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HOUSES

STYLISH, FUNCTIONAL FAMILY HOMES



The Laamans renovated their Sydney home in three stages over 10 years to achieve the modern-cottage feel they craved. Pet spoodle Bailey has also given it the seal of approval. Turn the page for more...

TURNING POINT

Taking a detour to see a home in a previously unexplored area worked out just fine for this forward-thinking Sydney family.

STORY *Deborah Grant* | STYLING *Kayla Gex* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Maree Homer*

KITCHEN *from left* Chynna, Jovi, Sean and Julia Laaman with Bailey, their pet spoodle. As well as a full pantry (with an attached laundry and drying area), the new kitchen has many integrated appliances, such as the fridge (far left). Carrara marble features on the benchtops; the splashback tiles are from Amber Tiles. Shaker-style polyurethane cupboards in Dulux Vivid White and island base in Monument. Custom stools, Flow Interiors & Styling. Vintage Chinese timber box (containing orchids), Les Interieurs. **Designer buy:** Mercator 'Hampton' pendant lights, \$339 each, Temple & Webster. ▶

This is the life

"Sean is a surfer whose dream was to surf before work in the morning so this area ticked the box nicely," says Julia. "But before we committed to the house, we took an architect through to make sure we could do all the things we wanted." One of them was to create a cottage feel with a modern twist. New white french windows and doors and black steel doors have achieved the look, along with the herringbone timber floors Julia loves.

'I'VE ALWAYS WANTED A MONOCHROME PALETTE SO WHITE, GREY AND BLACK WAS MY INSPIRATION AS IT'S TIMELESS AND FRESH. THE BLACK ADDS AN EDGE AND BREAKS UP ALL THE WHITE, AND I'VE ADDED A TOUCH OF COLOUR HERE AND THERE.'

Julia Laaman, owner

Julia and Sean Laaman were living on Sydney's north shore but had their eye on the beach suburbs when they found their home in 2008. "We were passively looking in Manly for the right thing to come along and saw this house in the local paper. The area wasn't really on our radar, but as we were driving along, I said, 'Let's take a left here - there's a cute place we should look at.'"

The home was a Federation cottage with the high ceilings and period features they were after and plenty of room for their two children: daughter Chynna, now 15, and son Jovi, 13. What it lacked was a family-friendly layout and all the modcons they were hoping for. Not to be deterred, the Laamans planned the property's transformation over an extended period before completing it two

years ago. Their patience was rewarded with a tailor-made home.

That's not to say the build process wasn't tricky at times. Years of deterioration meant that builder James Mangleson of JSM Construction had to strip everything back to the timber framework in almost every room. "Nearly every wall, ceiling rosette and floorboard has been replaced," says Julia. "We just used the bones and tried to stay sympathetic to the heritage of the home."

Doing the work in three phases helped to keep everything on track and on budget. First up was the facade, which they wanted to look like a "fresh, quaint country cottage you might see in Bowral", says Julia. Stage two was tackling the front rooms, and stage three focused on the back of the house and garden. ▶

FORMAL LIVING This room used to be part of the dining/TV area. Now a cosy space with an Escea gas fire and small walkout, it's also PlayStation central for the boys. The 'Motti' sofa, leather ottoman and 'Connie' coffee table from MCM House are a similar style to the family-room furniture, ensuring continuity. Julia says the custom photo shelves are one of her favourite features. Rug and candle, Smithmade. **Local hero:** Cylinder pot (not including strelitzia), from \$120, Pop & Scott.



The original layout had two bedrooms upstairs and two down, which wasn't ideal, plus the second living room was a combined dining/TV area at the front of the house. "That big room wasn't connected to the kitchen, so it didn't make any sense," says Julia. "We decided to divide the space into a third (guest) bedroom and a separate living area with new french doors leading out to a small deck, then installed a gas fireplace to kit it out for winter."

Creating an extra bedroom downstairs meant the two upstairs bedrooms could become one huge parents' retreat, including a separate dressing room and extended ensuite, complete with a higher ceiling. "It had always felt too low; our builder raised the height by going into the pitch of the roof," says Julia. She fitted out most of the interiors herself, with the help of Pinterest. The final touches were down to interior designer Anna Allen of Flow

Interiors & Styling. "Anna helped me out with furniture choices," says Julia.

The gardens were designed by Lyndall Keating of Garden Society. "She worked with our budget, which was great as we had to completely excavate and rebuild the front area," says Julia.

