



After the dark ages

A simple renovation and the addition of a deck has brought this home to light

WITH FRANCENE RIDLEY



OUT OF THE BOX ... a few small changes, such as the addition of skylights and a deck, along with a substantial relocation of the kitchen, have transformed the dynamics of this house. **Photographs //** Darren Kerr Photography

The 1980s was a dark decade in residential architecture – only because the brick homes that predominated seem to be the antithesis of what we demand now. Back then, the dark face brickwork and low ceilings made interiors quite a gloomy affair. Today, it's all about light and ventilation, "outside rooms" and living on the deck.

Creating such an environment is the norm in Australian timber home renovation, but it's more difficult to conjure inspiration and a new vision for a typical two-storey brick number from the '80s.

As difficult as it may be to change a face-brick home without surrendering to exterior rendering, the future for renovation within the current global economic situation may rest on finding innovative ways to use existing residential architecture, rather than demolishing to the structural bones.

Architect Dion Seminara was called to the design rescue for such a home in Carina Heights. From the exterior it now looks like a brand new house, but the structural changes to the four-bedroom home were minimal.

"We only added a small entry space and front deck and made better use of all other existing living areas," Dion says. "Driven by budget, we decided to concentrate on the living areas and the

front part of the house to maximise lifestyle needs and change the street appeal."

Before photos show the extent of the transformation made by adding the timber deck framed with polycarbonate steel. The owner concedes that pre-deck the home looked "unfinished from the front, like it needed something".

And even though this structure is continually in use as another living area opening from the kitchen, Dion says privacy from the street isn't an issue.

"The proximity of the battens around the deck means you can't see through them unless you are facing straight on from the street," he says. And that only happens with visitors.

Before the entry was shifted to the left side of the house, visitors may have lingered long enough to peer through the battens.

"It's much better now the entry has changed," the owner says. "Previously, people would just stand outside the house not knowing where to come in."

Dion used polycarbonate panels around the entry to create privacy, but they also add a contemporary edge to the aesthetic.

The view from inside out is much improved too, with the

kitchen moved towards the front of the house opening to the deck to achieve that covetable coexistence between outdoors and indoors.

"It was a case of thinking outside the square for the clients when I suggested we relocate the kitchen for better connection to an outdoor area, even though we were on a suspended concrete slab," Dion says.

Consequently the owner notices a difference in the circulation of breezes, which now travel right through the house. And more natural light in the kitchen and living areas has metamorphosed the gloomy into the glowing.

Lining the ceiling and face-brick walls with plasterboard made a difference, as did the inclusion of skylights – such a simple design concept with such dramatic return.

Another fairly basic feature used was that of the shuttered window opening the study up to the living areas. It has changed the dynamics of these rooms – indeed, the whole house now exhibits a remarkable lightness of being.

ARCHITECT // Dion Seminara, Dion Seminara Architecture, ph: 3899 9450. www.dsarchitecture.com.au

BUILDER // Mint Initiative, ph: 0411 697 806