

Wedded BLISS

When the owners of this outer-Sydney home said 'we will' to participating in an exciting home makeover experiment, they paved the way to the perfect backdrop for them to say 'I do'.

STORY *Elizabeth Wilson* | STYLING *Three Birds Renovations*
PHOTOGRAPHY *Chris Warnes & Maree Homer*

THIS IS THE LIFE

Living in the outer-Sydney township of Windsor, on the Hawkesbury River, is the best of both worlds, say homeowners Sarah and Cath. "You always feel like you're on holidays," says Sarah. "We have all the facilities we need nearby, and it's close to transport. We can walk to cafes or a cute little wine bar, or take the boys to the park, or go kayaking on the river. We don't miss out on anything here, and it's a wonderful place to grow as a family."

OUTDOOR ENTERTAINING Three Birds Renovations transformed the rear of the property into an entertainer's heaven. Stria fibre-cement shiplap cladding, painted Dulux Pozieres, and HardieDeck decking, all James Hardie. Windows, Colonial Warehouse. Window trims painted Dulux White Dune. Cannes outdoor dining table and benches, and Trentham planters, all Freedom. Flora tablecloth, Bonnie and Neil. Moffat bar stools, Lounge Lovers. Zulu hanging chair and Santorini resin chairs, all Uniqwa.



LIVING *This page and opposite* Walls and trims painted Dulux Clay Pipe. European-oak floorboards in Smokey Grey, Woodcut. Parchment sofa and Nordic vases (in hearth), Oz Design Furniture. Huggy armchair, Sarah Ellison. Mele stool, Uniqwa. Cushions on window seat, Bonnie and Neil. Cove coffee table, Freedom. White fruit bowl, House of Orange. Ceramic candleholders, Haar East. Brass candle stand, Woven Oak. Mirror, Life Interiors. Bowl and vase (on mantel) by Rikki Day. The blinds are Pirouette Shadings with Powerview motorisation, Luxaflex Window Fashions. Tara Rattan sideboard, Lounge Lovers. Parque face sculpture, Oz Design Furniture. Glass vase, Target. Artwork by Rikki Day.



Sometimes, it pays to throw caution to the wind, according to Sydney couple Sarah and Cath Jordan de Souza. And they would know. They recently surrendered their home to the dynamos at Three Birds Renovations, giving them total free rein to transform it. And they couldn't be happier with the gleaming result.

The radical renovation began when Sarah and Cath responded to a Three Birds Renovations call-out on Instagram. The proposal was an exciting one - with a major caveat: "We asked if there was anyone who'd like us to renovate and furnish their home," says Three Birds' co-founder, Erin Cayless. "But they needed to be prepared to hand over their house keys, their budget and to give us 100 per cent creative control - that was the catch."

For Sarah and Cath, the proposition was a timely one. The couple lives in the historic town of Windsor, 55 kilometres north-west of Sydney, with their sons Chaise, 11, and Addison, nine. Their home, a cute early 1950s cottage, was in near-original condition when they bought it six years ago. Clad in pale yellow timber battens, the three-bedroom home was characterful and cosy but needed work. And with two growing boys, Sarah and Cath knew they needed to rethink their floor plan. They had considered going up and going out, and were still weighing their options when the Three Birds proposal came along.

The team from Three Birds was seeking a project of a manageable scope and budget that could be completed in eight weeks, and Sarah and Cath's home fitted the bill. It was selected from more than 800 projects. Thrilled to be the chosen ones, Sarah and Cath handed over their bank-approved funds, along with their full blessings to "go for it". Sarah admits it was difficult to relinquish control and "some friends told us we were nuts" but over a bottle of wine, and Cath's assurances, she decided to ►



embrace the adventure. The Three Birds team asked the couple for a renovation wish list. “They said ‘no’ to most things on that list,” says Sarah, laughing. “But they took in the fact that we like entertaining, that we needed a study space and we wanted a family home, not a showpiece. They kept saying ‘just trust us’ - and we did.”

