

# The Daily Telegraph home

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## Natural selection

Stone and wood inspire a modern masterpiece **10**

**Display** Glenbrook by GJ Gardner Homes **12** **At home** Charlie Albone **17**



## Build

### The brief

To replace an old house on a sloping block with a home that makes the most of the view and the natural environment.



ARCHITECT  
**Richard Cole** (pictured)  
richardcolearchitecture.com.au

BUILDER  
**Aaron Chow** (pictured) Prime Form  
Construction, primeform.com.au

OWNERS  
**Terence and Tina Cole**

THE SOURCE  
**Roofing** Bluescope Custom Blue Orb  
steel roofing, bluescopesteel.com.au  
**Sanitary fittings** Rogerseller,  
rogerseller.com.au  
**Tiles** Thassos marble mosaic tiles from  
Belmondo Tiles, belmondotiles.com.au  
**Windows** Altair louvred windows with  
clear anodised gallery and black clips  
from Breezway, breezway.com.au



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Richard Cole was the architect chosen by his  
parents Terence and Tina for the Waverton home.



### Natural beauty

Keeping the magnificent mature  
angophora that was already on the  
block was a priority for the owners, and  
a sandstone shelf uncovered during the build  
was also incorporated into the design.

# It's a job well done, my son

It pays to choose the right people when building a house, writes Robyn Willis

Building a house is a major investment in time and money so trust in the right people is vital.

For Terence and Tina Cole, choosing an architect was straightforward once the decision was made to build their own home.

They had moved back to Sydney from acreage in Bathurst, and were looking for a house that would be as beautiful to look at as it would be functional to live in.

### Site inspection

Although they wanted to live close to the city, they could not find anything that suited them and finally settled on an older home on a sloping site in Waverton on the Sydney's lower north shore.

Attracted by its elevated position and a mature angophora on the block, they spent a year in the old house while they worked on plans for its replacement with the architect, their son Richard Cole.

With plenty of experience designing for sloping sites, he has built a reputation for homes that are beautifully crafted without competing with their natural environment. Even so, he had his work cut out for him with this project.

### Hurdle jumping

Along with the sloping site, which included a large sandstone rock shelf, the block was bookended by streets on two levels which were under heritage conservation orders.

Car access from the upper street had been almost impossible with the old house so plans were soon afoot to build a garage on the lower street with a lift to take visitors to the first and second floor.

Movement from indoor spaces to outdoor decks would be seamless with custom-made timber doors which completely slide back to

reveal the view and avoid any chance of tripping. Extra wide timber internal doors would be fitted with built-in handles that could be operated with one finger.

Both levels have bedrooms and bathrooms providing plenty of flexibility, whatever their needs in coming years.

### Universal appeal

Richard says while it is important the house be easy for his parents to use, it is equally critical that none of its universal housing features (which meet needs across a lifetime) would be obvious.

"My parents did not plan the house for universal housing but I've been doing a bit of housing for seniors living so I was up to speed with all the issues to do with that," he says. "At the moment they are both extremely active so it had to be able to accommodate them now and into the future. At the same time, we didn't want to compromise anything to do with the quality."

Richard and his father share a love of Australian timbers, so there was no argument over the choice of tallowwood, a hardwood that has been used inside and out for floors, doors and even the wave-like ceiling.

### Solid rock

Once the old house had been demolished, a large sandstone rock shelf was discovered which Richard decided to keep exposed in the house.

"Sandstone escarpments are a real feature of Sydney's topography and it is quite an unexpected experience (to find it in the house) if you don't know about it," he says.

However, convincing his parents that it was a good idea to have part of their bathroom and a bedroom open to bare rock was not easy.

"They were worried the rock face would be wet and that it would become a real problem in the house," Richard says.

"It is always a risk to do something like that but it has worked out well and we have installed drains to intercept any water."

To ensure that the house would stay where it was put, builder Aaron Chow secured the building with about 30 rock anchors inserted deep into the rock.

Securing the rock proved to be the biggest issue during the 18-month building process but Richard says it is worth taking the time to get it right.

"The builder had a relatively small team which is why it took so long," he says.

"Some of the builders (who tendered) proposed to do it quicker but getting the quality was the important thing."

Indeed, nothing has been left undone with everything considered from venetian blinds inserted between glass in the main bedroom and LED strip lighting in the timber stair rail through to the timber handles in the kitchen which Richard made himself.

Although the approval process with council was a fraught 10-month-long process involving three council meetings, the very contemporary home was passed with the support of the planning department.

With conservation credentials including passive solar features and the retention of the large angophora on the block, it comfortably takes its place in the landscape.

Importantly, the clients are happy.

"They put a huge amount of faith in me and it is a very big thing to ask," says Richard.

"Fortunately, they are very happy with the result."

home  
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Pictures John Fotiadis



Richard and his father share  
a love of Australian timbers.

