

# MINIMALIST MAKEOVER

Rejuvenated to meet the changing needs of its owners, The Grove is a treasure trove of modern design with supreme indoor-outdoor flow

Words Louise Smithers Photography Simon Whitbread





The mark of a great home is its ability to change and grow with its occupants. The Grove has undergone major work to make its owners' golden years as comfortable and convenient as possible.

Scintillating views towards the mouth of Sydney Harbour over Balmoral Beach greeted the original brick-and-tile building, which was last renovated in 1988. With a 15m height difference between the street frontage and the rear boundary, the steeply sloping site and its three-level dwelling (with a separate double garage on street level) needed a renovation like Sydney Harbour needs the Coat Hanger.

Despite its size — four bedrooms and three living spaces — the original home was compartmentalised and lacking flow or connection to the garden, making it feel far smaller than its footprint. Structurally sound but stylishly tone deaf, the home was not appropriate for the homeowners' impending

retirement and all that comes with the next phase of their lives. This is why the specialists from Stewart Design Studio and Lawson & Lovell Building Services were engaged to complete a full renovation that saw everything replaced except the southern wall.

Accessibility was highly important. "The new subterranean link between the existing garage and the dwelling, plus the addition of a lift, provides universal access from street level to all levels of the home," explains Jean Stewart from Stewart Design Studio.

Reconfigured spaces boost liveability on a daily basis and during busy times when guests visit. "Relationships between spaces and movement patterns both vertically and horizontally have been carefully considered," Jean says.

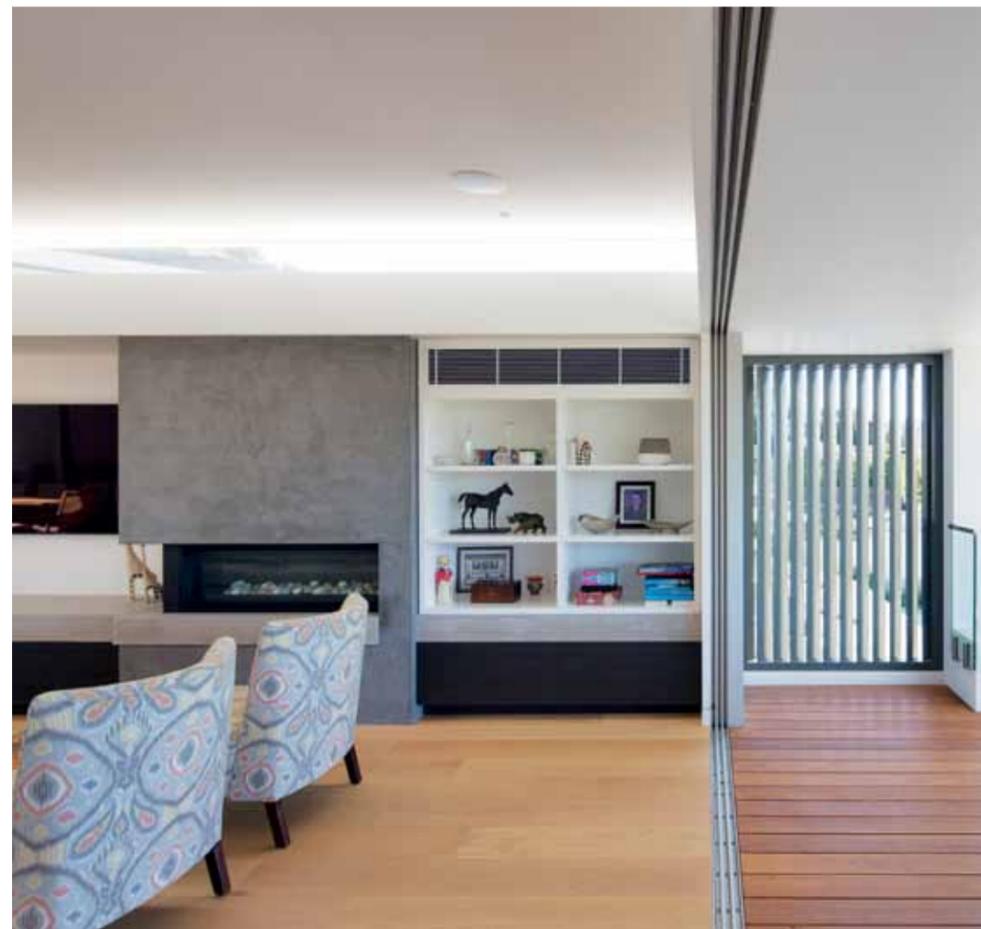
Positioned at the rear of the property at a similar elevation to the top storey, the swimming pool was once a spot nobody bothered with. By moving the bedrooms to the middle level and relocating the main living areas to the top



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level, the disconnected watering hole has now become a functional and aesthetic feature linked directly to the top floor.

An external tallowwood deck joins custom coping tiles around the pool and over the stair. Sandstone masonry walls have been recycled from the footing material of the original structure. Oversize glazed areas at the front and back create cohesion between indoor and outdoor zones by joining the interior to the garden by way of covered verandahs.

“The design focus was to open up the spaces to achieve views right through the building, from the beautiful natural rock formation at the rear through to the amazing ocean views to the east,” Jean explains. “This has resulted in a spatial perception that both the house and the site are significantly larger than before, despite the fact that the building footprint has essentially remained the same.”



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— Jean Stewart



Pared-back finishes are warmed by the introduction of textured furnishings and materials that combine with a carefully selected colour palette for an interior design that is modern but timeless.

Low-maintenance finishes and energy-efficient features make the home a joy to live in. A 15.075kW photovoltaic solar system (and 10kW of Sonnen battery storage), abundant natural light and passive ventilation guarantee year-round comfort without exorbitant energy bills. Skylights are positioned with precision, like the one overlooking the stairwell, to enhance illumination without forgoing privacy from adjacent homes. On the topic of privacy, the combination of large roof overhangs, skylights, hard privacy screens and landscaped screening work to promote an atmosphere of seclusion.

From traditional to minimalist and contemporary, the new home needed a roof to match. In keeping with the streetscape, a flat roof replaced the once dominant pitched form, while balustrade-free balconies are cantilevered from the main building. The old timber balustrades with heavy stone columns have been repurposed in the landscape as planters topped with frameless glass.

“The removal of the columns, the addition of landscaping on the built structure plus reduction in height of the solid portion of the balustrades has shifted the massing of the building from vertical to horizontal,” Jean notes. “The horizontality assists in softening the impact of the four-storey building as it presents to the street.” **HD** [stewartdesignstudio.com.au](http://stewartdesignstudio.com.au)



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