For Three Birds’ creative director and co-founder, Bonnie Hindmarsh, the cottage was an exciting blank canvas. “I wanted to make it more contemporary but with a subtle nod to its origins,” says Bonnie. Outside, this meant replacing the old horizontal battens with new James Hardie ‘Stria’ cladding, laid vertically, and painted Dulux Pozieres, a muted green. “The vertical cladding immediately made it feel more modern,” says Erin. The concrete roof tiles were cleaned and sprayed in Dulux Surfemist to match the fresh new look.

Internally, the cottage underwent a complete overhaul. In its original state, the home’s kitchen, dining and living rooms were all separate. “We removed the hallway wall and two smaller walls to create one open-plan space,” says Erin. In doing this, the original bathroom became

part of the new main bedroom suite and a new family bathroom was created. Then, to enhance the indoor-outdoor connection, they pushed out a section of the rear wall, creating space for a dreamy new kitchen with cafe-style bench seating and servery bifold windows onto a new deck. They moved the laundry facilities (previously at the rear of the property) into the kitchen, where they are concealed behind a wall of joinery. The backyard has been converted into a heavenly entertaining zone with the back shed morphed into a glamorous bar.

It remains a three-bedroom home but now has two bathrooms and feels more spacious overall. There’s a requisite study nook, plus a variety of newly-created sitting spaces for Sarah and Cath to work from home.

Colour-wise, Bonnie adopted a “warm, cosy, textural and organic,” palette of soft and earthy tones. Drawing inspiration from an original 1950s curved built-in cupboard in one of the bedrooms, she designed a series of archways and curvilinear shapes throughout the home. “The curves complement the soft colours and help accentuate the height of the ceilings,” says Erin. ▶



