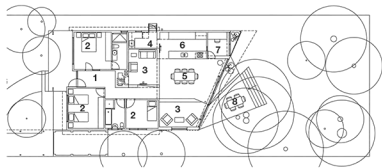


ADJUSTED BEARINGS

In scales from small to large, three projects – two in Sydney, one in Melbourne – illustrate the clever ways a deft renovation can move life in a new direction. **Story by Peter Sackett**





Ground level 1:400

PREVIOUS PAGES: Glimpsed through a low, hearth-like window, furniture selections reference the modern houses of the 1950s. **BELOW:** The volume pushes into a sunny clearing amid ghost gum trees. **RIGHT:** The light, boxy building reaches into the greenery of the rear yard, away from a close neighbour to the east. **BELOW RIGHT:** The blackbutt floor is faceted into a cluster of stages that divide the space into wall-less rooms.



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

KEW RESIDENCE

ANDREW CHILD

THIS KEW HOME had incubated quietly for decades as a rental property while the owners hatched long-term plans to move into it themselves when they transitioned into their golden years. Architect Andrew Child helped them prepare with some deft structural amendments.

The original 1930s bungalow-type structure was endowed with significant native backyard foliage, including a tight cluster of three mature ghost gums, their pinkish-white bark glowing beneath a canopy of lacy green leaves. The vintage interior was dim, congested and allowed only marginal enjoyment of the flora outdoors. A stuffy floor plan ended abruptly at the rear of the house where the backyard beckoned meekly through small, inoperable windows.

"Most properties are redeveloped to within an inch of their lives," Andrew points out. "I envisioned a solution that was more loose and informal – something with a mid century spirit to it." His addition, a glassy, faceted chamber in white, resembles a box kite that has come to rest among the surrounding tree trunks.

Andrew took cues from the primary site features and navigated around them. After cracking open the back of the house, he designed the extension to run straight into the backyard, approaching the gum trees, then veering to one side into a clearing. The manoeuvre yielded a trapezoidal structure with one wall longer than its opposite, and a long expanse of glass connecting them at its terminal end. "It pushes you into the greenery and pulls in cool, diffuse daylight from the north," Andrew explains.

The new plan parses the interior into several wall-less zones by manipulating the topography into high and low areas over blackbutt floors, creating spatial eddies which amplify the feeling of roominess. They come together like a kit of parts, revealing their components. From the original structure, a single, wide step downward separates kitchen and dining area from the hallway and living room. A right turn and two more steps drop gently into a sitting area, which looks back at the interior like a sunken theatre viewing a set of brief stages. Near the kitchen, Andrew concealed a small corner study behind a board-and-batten wall of white-painted cedar.

The structure makes a clear separation with its senior counterpart without any visual confrontation. "Though the home is in a suburban environment, the notion I had in mind was more akin to the laconic beach house structures of the 1950s," Andrew says. "I've always admired those."



Photograph by Pieterro Faber