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May 16, 2009

# home

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## Getaway plans

Using low-impact design and construction to create a stylish holiday house **14**

**24** Your guide to display homes open for inspection

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**7** Second-hand shopping tips from Tom Williams







### FACT FILE

#### THE BRIEF

Design a low-maintenance holiday home to take advantage of its natural setting

#### THE OWNERS

Debbie MacKinnon, Mike Staniford, and their children, Polly, 27, Daisy, 24, and Jack, 18

#### THE ARCHITECT

Richard Cole Architecture



# Outside the box

An innovative holiday getaway goes for something completely different

Going on holidays to the beach is an Australian tradition and one that Debbie MacKinnon and Mike Staniford were quick to embrace when they moved to Australia from Britain 15 years ago.

"Hardys Bay was the first place we visited [for a holiday] when we moved to Australia," Debbie says.

"We came here for Christmas and fell in love with it."

While they settled in Sydney for work, they had always hoped to buy a place in this popular pocket of the Central Coast and initially looked for a house to buy. But after the search

proved fruitless, they bought a sloping 817sq m vacant block directly overlooking the bay and hired Northern Beaches-based architect Richard Cole to design a house.

**"With a holiday house you want something different to your main residence"**

"We looked at a house he had worked on in the area and I really liked it. It had that semi-industrial feeling he creates," Debbie says.

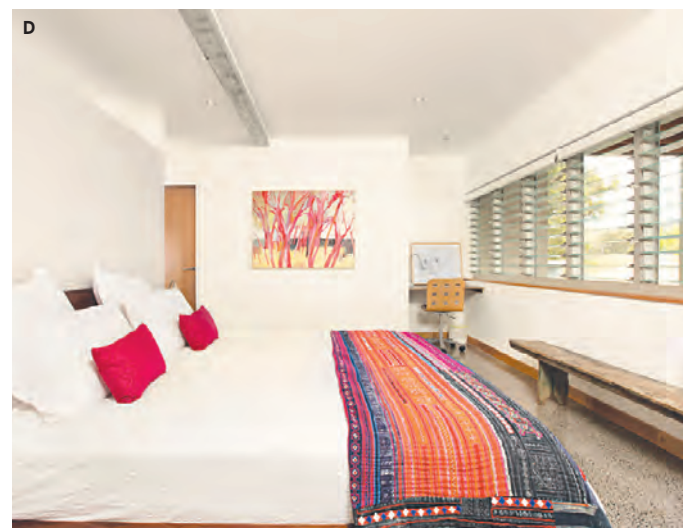
Their brief was to design a house that would embrace the outdoors and

make the most of the water views. Richard decided to set the main part of the house high on the block and create one large kitchen, dining and living space. Two bedrooms are tucked behind the kitchen and bathroom while the main bedroom suite, including ensuite and walk-in robes, is positioned on the floor below.

Access from the main bedroom to the living area is via outdoor stairs.

Richard says it is in keeping with the casual approach to living Debbie and Mike were looking for.

"The stairs to the bedroom are outside," Richard says.



**A** A covered alfresco area makes the most of the water views **B** Outside stairs connect the main bedroom with the living areas **C** Raw materials were used extensively to keep the house low maintenance **D** The main bedroom





**E** The bright orange colour used in the glass splashback is repeated throughout the house **F** High, fixed windows let in the northern light but maintain privacy

“You can get away with it in a holiday house but you would not accept it in your main house, because it is a little bit exposed. With a holiday house you want something a bit different to your main residence and you can try [various] ideas.”

The second and third bedrooms have also been kept deliberately low key.

“The bedrooms are pretty small and functional, because you are not going to spend a lot of time in there,” he says.

With the focus on the living areas, the difficulty was to capitalise on the views without allowing too much sun

to penetrate into the west-facing house. This was achieved by the inclusion of a deep, outdoor deck with a fixed roof, which has become a popular dining spot.

**“We have left a lot of materials in their natural state”**

To capture highly desirable northern light, Richard designed high, fixed windows for both the northern and southern sides of the house.