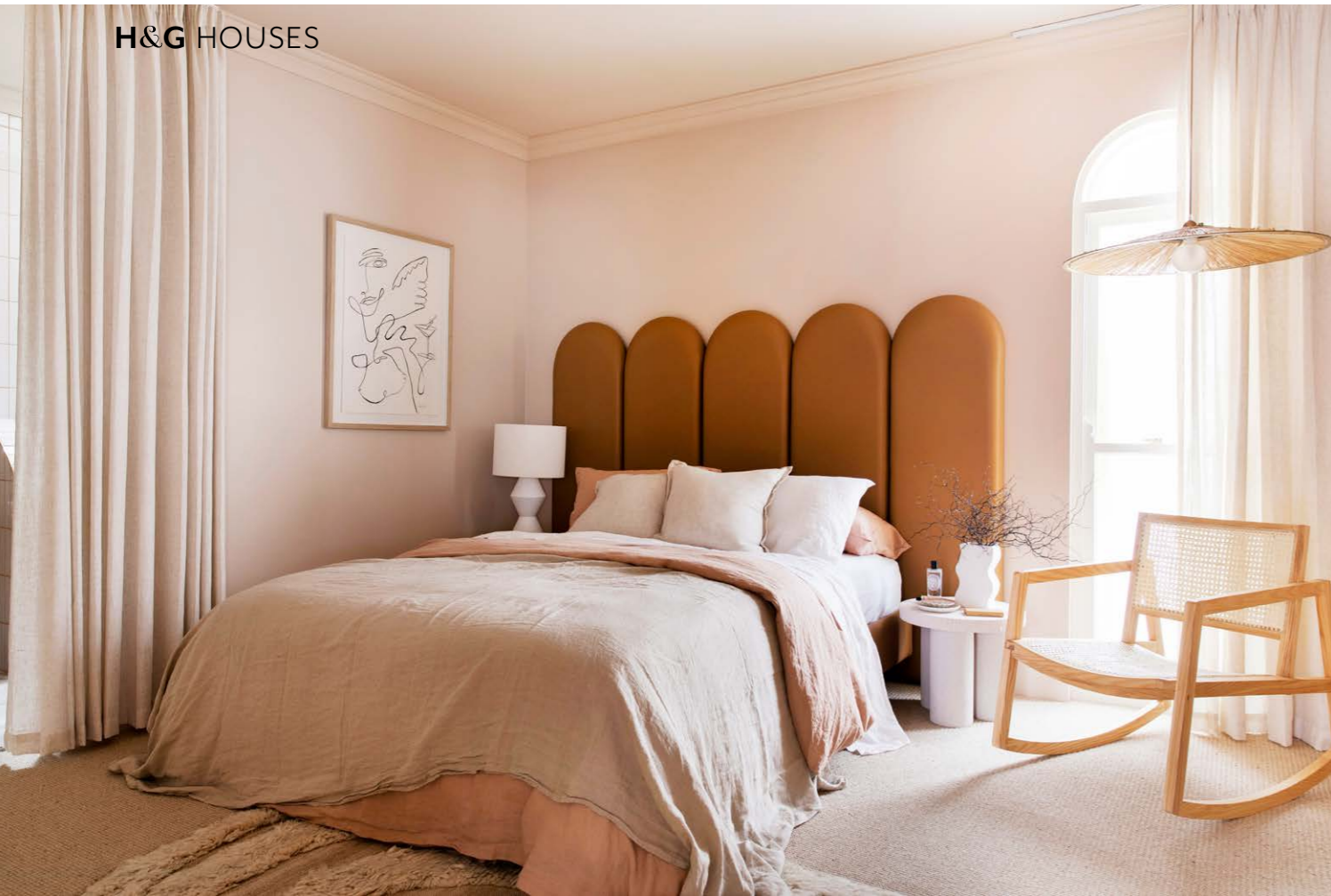
KITCHEN *This page* The Three Birds Renovations trio (from left) Erin Cayless, Lana Taylor and Bonnie Hindmarsh. Cabinetry, Carrera by Design. Elba White engineered stone benchtops and splashback, Talostone. Scala pull-out sink mixer and Memo Harper butler’s sink, Reece. Appliances, all Electrolux. Axon vertical groove panelling, James Hardie. Custom bench seat cushions, The Foam Booth, in Hessian Pavlova fabric, Florence Broadhurst Fabrics. Gabriella mirror, Sarah Ellison. **DINING** *Opposite* Fenton dining table and Totti chairs, Oz Design Furniture. Aiden-1 pendant light, Beacon Lighting. Curtains, Luxaflex Window Fashions. Artwork by Vynka Hallam (dining area) and Rikki Day (seen through cut-out).

Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.



THE PALETTE

- Dulux Pozieres
(external cladding)
- Dulux Deep Sun
(Chaise’s room)
- Dulux Clay Pipe
(living/dining/
kitchen walls)



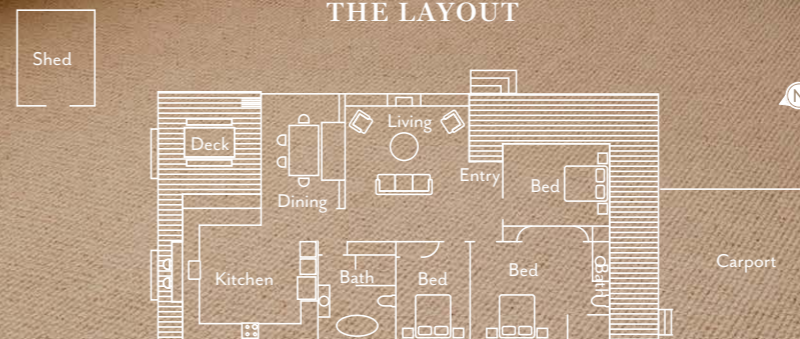
MAIN BEDROOM Custom bedhead, Create Estate. Trunk side table, Future Collective. Abbotts occasional chair, Freedom. Parasol pendant light and Cappelen Dumyr No 1 rug, both Tigmi Trading. Cuzzi II lamp, MCM House. Bedlinen, I Love Linen. Curtains, Luxaflex Window Fashions. Artwork by Rikki Day. **ENSUITE** Newport gloss mini bone subway tiles (walls) and Thirroul matt bone subway tiles (floor), Tile Cloud. Kado basin and mirrored cabinet, Milli tapware and shower mixer, all Reece. **CHAISE'S BEDROOM** Custom bed, Carrera By Design. Bedlinen, Society of Wanderers. Wall painted Dulux Deep Sun. Florence Broadhurst 'Steps' wallpaper in Deep Sun (ceiling), Materialised. Wool carpet in Limestone, EC Carpets.



