

Renovate

The brief

To open up and refresh a seaside apartment to create a classic but practical home with plenty of design flexibility into the future.



DESIGNER

Alexandra Donohoe Decus Interiors, decus.com.au

THE SOURCE

Cockatoo artwork by Lelia Jeffreys, leilajeffreys.com

Floating floor Europlank in Legacy White from Havwoods, havwoods.com.au

Splashback tiles Moroccan Casa tiles from Onsite, onsitesd.com.au

Wall colour Vivid White by Dulux, dulux.com.au



With oceans of style

A dated apartment finally embraces its seaside location, writes **Robyn Willis**

A lot of us are looking to create classic interiors. Often, it is because we don't want our spaces to date too quickly while for others, it's all about the resale value and appealing to as many buyers as possible.

For the owner of this apartment overlooking Tamarama beach, the motivations were altogether different.

Rough diamond

Interior designer Alexandra Donohoe would rather not put into print what this apartment in a 1940s building reminded her of when she first saw it.

"Suffice to say, I don't know how the owner was living there," she says. "He had his mini Weber barbecue in the living room."

The interior was looking tired with the space closest to the ocean views divided in half while the balcony was almost falling off.

However, the location overlooking the Bronte to Bondi walk and the ocean beyond was idyllic and the building had only two apartments per floor, ensuring easy access to natural light from two sides.

After living in it for a while, the owner was ready to bring his home up to speed. He just didn't have a clue how to go about it.

"He'd had very little luck finding a designer to interpret his ideas but he didn't have very strong ideas either," says Alexandra.

"He wanted it to be clean and classic, not overly styled and it needed to look like it belonged in its location."

Although the block was solidly built, an architectural detail had been lost years ago so Alexandra started by stripping the two-bedroom apartment back to the bare bones.

"Where the living and dining spaces are now, there were deep over-sized walls that were not structural but effectively cut the



spaces in two," Alexandra says.

"They really reduced the usable space so we removed them and put in steel portal frames (to reinforce the walls) so that it is much more open now."

While there was plenty of light in the bedrooms, the hallway was dark so Alexandra set highlight windows into the shared wall to allow the light to flow through easily.

The main bedroom also had a stepped down space which Alexandra suspects was once a private balcony but had been enclosed some time in the building's history.

She has turned this into a deceptively

simple built-in desk and study space complete with open and closed shelving.

Service entry

The kitchen, which was also in the centre of the living space, was relocated to the back of the room with an island bench facing towards the view. It is deep enough to accommodate a trio of barstools for casual eating or for serving drinks when friends drop by.

Typically, moving services in apartments is difficult because they are fixed in place throughout the building. However, Alexandra says they were fortunate enough that there



A cheeky cockatoo print ensures this living space doesn't take itself too seriously.

was a sizeable cavity or 'cellar' between the floor of this apartment and the ceiling of the dwelling below.

"The space under the floor was reasonably deep so the guys just got in underneath and ran the gas line for the kitchen to the new position," she says.

Moving services was made easier by the decision to replace the floor.

Alexandra opted for an engineered timber floating floor from Havwoods which is pre finished for easy installation.

While it is just 14.5mm thick, it has been designed to be sanded back in time, depending on wear and tear of the floor.

Beach style

The choice of finish for the floor was very much about creating a stylish but relaxed beach feel for the internal spaces.

To this end, Alexandra has chosen a simple palette of materials that includes the extensive use of V-grooved panelling on the walls which have been painted in Dulux Vivid White. Textiles in soft charcoal and a monochromatic flatweave rug provide a textural element.

Against this simple backdrop, hand made Moroccan blue tiles make a colourful impact in the kitchen while sea-green ceramics continue the connection to the natural environment outside.

Graphic prints of native birds by artist Leila Jeffreys are not only beautiful but add just the right amount of humour.

The work took 16 weeks to complete at a cost of about \$240,000.

The owner has a good relationship with his Body Corporate so approval was gained without drama.

"They were an easy bunch of people to deal with," says Alexandra.

"The work was all internal anyway, except for the balcony which we replaced."

For his part, the owner is delighted with the outcome, which he left mostly to Alexandra and her team.

"He was very trusting, which was great."

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Pictures Justin Alexander



Blue tiles stand out in this all-white kitchen while timber barstools create a relaxed feel.



Hall monitor

Alexandra has taken every opportunity to include storage in this apartment, including here at the end of the hallway where a built-in cupboard is finished in limed timber veneer with leather loops for handles. Open shelves make it a great alternative to a traditional hall table.

