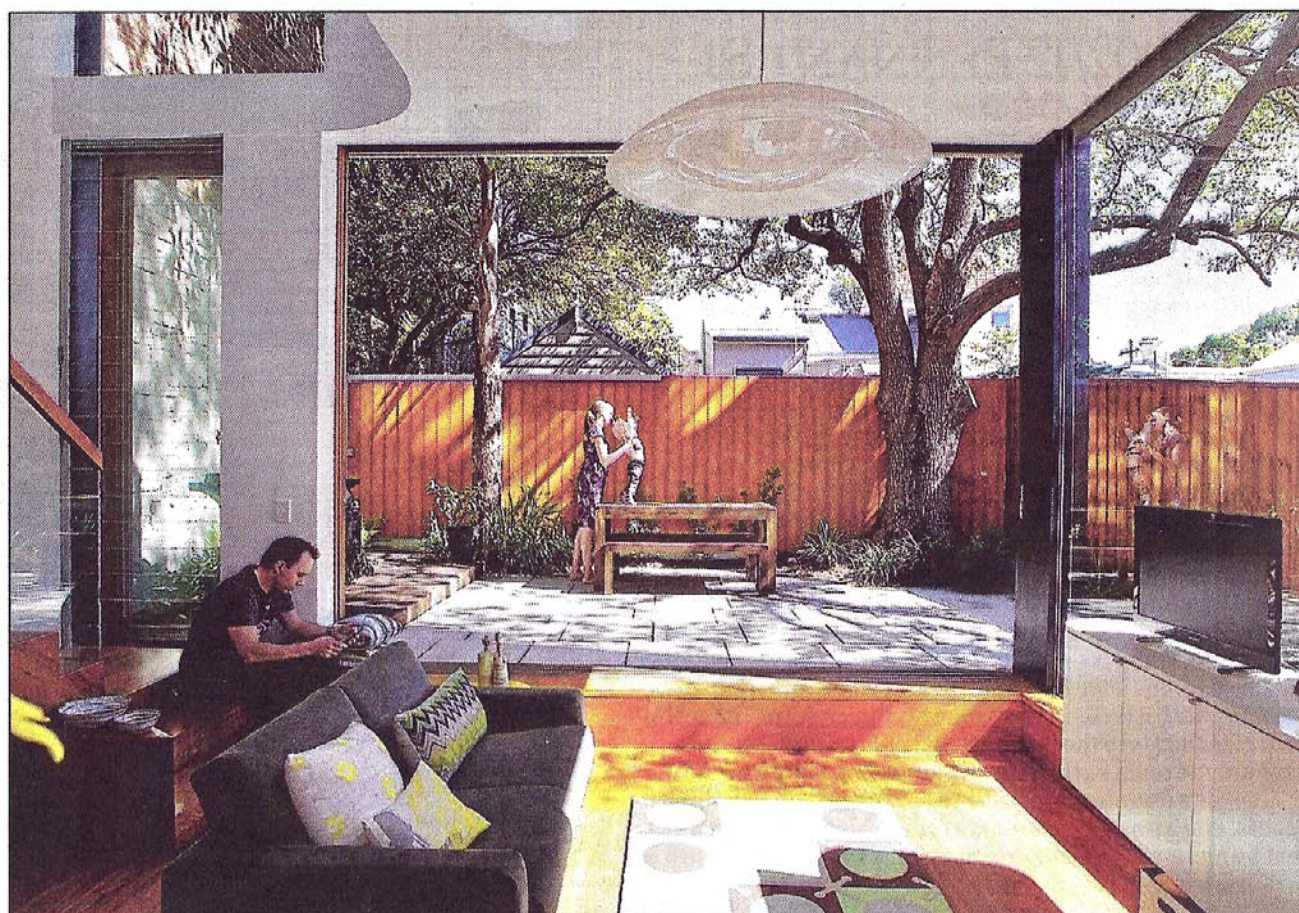
"It's being clever about small spaces," Polly says.