On the day of the final reveal, Sarah, Cath and the boys waited around the corner before being escorted up the driveway. "All we could say was 'wow'. It was sensory overload," says Sarah. "The moment we stepped inside, all our 'what ifs' disappeared," says Cath. "We all loved it - it felt like home. It's a home to live in and grow in."

The completion of the renovation became a double celebration: before the family moved in, Sarah and Cath were married in the backyard, with Chaise and Addison as attendants. "It was perfect," says Sarah. "Forever we will look out to the garden and say 'that's where we got married'," says Cath. "And each year, we'll stand on that very spot where we said 'I do', with a glass of Champagne, and say 'cheers to us'. We'll always look back on this year and marvel at what we went through as a family." ▶
 See more of this home, 'House 12', at *Three Birds Renovations*; threebirdsrenovations.com.

THE LAYOUT



PREP



DECK Lana, Bonnie and Erin celebrate the completion of another dreamy makeover. **WEDDING** Homeowners Cath (bride at left) and Sarah loved the renovation so much they celebrated by getting married in the backyard, attended by their sons Chaise (left) and Addison. "It was wonderful to share our special day, and new home, with our family," says Sarah. **FRONT EXTERIOR** Stria 255mm cladding, James Hardie, painted Dulux Pozieres. Roof sprayed Dulux Surfemist. Bondi Tan encaustic tiles, Tile Cloud. Pebble 1 wall lights, Beacon Lighting.



FESTIVE STYLE

A peaceful, easy-to-live-with palette.

- 1 Arch wall mirror, \$899, House of Orange. 2 Margo limited-edition art print, \$400 (unframed), Vynka Hallam. 3 Iveta bedhead, \$590 (single), Inartisan. Venice Sunset Skater 3 photo print, from \$195, Camilo O. Desert Palm framed print, \$429, Oz Design Furniture. Kaspar oak bedside table, \$399, Freedom. Picasso lamp, \$249, Neighbourhood Studio. 4 Swell linen cushion, \$200, Bonnie and Neil. 5 De'Longhi 'Icona Metallics' 4-slice toaster, \$169, Harvey Norman. 6 Google Nest Audio speaker, \$148, Harvey Norman. 7 Beliz rattan planter, \$119.90, MRD Home. 8 Woven water-hyacinth basket, \$59.95, Howards Storage World. 9 Mimosa 'Malibu' outdoor dining chair, \$169, Bunnings. 10 Waffle cotton bath sheet, \$79.95, Aura Home. 11 Dreamweaver Mid Light pendant light shade, \$980, Pop & Scott. Cove coffee table, \$529 Freedom. 12 L'Art de Vivre American-oak lounge chair with bouclé upholstery, \$3350, Fomu Design. 13 Arabian handmade tiles in Sand 50, \$485/m², Perini Tiles. 14 Apple Watch Series 6 smart watch, \$1119, Harvey Norman. 15 Anderson terracotta vase, \$59, Domayne. 16 Tao leather, metal and marble table lamp, \$495, Coco Republic. For Where to Buy, see page 176. H&G

Wedding photography by River Bennett Photography.

