



THIS PAGE The hallway, with light filtering through the front door, leads past two bedrooms to the sitting room. Eames coat rack from Living Edge.
OPPOSITE The living space is part of an open plan, along with the kitchen and dining area. Alvar Aalto chair from Xxxxx. For Where To Buy, see page XXX.



ROOM TO MOVE

Working within a limited space, the owner-architect of this Sydney family home made small but striking changes, transforming it from a so-so semi to full-on fabulous.

STORY JANE BURTON TAYLOR STYLING KIRSTY CASSIDY PHOTOGRAPHY MICHAEL WEE



Katie and Jon King's fire-engine-red front door heralds the vibrant space that lies beyond it. Their house has a welcoming, relaxed atmosphere with bright highlights of colour and walls adorned with original Australian art and beautiful found objects.

The Kings have called this semi in Sydney's eastern suburbs home for eight years now. They moved in when their eldest daughters, Charlie and India, were a toddler and a baby. The couple knew they'd eventually renovate, but they were in no hurry, even after the arrival of their third daughter, Daisy, about one year later. "We lived here for six years before we did anything," says Jon, whose daughters are now aged 11, eight and seven. That gave the Kings time to understand the house and establish the rhythm of their family life. And when they finally did renovate, they wanted both spatial and financial economy.

"We had a house we couldn't afford to pull apart and destroy," explains Jon. "And we weren't allowed to build much more on the site anyway. So we tried to fit our life into the house, the sleeping, the cooking and eating, the lying around."

To renovate without blowing the budget, Jon and Katie opted to retain the existing structure, including the rear "cheap and nasty" 1990s renovation, but reinvent the rooms within the footprint with new finishes and fit-outs. ▶→

ALL'S SHIPSHAPE

Architect and owner Jon King gained more space mostly by reconfiguring the existing structure. "I think of the house as being a little boat that all the family are sailing in through life," he explains. "The hull is predetermined by outside forces, then you focus on fitting your life inside that hull. The limited space helps make you distil your essential living requirements."



THIS PHOTO The owners chose lightweight Alvar Aalto furniture for flexibility – they can be moved around easily for parties. **ABOVE LEFT** The dining area displays artwork by Mark Gerada and found objects such as pieces of timber. The table, made by owner Jon King of King Design, is paired with chairs from Xxxxxx.



THIS PAGE Charlie, left, with her sisters, India, right, and Daisy in their room. Bunk beds in pine and MDF designed by Jon King of King Design and made by Brett Beattie of Solid By Nature. OPPOSITE clockwise from top left The sitting room is furnished with a daybed; the children's bathroom was retiled in apple-green mosaics from Xxxxxx; the towel rack has ample room; Millie the schnoodle on a Saarinen chair from Spence & Lyda. For Where To Buy, see page XXX.



OPPOSITE The parents' bedroom on the new upper level has green views and louvre windows behind the bed for cross-ventilation. Desk designed by Jon King of King Design. Xxxxx chair from Xxxxx xxxx. Cushion and quilt from Xxxxxxx. For Where To Buy, see page Xxx.

◁ The couple also wanted to address the problematic location of their ground-floor bedroom – it was the easiest way to access the backyard, which meant the three girls, along with their friends, regularly rampaged through their parents' room. So Katie and Jon decided to convert their bedroom into living space and to add an upper-level parents' retreat. But for this plan to work, they first asked India and Daisy (who are closest in age) if they'd be happy sharing a room. Fortunately, they were.

Jon, whose architectural practice, Design King, focuses on residential projects significantly larger than his own, drew up the plans. "This time, Katie was like my own client," he says, "trusting, but one with a keen eye on budget."

Their collaboration worked perfectly and the resulting three-bedroom house is proof of this. Now, from the front door, the hall leads past two bedrooms fitted out with brilliantly coloured bunks, plus dressing tables and desks slotted underneath. Next is a cosy sitting room with a short flight of stairs leading to the main living area, part of which was once the couple's bedroom.

The timber-floored kitchen and living/dining space open onto a covered north-facing deck. "The basic configuration of the room was there, but we refurbished it with a new floor, new ceiling and all new joinery," explains Jon.

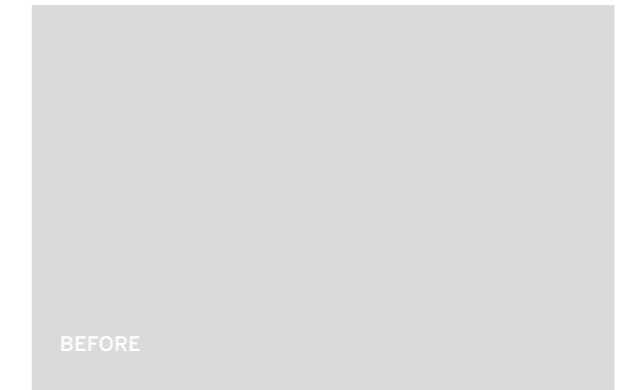
This sunlit space is the heart of the house, where the family eat, talk and plan their lives. So included in the living room is a practical element: a family command centre of sorts. Across from the kitchen, where there was once a melamine cupboard, Jon designed an office nook with room for Katie's laptop, a family noticeboard and a deep storage drawer for each of their daughters. "This is really a function centre," says Jon, "and eliminates having bits and pieces sitting on the dining room table."

Stairs from a small landing behind the sitting room lead up the the new main bedroom, which feels like a genuine retreat. Like the lower living space, it takes advantage of northern light, opening onto a deep and totally private deck-cum-window-seat. "It is great to go upstairs and know it is our space," Jon says. **H&G**

Design King, Sydney, NSW; (02) 9261 3062 or www.designking.com.au.

The project

Jon and Katie King worked within the footprint of their semi – and lived in it, with their three girls, during its reno.



Budget: About \$250,000.

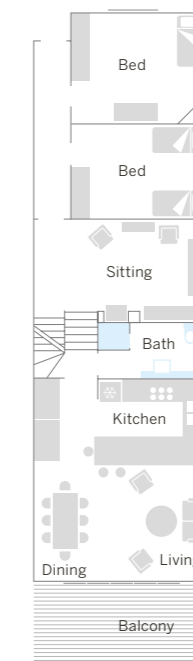
Objective: To convert a semi into a more spacious home for a family of five, while retaining as much as possible of the original structure and adding a level for a parents' retreat.

Highlight: Living in the house in an informal way by camping on the lower deck during the three-month reno. We all slept down there and set up a camp stove and tarpaulin.

Lowlight: Camping downstairs felt two weeks too long.

Top tip: Plan the cost to the last dollar before you begin, so you have a good idea of what you can realistically achieve.

Ground floor



First floor

