



Shared living

An extended family enjoy life together in a home built for collective, and private, living.

WORDS Verity Campbell
PHOTOGRAPHY Judy Sederof

THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA, just outside of Melbourne, is the classic weekend getaway. With its rugged ocean beaches, national parks and undulating hills dotted with wineries and pick-your-own orchards, it's no surprise so many Melburnians decide to relocate there permanently. But for one family of sea-changers, the move to Merricks North in the hills of the Peninsula was no hasty decision.

For over 20 years Marie and her family had tended the land around their weekender, lovingly revegetating their six and a half hectares with more than 3000 trees. They even co-founded a local Landcare group and won an award for their revegetation work on Merricks Creek, which borders the property.

But the existing house was badly insulated, dark and ill-equipped to accommodate an extended family – Marie, her partner, their child and his grandfather – so they chose to build a new dwelling to meet their need for both

shared and independent living.

The brief to Andreas Sederof and Brent Lamb of Sunpower Design was to keep it simple, make it energy efficient, build to last, and meet the family's need for both communal and private living. And so project architect Brent set to work, ensuring the woodworking passion of the owners was fully incorporated into the design. The superb recycled cabinetry is a credit to this successful client-designer partnership.

The plan of the 21 square (196 square metre) home is linear with east-west orientation to maximise northern light. The two wings pivot either side of the shared entry corridor, laundry and living-kitchen room – a lofty space with Australian quarried sandstone flooring, large island bench, cheery canary-yellow tiled splash back and a corner butt-joint window with views to Western Port. "Real estate agents would make a big deal out of that glimpse of water," jokes Marie. →

➔ Much of the furniture is homemade, secondhand or recycled, including chairs salvaged from kerbsides and refurbished, and vintage 1970s lights – even a reclaimed bowling alley repurposed as a shared desk. Two slow combustion wood heaters are used to heat each wing in winter.



One of the challenges of designing country properties, says Andreas, is striking a balance between thermal performance and providing access to the beautiful views. “On the one hand you want to make the most of a landscape by bringing the outside in. On the other hand you need to manage the expected thermal performance of the house. Too much glazing will compromise the home’s ability to mitigate heat gain or loss; too little and you’re not making the most of your surrounds.” [Ed note: *Your Home* provides advice on how to wade through the complex interaction of the many variables that impact the thermal performance of a home. Visit www.yourhome.gov.au]

Through the living-kitchen is the entrance

to the family wing, with its walk-through study and living room with a wood-fired heater. A bathroom and two small bedrooms open off a tapered corridor. “Brent explained that the tapering gives a greater sense of space; making the corridor feel less enclosed,” Marie says. The grandfather’s wing sits at the other end of the house. Entered via the shared kitchen and dining room, it serves as an additional private retreat to the shared living space.

“It’s an interesting experiment in shared living,” says Marie. “Getting agreement [during the design phase] on all sorts of things was a process of compromising but still coming up with something you all like. Our shared values were important. We don’t like ostentation; we’re

not concerned about being ‘on trend’ and we like things to last. We love both the communal nature of the home and the fact that we can have our privacy as well.”

The family specified simple fittings that are made to last. They opted for pull-down rather than automatic, mechanised external blinds. “Mechanised blinds, for us, were just another thing that could break down that we wouldn’t be able to fix easily,” says Marie. “I also prefer manual blinds. They help you pay attention to looking out for how the house is working. You don’t expect everything to be done automatically – you notice when it gets cooler, and you do what you have to do to work with the house.” →

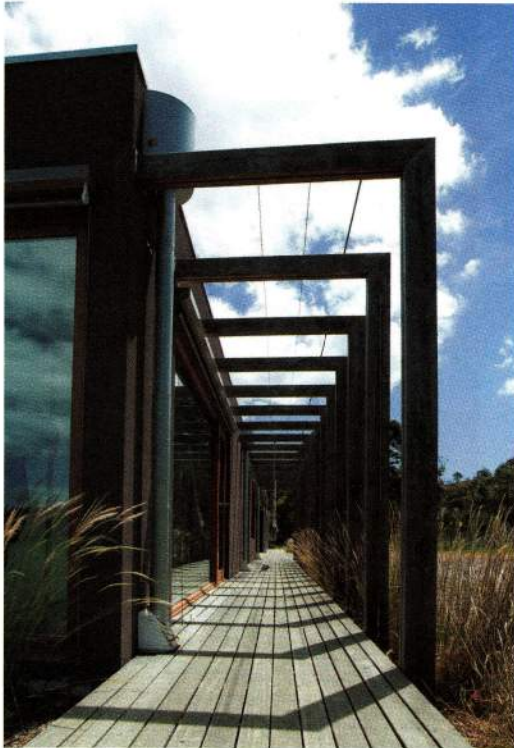
"I think we have achieved a good compromise. We have a really generous shared space, with a sense of spaciousness and expanse, but in the wings we have economised on the height of the ceilings and the size of the rooms. I think houses are too big these days. After all, bedrooms are just for sleeping in."



