

Family ties allow design to rise to a steep challenge



Trisha Croaker

From the Drawing Board

The history of architecture is littered with stories of architects keeping it “all in the family”, of being grateful recipients of residential commissions from a supportive mum or dad, brother or sister.

The advantages are mutual. For the architect, the opportunity may be a timely one to prove their mettle, to experiment, to test themselves in ways previously not possible.

For the family member, it's a house designed by someone who knows them more intimately than any other – someone tuned to their peccadilloes, likes and dislikes and, importantly, their aesthetics.

A recently completed house in Waverton by Richard Cole is a great example of a home designed, in this instance, by an established architect for his retiring parents.

While Cole had numerous commissions to his name, the project was a special one – a first-time commission from “conservative” parents Tina and Terry.

“We always wanted Richard to do something for us, it was a dream we had,” Tina said.

‘It was important we create something sculptural.’

Richard Cole, architect

The dream was realised when they purchased a challenging site with “lots of potential” several years ago.

The block featured magnificent angophoras, district views, and sat at the end of two cul-de-sacs. On the downside, the cul-de-sacs were separated by a three storey drop – an old quarry on a sandstone cliff riven by fissures, on a south-facing site.

The brief was simple. The couple wanted a “luxurious but not huge house” where they could “live on the ground, to feel the grass, trees and birds”. They planned to age in place, with access issues addressed.

“I knew what mum and dad were like intimately, which was really helpful,” Cole said. “It was important we create something sculptural rather than geometric. And that we get the character of the house right.”



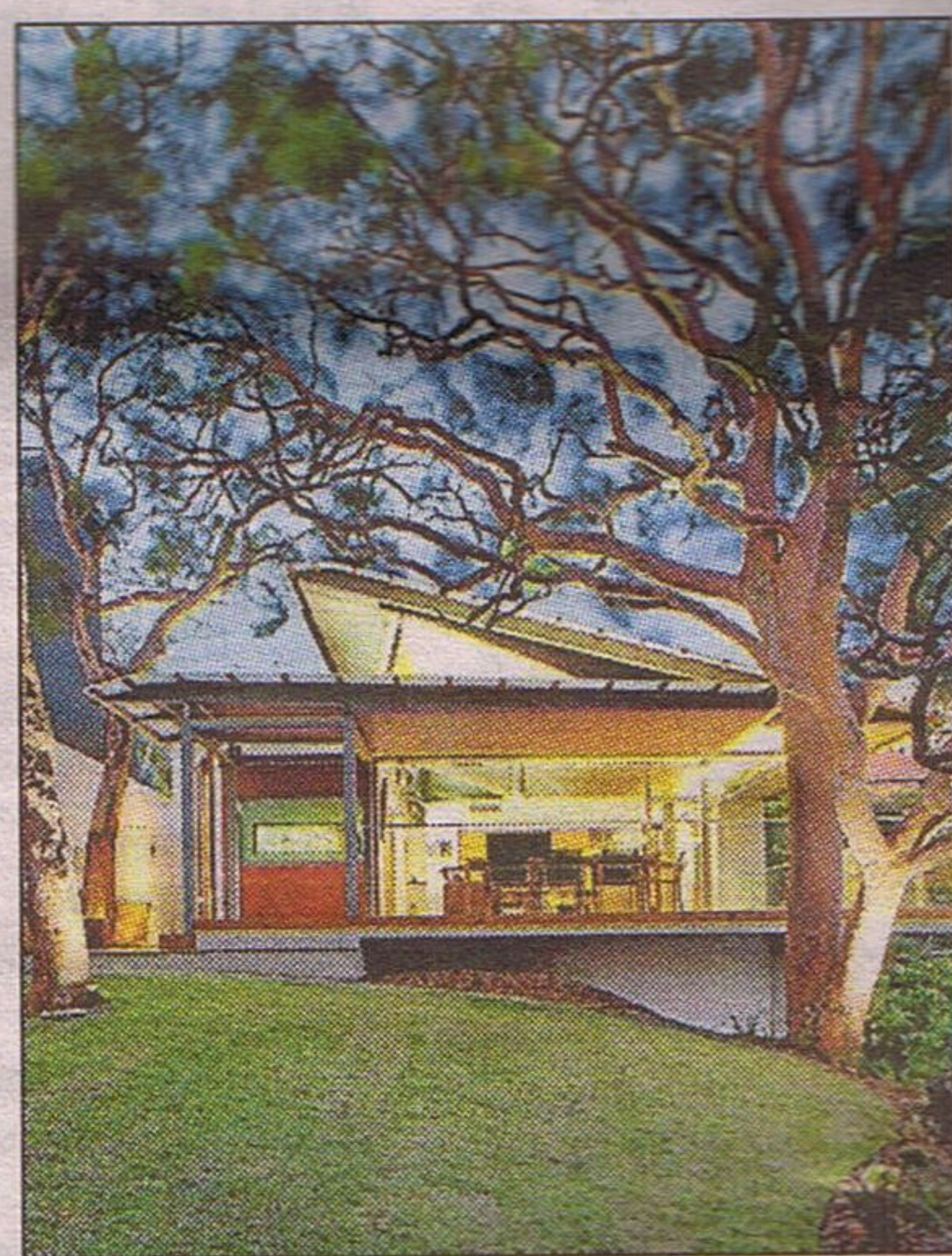
The world beyond: An undulating tallowwood ceiling draws the eye outside (main); and the surrounding angophoras (right). Photos: Simon Wood

The resulting design is a light-filled two storey home entered from the higher cul-de-sac, with car entry from the lower street, and a steel and glass lift linking all.

Cole placed the kitchen, living and dining on the western side of the upper level, maximising visual and physical connection to the garden and angophoras. A master bedroom suite was placed on the eastern side, allowing the top level to work as a self-contained space. A study, second bedroom and bathroom were placed on the lower level, with the sandstone escarpment exposed to form the rear wall.

“We designed the spaces on both levels to be solid at your back, to feel part cave-like against the slope, and to open to the views to the south and west.”

Tallowwood framed retractable glass doors and windows and a dra-



matic softly undulating tallowwood ceiling are among many features designed to draw your eye to the world beyond, while ensuring you feel embraced by the space within.

As Tina said: “This house was designed with a lot of thought, and a whole lot of love. We love it.”

trish.croaker@gmail.com