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# barefoot luxury

Relaxed and elegant at the same time, this Aussie beachside home is a place where you can sit back and enjoy the good life

PHOTOGRAPHY Anson Smart

WORDS Karine Monié



## LIVING ROOM

Two glazed walls bring the lush outdoors inside.

Extrasoft **sofa**, Living Divani at Space Furniture. Silk **rug**, Robyn Cosgrove. Serge Mouille Applique 2 **wall light**, Cult Design





## POOL CABANA

The decor took its cue from the organic nature of the home's green surroundings.

*Parwalla (2008) artwork* by Elizabeth Nyumi. Custom **seat**, Decus Interiors; **covered in** Chevron, Missoni Home at Spence & Lyda. Bandy **side table**, Jardan

# S

et among lush and mature gardens of indigenous flora, this three-storey house located on a picturesque stretch of the Australian coast with far-reaching vistas of coastal pines and the ocean beyond had already maximised the breathtaking panoramas. Even with its exceptional landscape, however, the potential for the interiors is what immediately convinced Alexandra Donohoe Church, founder of Sydney-based studio Decus Interiors, to deliver this atypical beachside home for a couple with five children.

'Part of the attraction of this project was that it offered a variety of design detailing to get our teeth into,' says Alexandra. 'It had a bit of everything, in that the heritage part of the house required a more traditional approach, while the new extension [designed by Tim Wright Architect] necessitated a more contemporary feel.'

As a starting point, the young Australian family shared with Decus Interiors four images to illustrate the kind of aesthetic that appealed to them. From there, the design team had carte blanche. 'The clients were open to having something of their individual personalities considered in the house, so the rooms are all quite different, each reflecting the identity of their primary user,' says

Alexandra. A variety of looks were created through colours, textures and materials without losing cohesion.

'In the areas to be primarily used by children (like their bedrooms, bathrooms and playroom), we erred toward energetic and optimistic palettes, with clean and unfussy detailing and robust materials,' says Alexandra. 'We treated the main suite as a parents' retreat, with a muted and sophisticated palette and luxe fabrics and finishes.' The detailing of the existing heritage house was a constant source of inspiration and a reference point. For instance, in the main bedroom, adorned with cornices, plasterwork and panelling, the designers raised the skirting height in order to echo the timber skirting board height in the main study.

'It was intentional to select darker, more dramatic and moody base tones for the living spaces,' Alexandra adds. Both in bronze, the range hood in the kitchen and the stairwell handrail – winding its way through the heart of the house – bring a lot of character to these areas. Present in every room, the impressive collection of Australian art also enriches the design narrative, while the layout and flow had to combine both family living and entertaining for the adults. 'Our work seeks

to constantly balance the exquisite and provocative, whimsical and classic, austere and colourful,' explains Alexandra.

Outside, the new pool cabana – that supplements the large family's space for play – swimming pool, terrace and wraparound veranda are an invitation to further enjoy a quintessential lifestyle by the ocean.

'We subtly took cues from the organic nature of the surroundings and integrated the idea of barefoot luxury throughout the home,' the interior architect says. The visual language of polarity – characterised by a mix between old and new, young spirit and adult needs, grand proportions and warm atmosphere, a sophisticated and laid-back vibe – ensures elements of surprise, discovery and nuance in every corner, while avoiding any sense of cliché. 'We did not want the house to feel too typically coastal: it was purposeful that the home stands apart from the region's often ostentatious personality,' says Alexandra. 'This is a house with something for everyone. There are bold tones, soft lines, pops of candy greens and blues, with delicate pinks; we got to play dress-up with lots of different dressing-up boxes!'

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[decus.com.au](http://decus.com.au)

## home profile

### THE DESIGNER

Based in Sydney, Australia, Alexandra Donohoe Church, who is the founder and managing director of Decus Interiors, transformed this beachside home for a young family of seven.

### THE PROPERTY

The first floor of the house comprises five bedrooms, three bathrooms, a playroom, study and terrace. On the ground floor, there is a main bedroom, en suite and dressing room, main study, dining room, kitchen with large scullery, living room, two cloakrooms and an outdoor terrace. The detached pool cabana has a living room, cloakroom and kitchen.

### KITCHEN

'I love this room for its rich and moody tones, the detailing and the materials,' says Alexandra.

**Joinery**, custom design by Decus Interiors. **Pepper stools**; **Moon pendants**, both Holly Hunt. **Oak Argento flooring**, Tongue n Groove





### MAIN STUDY

'We worked with the bones of the original house by integrating warm, rich and inviting colours here,' says Alexandra.

**Curtains**, Simple Studio.  
lan modular **sofa**, Christophe Delcourt at Ondene



## TERRACE

Sleek cook space, chill-out zone  
- this alfresco area has it all.

Sabi sofa; Kaba chairs; Sciarra  
coffee table; Samo rug, all  
Paola Lenti at Dedecé



**MAIN EN SUITE**  
Clever mirrors were made to sit  
in front of the windows.

Bianco Carrara vanity unit and hardware, CDK Stone. Mirrors, custom design by Decus Interiors. Amboise wall lights, Jonathan Browning at Milgate



## MAIN BEDROOM

Lighting was incorporated into the headboard.

Headboard, Decus Interiors.  
Bedlinen and blankets, Society Limonta at Ondene. NuSilk Opulence carpet, Sylka Carpets & Rugs at Whitecliffe Imports

houses



### DAUGHTER'S BEDROOM

'I created a whimsical space in which to dream,' says Alexandra.

Bahamas **wallpaper**, Bien Fait. Clementine **table**, Jordan

## home truths

### PERFECT EVENING: TV OR BOOK?

Reading a design book.

### COFFEE OR TEA?

Coffee.

### ABSTRACT OR FIGURATIVE ART?

Abstract, as I'm intrigued by colour, shape, and texture.

### IF YOU COULD TIME TRAVEL, WHERE WOULD YOU GO?

The late 1960s/early 1970s - for the music, revolution and social change.

### THE CELEBRITY HOME YOU WOULD LIKE TO DESIGN...

Jay Z.

### URBAN PENTHOUSE OR COUNTRY HOUSE?

Countryside house surrounded by nature.

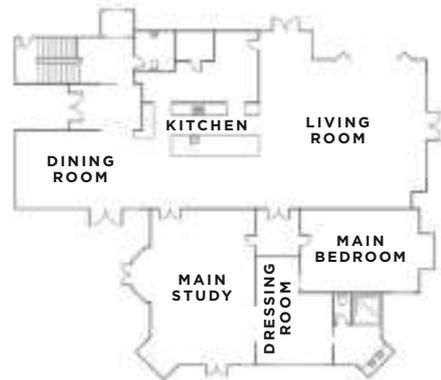
### KIDS' BATHROOM

This was designed to be both playful and sophisticated.

Fizi **wall lights**, Articolo. **Vanity in** Norwegian Rose marble, CDK Stone. Glass mosaic 'Opus' Romano **wall tiles**, Bisanna Tiles



## the blueprint



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR