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LIFESTYLE

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BUILDING BLOCKS

An extremely tight deadline, building work across two states, a jet-setting project manager — this was one exhilarating building experience for the owners and for all involved



The elegant outdoor area features an inviting pool while stairs lead up to a deck that offers mesmerising views out to Clovelly Beach.

HOUSE

Clovelly House

LOCATION

Clovelly, NSW

COST NFP

DATE COMPLETED

April 2010

EPISODE 1 SERIES 1

Picture being given six months to clear the site of an old residence and build a new home. It sounds near impossible, especially when building a massive, modern sculpture, fitted with high-quality furnishings and fittings.

For Patrick and Julie Eltridge, six months was the deadline. They bought a block of land with an old fibro cement house in Clovelly, NSW, on a whim a few years back. They noticed the auction on the day and Patrick registered while Julie ran through the house trying to get a feel for the place they might one day call home. It was theirs within minutes but they did not make it their home for a good few years. "We mowed the lawn and drove by every now and then and wished that somebody might set fire to it so we didn't have to demolish it," Julie laughs.

Life got in the way, but after more than three years had passed Julie and Patrick came to the realisation that they needed to build, and to build fast (they wanted to claim the house as their place of residence for tax purposes, but discovered that it needed to be lived in within a four-year period from the date of purchase).

The unusual time constraint resulted in an unusual building approach — an innovative yet somewhat risky process that required the collaboration of various parties. "We had Melbourne architects who designed the house, Sydney builders who constructed the foundations, and Melbourne builders who created four modules in a factory 900 kilometres away," Julie laughs.

Before the building process could begin, Julie and Patrick needed to knock down the old construction — and this was not a simple and straightforward task. Asbestos is often found in fibro cement houses built from the '50s onwards, and this dwelling was no exception. The removal of toxic asbestos-ridden sheets is a very labour-intensive, expensive and slow



The free-flowing design of the home is activated through the use of space, clean lines and an abundance of open areas.

“The location and design are us. How we live was the inspiration, and we’ve taken the colours from the area we live in and gravitated to a low-key, tactile design.” ■



Modules two and three were successfully combined into a double-height void for the living room, creating a sense of grandeur in the space.

"It could be said this was a tale of two cities, and this story came together once the pre-built modules were finally placed in position."

exercise. More asbestos was found in the rubble under various concrete slabs and, again, the removal procedure was both lengthy and pricey. Unfortunately, this was not the only problem for the Eltridges; a lot of water was running down the hill and into the site, causing concern. It was thought that a spring was creating the constant run-off and they had to recognise and address the issue, which included constructing additional features. Concrete retaining walls, 60 tonnes of crushed rock, eight stormwater pits and two pumps were installed to counteract the problem.

Finally it was time to build. Patrick and Julie were looking to create a space that would allow them to share their lives together; a place they could at last call home. Both Patrick and Julie are IT professionals, sometimes residing in other countries, and they wanted to build and personalise their space — a permanent sanctuary they could always come back to. For most of the duration of the building process Patrick was working in Singapore, so Julie took on the project management role. "I was really thrilled and touched that Patrick trusted me with the project," Julie smiles. With a looming deadline, Julie and Patrick looked into prefab as an option and chose Prebuilt, a Melbourne-based building company, for part of the job.

Making up the ground floor would be modules one and two. Module one would house the sun-drenched kitchen, dining room and the study, while module two would be home to the living room, powder room, spare bedroom and stairwell. Modules three and four would be positioned on the second level. These two modules would house two guest bedrooms, a bathroom, mezzanine study, a large circulation space and the master bedroom refuge, complete with a big walk-in wardrobe and ensuite. The idea was that the free-flowing design of the home would come alive once the modules were joined together. Importantly, from both the design and the construction perspectives, modules two and three would combine into a double-height void for the living room, something that Prebuilt had never constructed before. They were looking to create a stripped back, minimalist sculpture, one that would sit confidently within the streetscape.

In Sydney, the on-site builders would construct the two-car garage, cellar, laundry and outdoor area with pool. It could be said the home would have a split personality, but the



The sun-drenched kitchen was designed with functionality in mind.



The large master bedroom at the end of the bedroom suite is a haven for the owners.



Simple in design, even the ensuite bathroom features stunning views of the ocean.

aim of the project was to effortlessly join the two areas and link the spaces seamlessly.

Patrick and Julie worked closely with Pleysier Perkins and Prebuilt (the Melbourne architects and builders) and One Up (the Sydney builders), with Julie setting up weekly Skype meetings between the site managers and travelling to Melbourne on occasions to ensure the project was on track. These meetings and relationships were key to the successful completion of the project.

The benefit of indoor building is the controlled conditions offered. The ground is flat, all tools are kept on-site and are easily accessible, the team of workers are experienced in working together, and there are no weather constraints. This results in a quick build time, which suited Patrick and Julie's brief perfectly.

Transporting the four modules from Melbourne to Sydney was another challenge, but Prebuilt succeeded using a four-truck convoy for the greater part of the highway route.

It could be said this was a tale of two cities, and this story came together once the pre-built modules were finally placed in position. After three days (one day lost to harsh wind conditions and driving rain) the crane-lifted modules were put in their places, the puzzle came together, and everyone was able to see and connect with Julie and Patrick's vision.

Today, the VM Zinc cladding exterior emphasises the boldness of the dwelling as



Patrick and Julie adorned the exterior of their home with lush plant life where possible.



The strikingly unique Clovelly residence sits confidently in its corner position.

It sits assertively in its corner position, the sensitive landscape softening the clean, sharp lines. The stunning views are not revealed until you enter the abode and walk through to the grand dining and living areas. Furnishings and furniture match the atmosphere of the home. The double-storey void makes the grand ceilings appear even higher than they are and a striking chandelier only reveals its intricate detail if you look at it seated at the dining table.

As you walk through each room you are met with pleasing design elements, free spaces and innovative furnishings. The link between the interior and exterior space is seamless, and the elegant deck is a great example of what Sydney is about. Featuring an inviting pool, an outdoor shower, a cantilevered stone barbecue and an upper-level deck offering delightful views out to the sea, it's a haven for Julie and Patrick to enjoy the beautiful outdoor lifestyle that living in Australia provides.

The master bedroom location on the top level is another sanctuary for the couple. The bedroom is at the end of the suite (which also features the walk-in wardrobe and ensuite), designed that way so it is never used as a walkway. Stunning views from the bedroom windows further enhance the luxurious and haven-like atmosphere.

Unfortunately, the water problem persisted and after a water pump broke, flooding the garage and cellar, they implemented another solution, which included digging up the road so that the constant water flow would drain into the public system, eliminating the reliance on the pumps and electricity. They later found out, however, that the core of the problem was a broken water pipe within the public sewerage system — something minor that should have been fixed.

The house has finally become a home for Julie and Patrick, and it's their success story. "Thermally it's very good," Julie explains. "We've only needed to use airconditioning twice in the past year and we both absolutely love the entire design and the way it's come together," she smiles. When asked what she'd change if given the opportunity, the list is small and minor: "I'd have a bigger space where the fridge goes so I could have a larger fridge," she notes, "and maybe lower the balustrade on the second floor to open up the communal living space."

Overall, though, there isn't much Patrick and Julie would change. "The location and design are us. How we live was the inspiration, and we've taken the colours from the area we live in and gravitated to a low-key, tactile design," she explains. The result is a highly unique, impeccably put together contemporary space, one that exudes the characters of the couple who live in it. ■

LOWER GROUND FLOOR PLAN

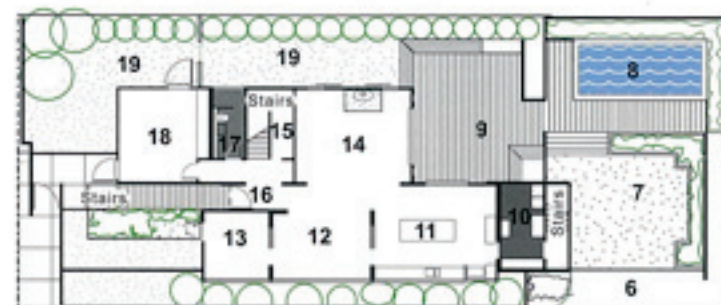
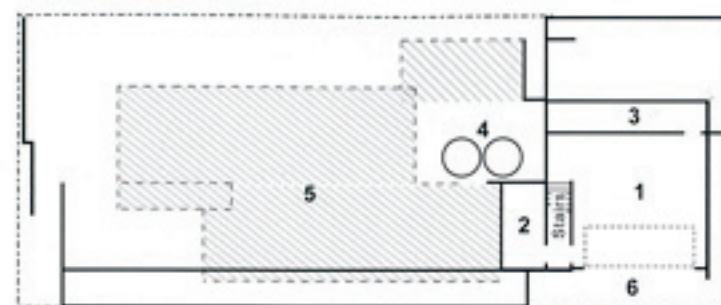
- 1 Garage
- 2 Cellar
- 3 Services Room
- 4 Water Tanks
- 5 Building Over
- 6 Driveway

GROUND FLOOR PLAN

- 7 Terrace
- 8 Pool
- 9 Deck
- 10 Pantry
- 11 Kitchen
- 12 Meals
- 13 Study
- 14 Living
- 15 Store
- 16 Entrance
- 17 Bathroom
- 18 Guest Bedroom
- 19 Garden

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

- 20 Master Bedroom
- 21 W.I.R.
- 22 Ensuite
- 23 Bedroom 2
- 24 Void
- 25 Study 2
- 26 Hall
- 27 Bathroom
- 28 Bedroom 3



PROJECT TEAM

- **ARCHITECTS** Pleyzier Perkins (pleyzierperkins.com.au)
- **ENGINEERS** Felicetti (felicetti.com.au), PCA McKenzie Group Consulting (mckenzie-group.com.au)
- **PLANNING** SJB Planning (sjb.com.au)
- **QUANTITY SURVEYORS** Plan Cost (plancost.com.au)
- **BUILDER (Prefab)** Prebuilt (prebuilt.com.au)
- **BUILDER** One Up Building, Sydney (oneupbuilding.com)
- **HYDRAULICS** Whipps-Wood Consulting (whipps-wood.com.au)
- **LANDSCAPING** Secret Gardens of Sydney (secretgardens.com.au)
- **INTERIOR DESIGN** Pleyzier Perkins and owner

- **STRUCTURE** Back pergola roof Vergola (vergola.com) Demolition Gabrael House Demolitions (sydneyhousedemolitions.com.au) Maintenance Secret Gardens of Sydney (secretgardens.com.au) Artedonus (artedonus.com) Painting (Sydney) Badawi Brothers (0411 178 450) Pool builder Splash Pools (splashpools.com.au) Timber floors Precision Flooring (precisionflooring.com.au) Underpinning/ piers ADS Underpinning Piers Pty Ltd (adspiering.com.au)
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LEFT Before: The old fibro cement house was a spur-of-the-moment purchase for Patrick and Julie. They always knew they were going to build an amazing home there together.