Finding their home and making it an even better, more contemporary version of itself has really paid off for the Laamans. "Everything about it is such a luxury to us now," says Julia. "We have underfloor heating in the bathrooms, ample storage, a gas-powered magnesium pool with spa jets that heats up to 39°, a butler's pantry, a dressing room for me with a vanity and make-up lights... it's amazing."

Flow Interiors & Styling, Mosman, NSW; flowinteriors.com.au. **JSM Construction**, Newport, NSW; jsmco.com.au. **Garden Society**, Narrabeen, NSW; gardensociety.com.au.



Flowers throughout from Emporio Home & Flowers, Manly, NSW; northsteynemporio.com.au.



FAMILY ROOM "The windows are part of the design so I didn't want to cover them with curtains or blinds," says Julia. A glass window over the TV area reveals the staircase. Bifold metal doors, The Steel Door Company. Custom sofa, blue chair and coffee table, Flow Interiors & Styling. Cushions, Smithmade. Throw, Sheridan. **DINING ROOM** Malawi cane chairs surround the table from Orient House. Photograph by Vicki Lee, Smithmade. **STUDY NICHE** Above the desk is an aircon unit cleverly hidden by louvres. Ottoman, Orson & Blake. Travel photograph by Julia Laaman. **BENCH SEAT** Covered in Mokum 'Nirvana' fabric in Oasis from James Dunlop Textiles. Cushion, Sheridan. **Designer buy:** 'Elements' handloomed rug in Beige, \$3000, Smithmade.





THE PALETTE

Dulux Natural White (bench seat and most interior walls)

Resene Quarter Silver Chalice (hall and formal living)

Carrara marble (bathroom)



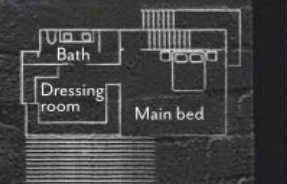
JOVI'S BEDROOM Surfing is a passion for Jovi and Sean. The poster of a famous surf break was a gift. Bed linen from Bed Bath N' Table. Quilt, Sheridan. Chair, Temple & Webster. **FAMILY BATHROOM** above right and opposite Doubling as the powder room, this space has a walk-in shower next to the Forme bath. Victoria & Albert basin and towel ladder, Just Bathroomware. Carrara marble vanity. Floor tiles and 'Infinity Richmond' ceramic wall tiles (at right), Amber Tiles. Taps, Brodware. Pendant light, bought in Bali. **PARENTS' RETREAT** below left and right "My dressing room is like a boudoir," says Julia. Cabinetry by Creative Projx. Bed and ottomans, Flow Interiors & Styling. 'Roxbury' wall light, Temple & Webster. **Smart buy:** 'Alton' bed cushions, from \$60 each, Sheridan.



Family dynamics
 Finding a corner block was a boon for the active family, who managed to fit a swimming pool and numerous grassy areas onto the 500m² site. The backyard, accessed through the elegant new black metal doors, is always a hive of activity in summer. "We spend a lot of time around the pool and do most of our entertaining on the undercover deck," says Julia. "We have speakers, heaters and even a ceiling fan so we can use it all year round." ▶

THE LAYOUT

GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

'THE BLOCK HAS LAWN ON THREE SIDES AND PLANTINGS ON THE FOURTH, AND THERE WAS A LOT OF WORK TO BE DONE. LANDSCAPE DESIGNER LYNDALL KEATING FROM GARDEN SOCIETY GOT MY VISION FOR THE GARDEN STRAIGHTAWAY.' *Julia*



FEATURE PLANTS

- Murraya paniculata*
- Star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*)
- Dichondra* 'Silver Falls'
- Coastal rosemary (*Westringia fruticosa*)
- Indian hawthorn (*Rhaphiolepis indica*)

Recycled timber decking connects the alfresco dining area to the pool. Lined in green sukabumi stone from Bali, its tropical-lagoon look is reinforced by the pink bougainvillea ('Scarlett O'Hara') plants heading up the white columns. The water is a magnesium mineral blend, which is softer on swimmers' skin and hair and less damaging to the garden. Sussex 'Monsoon' rust-resistant 316 marine-grade steel outdoor shower, Just Bathroomware. Outdoor table and benches, Eco Outdoor. Ceiling fan, Light Up. Clock, Alfresco Emporium. Swing chair, Byron Bay Hanging Chairs. For Where to Buy, see page 188. **H&G**