① A bamboo door. Marie's partner worked with the designer and cabinetmaker to design the internal cabinetry in the house.



② Recycled hardwood boards fixed to a 19mm carbonised horizontal grain Letobamboo substrate and white Laminex were used for kitchen cabinetry. A Caesarstone bench top contains 35 per cent recycled content.



➔ Home to an extended family, this narrow house runs east-west and faces north to maximise passive design. Two wings sit either side of a shared entry, living and kitchen space.

“Everything we did was designed around minimum maintenance,” says Andreas. “With the box gutters, for example, we designed a bespoke solution with super large gutters to ensure leaf litter – always a problem in country properties – doesn’t collect on the roof, but is washed straight down to deck level. With these gutters you should only need to get up on the roof with a broom once a year.”

The home stores 50,000 litres of water. An additional 40,000 litres in tanks at an existing property on the block can be diverted to the new house in times of shortage. Excess water on-site empties into the dam and swales (water harvesting ditches built on contour) are designed to water fruit and nut trees planted on the swale mound.

Around the house, indigenous grasses and shrubs soften the home’s straight lines, a native grass lawn is underway, and vegetable patches provide summer bounty. “One day”, says Marie, “I would like us to be growing more of our own food. And as a family we will continue revegetating this property.” A bush block is always a work in progress, which is precisely its charm. ⑤



⬆ Northern light enters the hallway through double-glazed windows at the eastern wing of this shared family home. FSC certified blackbutt timber boards were used for the deck.



↑
The northern facade. Around the house, indigenous grasses and shrubs soften the home's straight lines, a native grass lawn is underway, and vegetable patches provide summer bounty.



LEGEND

- ① Carport
- ② Living
- ③ Bedroom
- ④ Study
- ⑤ Bathroom
- ⑥ Laundry
- ⑦ Entry
- ⑧ Dining
- ⑨ Kitchen
- ⑩ Deck

FLOOR PLAN

Merricks house

—Specifications

Credits

DESIGN

Andreas & Judy Sederof
& Brent Lamb,
Sunpower Design

BUILDER

Darren Walsh,
Uber Constructions

CABINETMAKER

J&M Cabinets

PROJECT TYPE

New build

PROJECT LOCATION

Merricks, VIC

SIZE

196 sqm

Sustainable Features

HOT WATER

– Electric-boosted Edwards LX305 solar hot water system, including a stainless steel water cylinder with glycol heat exchanger and two Australis solar collectors.

WATER SAVING

– 50,000 litre in-ground concrete rainwater tank.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

– 2.5kW BP grid-connected solar PV system with an SMA Sunny Boy inverter. The family feed an average of approximately 60% of the energy the panels produce back into the grid.

PASSIVE HEATING & COOLING

– House oriented north to maximise solar efficiency
– Concrete slab for thermal mass
– Double-glazed windows and doors
– Effective cross-flow ventilation.

WINDOWS & GLAZING

– Pickering Joinery double-glazed cedar windows and doors.

ACTIVE HEATING & COOLING

– Two Nectre MK1 slow combustion heaters – one in each living space
– A Lenco P150DK Air Transfer Kit moves warm air from living rooms to each end of the home. Supplied by Omega Power.

BUILDING MATERIALS

– Hebel Aerated Autoclaved Concrete blocks
– Hebel PowerPanel 75mm panels
– Ecoblend Independent Cement
– FSC certified blackbutt decking boards from TimberZoo
– Two layers of R3.0 Auspoly polyester batts to achieve minimum R6.0 insulation value
– Kingspan Air-Cell Insulbreak 65 draped loosely between roofing iron and trusses
– Insulation for external stud walls and stud walls in cellar air gap to increase wall insulation
– Ceiling insulated with R2.5 Autex GreenStuf thermal batts.

LIGHTING

– CFL and LED lighting throughout.

CABINETRY

– Robe doors are 19mm thick Letobamboo (horizontal grain)
– Kitchen pantry doors are recycled hardwood boards from Urban Salvage fixed to a 19mm carbonised (horizontal grain) Letobamboo substrate and white Laminex
– All carcasses made from E0 boards
– Caesarstone Quartz Reflections bench tops contain 35% recycled content.

PAINTS, FINISHES & FLOOR

COVERINGS

– Wattyl ID environmental paint on all walls and ceilings
– Livos Ardvos 266 Universal Wood Oil on internal door and window frames
– Adjustable external shade blinds and sails for all glass surfaces facing west and north
– Floors sealed with concrete and natural sandstone tiles that were sourced locally.



☉
The southern facade.



• The design of this environmentally sustainable house in Merricks incorporated the woodworking passion of the owners.