"Most clients would want to try and maximise their ground floor, keep what they can."

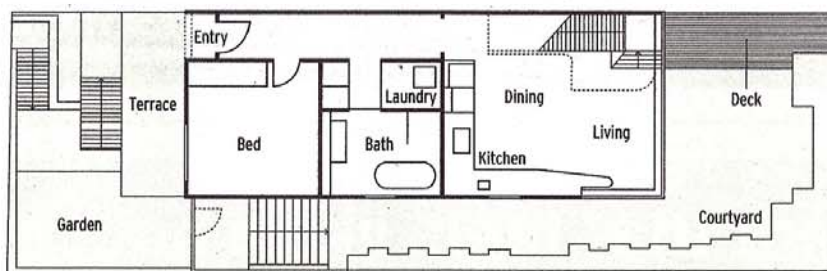
"But Megan and Glen saw the advantage in the greater utility of having courtyard space."

To compensate for the reduction in the ground-floor footprint, the upstairs area was extended over Polly's newly defined rectangle.

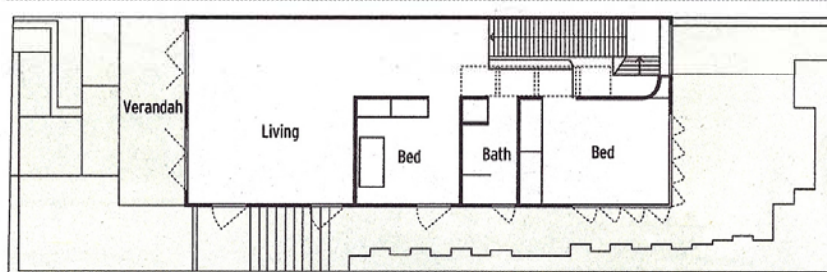
This resulted in an increase in the



Open-minded ... Glenn Elliott, Megan Ripper and Miles in Rozelle. Photos: Domino Postiglione (above); Brett Boardman Photography (below left)



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

overall internal size, which now sits at 116 square metres.

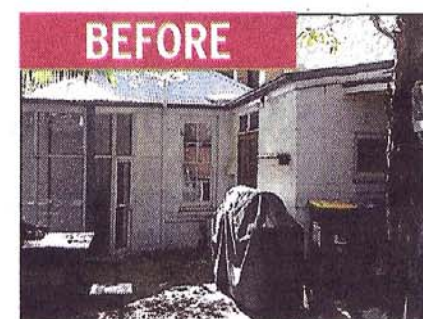
Upstairs features two bedrooms separated by a new bathroom, as well as a large north-east-facing living space.

This couple has no regrets about

the renovation reducing the footprint of their house.

"Big is not always better," Ripper says of the residence's new look.

"What we needed was something that was a little more family-friendly than a one-bedroom place with no



BEFORE

IN A NUTSHELL

Time Twenty-four months for design, approvals, paperwork and tendering; and eight months for construction.

Land size 193 sq m.

Internal size 116 sq m.

Architect Christopher Polly - Christopher Polly Architect, 0413 722 554.

Builder Paul King, Scott Inness and Ross Cummings - Paul King Pty Ltd, 9558 2747.

Green points

Ripper says: "For us it was about bringing more natural light and really making the most of the breezes that come through, so the whole house is designed to open up and take advantage of that."

Favourite feature

Ripper says: "The light and the airiness of the whole house and particularly upstairs, where it's a lot like living in a tree house."

Insider's tip

Ripper says: "Make sure you have the right people working with you. Having a good architect who was happy to project manage was really important for us."

What went right

▶ Back-lane access allowed for easy access of heavy machinery to the site, which can be problematic in small inner-west properties.

What went wrong

▶ Incorporating and defining the new retaining wall was a slow, difficult process due to the varied rock profile running along the length of the property.

usable space and a non-compliant set of stairs."

Hence, for Ripper, one of the best things about the home is sharing it with her son, Miles.

"It's now a lovely open space and a great spot for my son, who loves it."