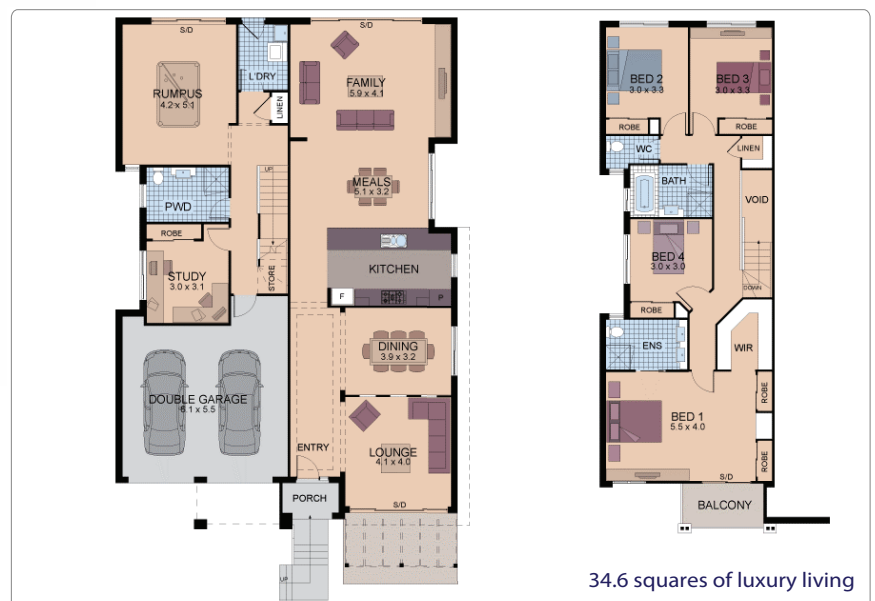
By positioning them well above eye height, the privacy of neighbours was →

# Split Level Display Home



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maintained while offering framed views of the treetops from the living areas.

Given it is partially unoccupied and has been designed for relaxation purposes, Richard says the other big consideration was using low-maintenance materials.

"We have left a lot of materials in their natural state, which I like to do to keep things quite raw," he says.

"The steel is galvanised, the [external] block work is cement render so it does not need painting, and the windows and doors are aluminium. It is really just the decks and handrails that need occasional attention."

Plywood has been used to great effect for the internal joinery, which has made a feature of the lined edges.

### Colour and warmth

But while the materials are largely raw, the space feels anything but cold or unlivable. Debbie is an accomplished artist and has used her eye for colour to inject a sense of casual warmth into the spaces.

An orange glass splashback has been followed up with bursts of orange throughout the space, including in her paintings, as well as in a great collection of second-hand Penguin classics.

Debbie also applied her artist's eye for detail and project managed the building process herself.

"I knew what I wanted and I was good at reading Richard's plans," Debbie says.

"We went through the brief carefully and we wanted to stick with the integrity of his design."

The detailed plans also cleared any confusion for the builder and, in any case, Debbie knew Richard was just a phone call away. Apart from some bad weather that set the building process back three months, she says construction went smoothly.

"The site is quite steep and full of clay so when it rained it became like a bog," she says.

She chose a local builder who not only offered good value for money but worked solely on her property until it was completed.

Although Debbie says she went into the process with her eyes open, it was still a daunting task.

"The hardest thing was the finances. You need to be organised and careful not to change your mind."

**Robyn Willis**

### MORE INFORMATION

**Debbie MacKinnon** [debbiemackinnon.com](http://debbiemackinnon.com)

**Richard Cole Architecture** 9918 3843,

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

**Mark Webster, builder** 0418 434 710

### RICHARD'S ADVICE

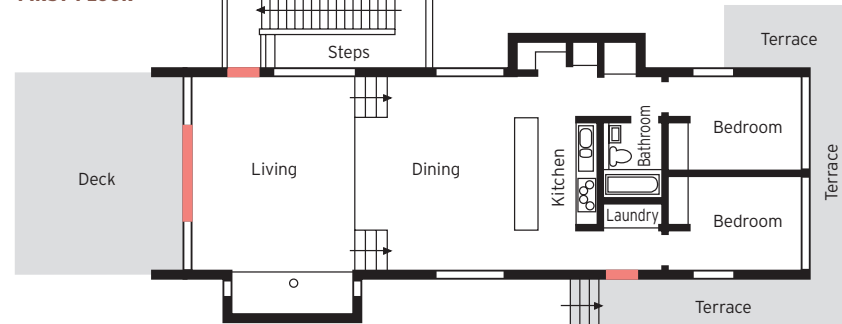
- Coastal holiday houses should embrace their environment. Consider locating services like stairs outside the house.
- Choose surfaces with low maintenance in mind. The last thing you want to spend your holidays doing is cleaning up.



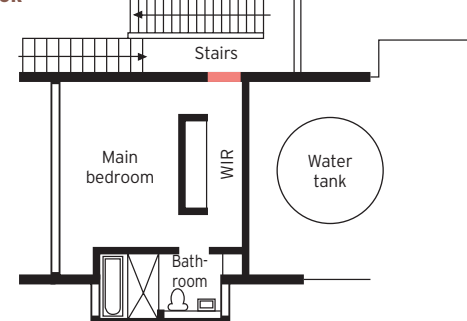
**A** The deep outdoor deck **B** The open-plan living area **C** Plywood cupboards are teamed with stainless steel **D** The mirrored bathroom



### FIRST FLOOR



### GROUND FLOOR



Photos: John Fotiadis