

## FACT FILE

**THE BRIEF**

Build a contemporary family house that makes the most of a difficult, rocky site

**THE ARCHITECT**

Adam Pressley,  
All Australian Architecture

**THE BUILDER**

Dom Ferragina,  
Ferragina Construction



**A** The builder Dom Ferragina **B** The ensuite  
**C** The second-floor sitting room is located at the front of the property **D** Building close to the boundary and maintaining privacy without creating blank walls was a challenge for architect Adam Pressley



# In for the challenge

A complex building site offers the opportunity to incorporate many intriguing elements

The sandstone ledge that dissects this Freshwater site presented both a challenge and an opportunity for architect Adam Pressley. With the only open space being at the top of the ledge, Adam, the principal architect at All Australian Architecture, created a backyard out of this space that connects to the roof terrace.

**Roof terrace**

“Rather than having external steps to get to the ledge at the back, the best way was to actually join on to it,” Adam says.

“There happened to be two floors of height to reach the ledge. By putting a roof terrace there, to get to the backyard, we could justify having the terrace.

“As it was only as high as the backyard, there weren’t the normal issues that the council have about roof terraces and overlooking and kind of getting more than you’re allowed to get.”

By landscaping this area at the top, which has a deck, grassed area and spa, there is no dead space on the site and more outdoor entertaining areas.

“It picks up views – water views and district views – and it’s fairly private. Not many properties overlook it,” he says.

The current owners bought the block of land, which had an old, red-brick cottage on it, along with Adam’s plans that had already been drawn up for the previous owners.

The plans had been approved by council and the new owners were happy with them, so they decided to knock down the cottage and build the five-bedroom, three-storey house that Adam had designed.

**“I don’t think it feels cramped in any respect, even though we’ve crammed so much in. I think it’s all about getting the maximum out of what you build”**

Adam says he tried to incorporate as many elements into the house as he could while maintaining a light and open feeling.

It has three and a half bathrooms, a home theatre, a four-car garage, a large open-plan kitchen and dining area, several living areas and three outdoor spaces.

“I don’t think it feels cramped in any respect, even though we’ve crammed so much in. I think it’s all about getting the maximum out of what you build and what you design,” Adam says.

“The main bedroom – with all the big louvres that open up – I think that’s one of my favourite features. It’s a nice big room up there. I think it’s really comfortable; it’s nice to look out over the district views and get the sun and be able to control the privacy all at the touch of a button.”

**Household hub**

As with most modern houses, the open-plan kitchen with its long CaesarStone island bench is the hub of the design.

“We wanted to have a glass splashback window that you could look out of to the landscaping along the fence line, so we could let natural light in,” Adam says.

“We were trying to get some natural light in rather than having an artificially lit kitchen and that’s what that long slit window does, so your bench space is all naturally lit. There’s a room that’s like a butler’s pantry that takes all the mess and keeps it in a separate room, so you can have that minimalist look and still have a very functional kitchen.”

The vines snaking along the wall have been carefully placed.

“The idea is that it becomes a lush wall,” Adam says.

“Landscaping is one of those things that



can take time. It's the last thing people do and it can really take a long time before it gets established."

**Privacy issues**

One of the challenges Adam faced when designing the house was building it close to boundaries on each side and maintaining privacy without creating blank walls.

"We've sort of broken the design in the middle so it steps in, in the middle, and it also steps in to the courtyard," Adam says.

"The stair is integrated into that, to break up the space and create light and visual interest. We built as wide as we could, because when you're facing north you really need to build wide. The ideal is a house that runs east-west and a long house to pick up as much sun as you can."

Dom Ferragina from Ferragina Constructions was coaxed out of retirement by the owners to build the house.

"I was retired for nearly two years and they approached me and when I saw there was a challenge there, and I like a challenge so I took it on," Dom says.

Extensive excavation was required to build the full-brick and cement-rendered home.

"It was a very difficult job," he says.

"I'm very happy. I did the best I could. The best of my 50 years experience." ■

Alice Wasley

● MORE INFORMATION  
All Australian Architecture  
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**E** The living room **F** The open-plan kitchen **G** Architect Adam Pressley **H** The backyard connects to the roof terrace **I** The courtyard

**ADAM PRESSLEY'S ADVICE**

- A good architect can see potential in even the most difficult site so invest in good advice and the best design from day one to make the most out of your property.
- Engaging an architect for pre-purchase development advice is important when deciding if a property is a suitable prospect.
- If you are planning to renovate your home on a stage-by-stage basis, think long term. Instructing your architect to prepare a complete masterplan design that fulfils the development potential and allows you to prioritise your building work can help you to avoid further costs at a later stage.

Photos: John Fotiadis