

**REAR GARDEN** The back of the house enjoys views to the river. Mediterranean Sand travertine terrace and pool pavers from RMS Marble Natural Stone & Ceramics. Lille old bronze and glass lights from LightCo. Landscaping by GoodManors.



## SET FOR LIFE

Becoming empty-nesters gave the owners of this Sydney property the chance to make a fresh start without leaving the home they loved.

STORY *Chris Pearson* | STYLING *Andrew Waller* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Nicholas Watt*

While many empty-nesters downsize, Judi and Paul, the owners of this tranquil retreat on Sydney's Lower North Shore, preferred to stay put. Instead, they opted to revamp the four-bedroom home to ensure it will remain the perfect fit through their retirement years.

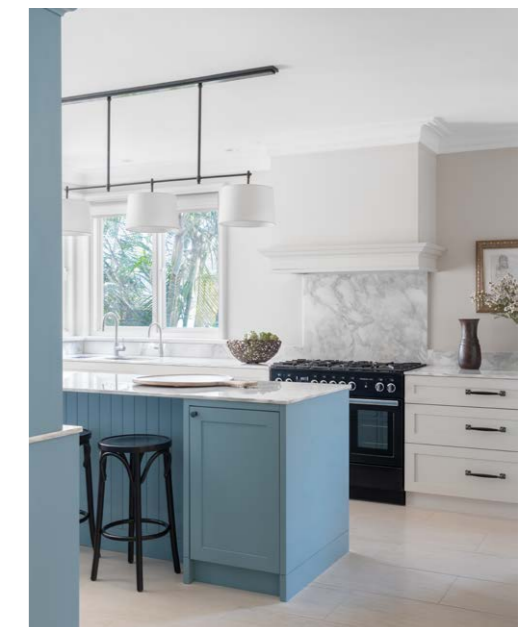
They bought the house in 2001, when their adult children, James and Georgia, were youngsters. "We had been living in Hong Kong for about 10 years when we thought it was time to look for a property back in Sydney," says Judi. After searching the area for six months, the couple found this house, built just a year prior. "We loved the location - north facing, with a flat block leading down to the river and a private jetty - but also its simple, clean design."

They tweaked a few things in the ensuing years, including adding a pergola on the north side upstairs, but since the house had been recently built and simply decorated, it was easy to live with, says Judi. After James and Georgia left home, the couple decided it was time to remedy the things that had niggled them

and elevate the practical, family-oriented house to something more graceful and elegant.

The existing fittings and finishes - red timbers, glass benchtops and acres of tiles - were looking a bit tired and dated. The scale, too, was overwhelming: fine for a family, but not for a party of two. "It was flooded with space, wide and tall, including 3.4-metre-high ceilings at the back, so the areas merged into one, with no definition," says interior architect Andrew Waller of Mr Waller. And, despite the seductive river view, a solid balustrade at the end of the broad hallway sliced off the open-plan living spaces at the rear, blocking sightlines to the water. "Judi and Paul wanted a classic, yet timeless, refurbishment," says Andrew. "I set out to reconstruct 20 years of family living." To this, Judi adds: "Andrew visualised our house in a relaxed contemporary classic style, moving away from sharper modern minimalism to a much softer, tranquil look."

Keeping within the ground-floor footprint, Andrew converted the study into a wine cellar and sliced up an over-generous laundry to create a butler's pantry. Abutting the pantry, the kitchen has resurfaced in a country-house style, with ▶



"THE REVAMPED KITCHEN, LAUNDRY AND BUTLER'S PANTRY ARE ALL FANTASTIC - USER-FRIENDLY, ARCHITECTURALLY CLEVER AND BEAUTIFUL TO LOOK AT."

JUDI, OWNER

Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.

THE PALETTE

Resene Akaroa Half (main kitchen joinery)	Dulux Aspinall Blue (kitchen island)	Dulux Vivid White
---	--------------------------------------	-------------------

**KITCHEN** *Above* Joinery by Andrew Waller made by Middleton Design (throughout). Calacatta Caldia benchtops and Mocha Cream floor tiles, all RMS Marble Natural Stone & Ceramics. Dual-fuel oven, Falcon. Visual Comfort 'Billiard' light, Laura Kincade. Barstools, Thonet. Picasso sketch bought in Paris. Bizen vase, Planet. **BREAKFAST NOOK** *Right* Banquette and cushions by Andrew Waller. Le Corbusier B9 bentwood chairs, Thonet. Palecek Rain Drum stool, Laura Kincade. Carved-marble side table bought in India. Beehive box and Rose bowl, both Greg Natale. **FORMAL LIVING ROOM** Armchairs, sofas and cushions, all by Andrew Waller. Rug and mirror bought in Hong Kong. Visual Comfort 'Farlane' chandelier, Laura Kincade. Kanta nested coffee tables and Santon side table, all Boyd Blue. Antique table lamp sourced at auction. Vault box and Gem Objet Fiore, both Greg Natale. Vases from Planet and Conley & Co.



**THIS IS THE LIFE**

Better use of space has meant the whole house is in constant use, especially with the steady flow of visiting friends and family. "We don't save any spaces for formal occasions," says Judi. She can't fault the final result: "The revamped kitchen, laundry and butler's pantry are all fantastic – user-friendly, architecturally clever and beautiful to look at. As are the redesigned ensuite and walk-in wardrobe. Every room is a joy to be in."



