

Moving on from the Past

VALDIS MACENS ARCHITECTS

Photography by Brett Boardman

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This cliff top used to be scattered with weatherboard cottages. While many have been cleared to make way for new homes, this new house, designed by Valdis Macens Architects, incorporates the original Edwardian-style cottage, built at the turn of last century.

The cottage sits on top of the cliff face, with the new contemporary levels on two lower levels. Built on a sandstone base, the new home features sandstone as a plinth in the design. "The sandstone was quarried from the site," says architect Valdis Macens. "My clients wanted a weekendster that could also be used as a family home down the track. The brief was fairly open, but they wanted to include a protective courtyard from the breezes and somewhere to retreat from the summer heat," he says.

The weatherboard cottage was reworked. What was once the verandah to the cottage is now a sunroom, accessed by three bedrooms. The entire cottage acts as a separate wing for the children. While there is direct access from the cottage to the new house on the lower levels, a forecourt on the middle level provides the main access point. The entry also provides a new sheltered area for the owners.

The new areas of the house are not only defined by large glass windows, but also by the shape of the ceiling. The kitchen, for example, is defined by a vault-shaped corrugated steel roof and the adjacent living/dining wing has a pitched roof. "The original building was defined by holes in the wall.

The new spaces are more like a series of pavilions," says Macens.

A main bedroom, ensuite, and study were designed on the lowest level of the house. With the children's wing in the cottage, and the parent's wing at the bottom of the cliff face, the kitchen and living areas in between act as a buffer zone. Alternatively, the home offers accommodation for two families who want to operate independently of each other. While privacy in the house wasn't difficult to achieve, creating a sense of seclusion from neighbouring homes required significant skill. "It's a fairly dense area. We didn't want the neighbouring homes to distract from the magical views ahead."