**ANDREW FOUND PERFECT PLACES FOR THE OWNERS' MOST PRECIOUS TREASURES, SUCH AS ARTWORKS, THE BEAUTIFUL ORIENTAL RUGS AND OBJETS D'ART, TEAMING THEM WITH CONTEMPORARY ELEMENTS SUCH AS GLAMOROUS LIGHT FITTINGS.**



**MAIN BEDROOM** Primula wallpaper, Quercus & Co. Marco bed, Oly Studio. Custom bedside table. Norman table lamps, Boyd Blue. Pinto carpet, Prestige Carpets. **DRESSING ROOM** Table lamp bought in New York. Joinery and carpet, as before. **MAIN ENSUITE** Stone benchtops, wall and floor tiles, all RMS Marble Natural Stone & Ceramics. Victoria+Albert 'Toulouse' bath, Just Bathroomware. No. 18 chair, Thonet. **DINING** Baxter dining table, Boyd Blue. Custom chairs by Andrew Waller. Rug bought in Hong Kong. The paintings are heirlooms. Visual Comfort 'Bryant' pendant light and basketweave box, both Laura Kincaid. Sculpture bought in Paris. Oscar bowl and Metropolis box, both Greg Natale. Vases from Conley & Co, Planet and Boyd Blue. ▶



VJ panelling, crafted joinery and marble benchtops. Upstairs, a family room became the study, the main ensuite reconfigured to include a bath and the fourth bedroom repurposed as a TV room. In the name of future-proofing the home, the staircase was realigned to make room for a lift.

An open balustrade at the end of the hallway ensures clear sightlines through the house. Andrew addressed the scale issue by dividing the layout into zones. Custom joinery, his signature, also adds character and warmth throughout. Paradoxically perhaps, the furniture was upscaled and low-key lights replaced with statement chandeliers.

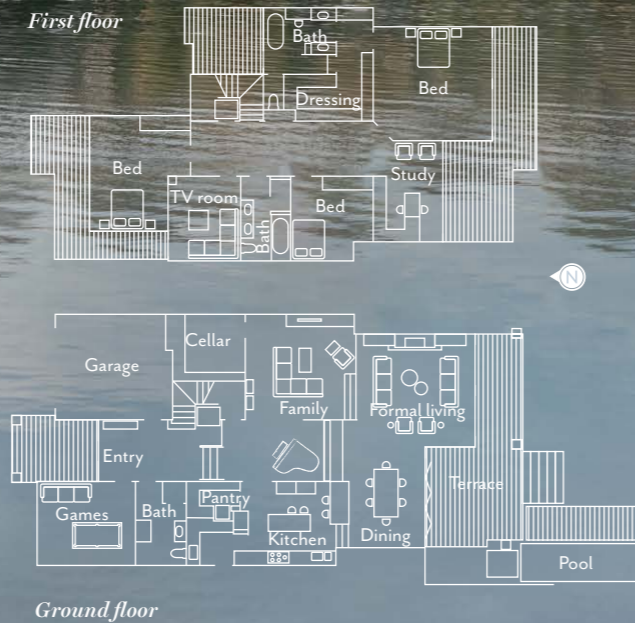
The palette predominantly comprises muted, muddy tones to create a tranquil atmosphere. It's enlivened by discreetly patterned pieces, the exception being an oversized floral on the walls of the main bedroom.

Treasures from the family's travels were woven into the new interior, helping Judi and Paul enjoy them anew. A Picasso sketch migrated from the main bedroom to the kitchen; a mirror from a Hong Kong hotel was repainted; and a marble side table - a souvenir from a visit to India's Taj Mahal - graces the new breakfast area. "Andrew found perfect places for all of our most precious items, such as the beautiful oriental rugs and objets d'art," says Judi. Among the contemporary elements are light fixtures to fill what would otherwise be gaping voids, a long dining table and chairs, and more formal living room furniture.

For Andrew, it wasn't just a job, but a labour of love. "Judi and Paul trusted me to do all of the structural work as well as the decorative detail. Bespoke joinery, more buoyant spaces and blue accents have created the perfect oasis by the water." *Mr Waller, St Peters, NSW; 0422 992 676 or mrwaller.com.*



THE LAYOUT



The property's private jetty, one of the riverside home's many attractions.

**FESTIVE STYLE**  
*When all is calm, all is right.*

1 Ceramic table lamp, \$360, Domo. 2 Sertnight limited-edition photo print by Benjamin Everett, \$699, Lumas Gallery. 3 KitchenAid 'Artisan' stand mixer, \$749, Harvey Norman. 4 Primula wallpaper, \$77/m, Quercus & Co. Custom bedside table. Norman table lamp, \$1375, Boyd Blue. 5 Bloomingville 'Arabesque' sculpture, \$199, Love Tree Interiors. 6 Cherry Blossom teapot, \$24.95, and teacup, \$12.95, Bed Bath N' Table. 7 Australian House & Garden 'Kelda' vessel, \$79.95, Myer. 8 Everyday Fresh: Meals in minutes cookbook by Donna Hay, \$45, Fourth Estate. 9 Grand Royal crystalline flutes, \$79.95 each, Villeroy & Boch. 10 Halton dining table, \$7400, Boyd Blue. 11 B9 Le Corbusier chair, \$431, Thonet. 12 Mallard wool-blend rug (2.4x3m), \$4650, Designer Rugs. 13 Tempest wallpaper in Celeste, Quercus & Co. Chair, console and artwork, all vintage. 14 Flexform 'Mood Ortigia' dining chair, \$8450, Fanuli. 15 Orchid Blue linen cushion, \$220, Bonnie and Neil. 16 Marine Stripes queen-size linen quilt cover, \$330, and pillowcases, \$69.90/pair, I Love Linen. *For Where to Buy, see page 176. H&G*