

# SPACE CRAFT

A kitchen expert tasked with the rejuvenation of this Sydney home used subtle layout shifts and sleek finishes to create a design worlds apart from the original

WORDS JESSICA BELLEF | PHOTOGRAPHY JACQUI TURK | STYLING ALEXANDRA AUSTIN



**KITCHEN** "When you walk into the new kitchen, you're presented with the soft, elegant curve of the island bench. It's a beautiful introduction to the main areas of the home," says interior designer Helen Baumann, who worked with Paul Woodward of WD Interiors on the joinery and Brehar Building on other aspects of the build. There's organic beauty in the marbling of the Super White Dolomite benchtops from CDK Stone and the natural timber grain in the cabinetry, which is alternately Vivid White and Domino, both by Dulux. "It's not black, but it's about as dark as you can get," says Helen of the moody blue tone. Onn pendant lights, Jardan. Bar stools, Coco Republic. Guan vase from Black Blaze. Arlo serving bowl and pedestal bowl, Papaya. Jug and glasses, Maison Balzac.

## cheat sheet

**Who lives here** Lynn and David Nicol with their teenagers – Grace, 16, and Harry, 14 – and miniature schnauzer Zoe.

**Style of home** A four-bedroom 1920s house ideal for 2020s family living.

**Location** Sydney's upper north shore, on land traditionally owned by the Darramuragal people.

**Timeline** The first design meeting occurred in November 2020 and the renovation was finished 12 months later.



**L**ynn and David Nicol sold their long-term family home in 2017 but the moving trucks didn't have to travel far. The couple, both IT professionals, and their two children were relocating a convenient two doors down. "We originally planned to renovate the home we were in," says Lynn. "It was getting close to crunch time on that and then this one came up for sale. It presented as an opportunity that would give us what we needed until David and I eventually downsize."

The California bungalow they decamped to sits on a coveted corner block. A solid brick beauty with a heritage facade, it came complete with sandstone footings, original leadlight windows and ornate plasterwork. The previous owners had extended the home's footprint, adding a double garage, more bedrooms and a rumpus room. "The envelope was already there," Lynn explains. "We didn't have to extend it, and knew the work to be done was all internal. That was very attractive to us."

The redesign instigated by the Nicols focused on the open-plan heart of the home – the kitchen, living and dining area – where they planned to address the clunky layout, dated finishes and lack of storage. Having spent years researching for the renovation they thought they were doing in their previous home, Lynn had binders full of inspiration at the ready. In late 2020, the couple met with kitchen design specialist Helen Baumann of HB Design. "David found Helen on Google and reached out," says Lynn. "She and I clicked, and that was the beginning and end of Dave's involvement!" she laughs. Helen worked closely with Lynn to fine-tune her ideas and provide solutions that worked spatially. "It was very much a collaboration," Helen explains. "We were really thorough about discussing what it was going to be and what Lynn was trying to achieve."

Shaking up the kitchen layout to improve the flow and create space for a butler's pantry was a design conundrum that had both designer and homeowner furrow-browed. Eventually, they discovered that flipping the island 90 degrees and covering up an unnecessary doorway addressed the circulation issue and gifted Lynn with more storage capacity. Greenlighting the relocation of the kitchen-adjacent laundry to the rumpus room downstairs allowed space for the highly anticipated concealed scullery. "Moving the laundry was quite a big decision, but the butler's pantry was at the top of the wishlist and we had to make it work," says Helen.

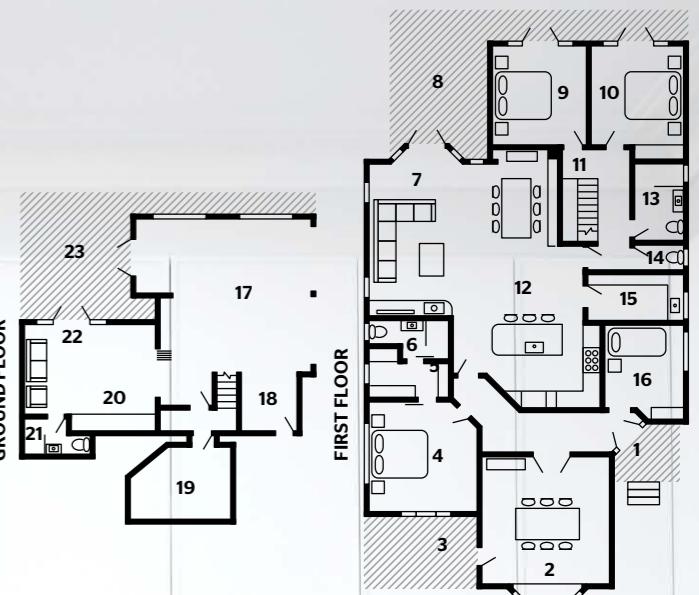
Hidden by a pivot door, the new utility area contains a sink, second dishwasher, coffee machine and all the necessary breakfast appliances. "Having this space means I don't have to

**"The cabinetry is consistent throughout, with a slimlined Shaker door style visually connecting all the spaces"**

HELEN BAUMANN, INTERIOR DESIGNER



- 1 Entry
- 2 Formal living
- 3 Verandah
- 4 Main bedroom
- 5 Walk-in wardrobe
- 6 Ensuite
- 7 Family room
- 8 Covered entertaining
- 9 Bedroom
- 10 Bedroom
- 11 Dining area
- 12 Kitchen
- 13 Bathroom
- 14 W/C
- 15 Butler's pantry
- 16 Bedroom
- 17 Garage
- 18 Workshop
- 19 Cellar
- 20 Laundry
- 21 Bathroom
- 22 Rumpus
- 23 Garden



**KITCHEN** (this page and opposite top) The skylight predates the design. Warmth comes from the timber flooring and burnished-brass accents of the tap handles and pulls. Opening the bifolds reveals the larder with timber shelving finished in Plantation Ash Woodmatt from Polytec. "It works so well as it's positioned by the stove, with all the spices and bits and pieces I need for cooking," says Lynn. Drawer pulls, the Jasquette range in Burnished Brass by Armac Martin. Cabinet handles, the Kingsheath collection in Burnished Brass by Armac Martin. Brodware tap in Brushed Brass, Miele wall oven and dishwasher, Falmec rangehood and Fisher & Paykel fridge, all Winnings. **BUTLER'S PANTRY** (opposite bottom) This room used to be the laundry.

**DINING AREA** (below) "There is beautiful LED strip lighting within the cabinets," says Helen. "We brought in lighting designer Raz Haroutonian and he gave Lynn lots of practical lighting advice." Dulux Casper White Quarter is painted on most of the home's walls, with trims in Vivid White. "We stewed over the whites," says Lynn. "David and I invested time and money in lots of different samples and tested them in each room. I couldn't be happier with the Casper White Quarter." Sub-Zero integrated wine fridge from Winnings. Dining table, chairs and rug, Coco Republic. Giotta sculpture and black bowl from Boyd Blue.

**LIVING AREA** (opposite, above and below) Round the corner from the kitchen is a wood-burning Escea fire surrounded by panelling in Dulux Domino. Bench, Super White Dolomite from CDK Stone. Brass mesh cabinetry inserts, Arrow Metal. Rug, Hali. Wall sculpture, The Visuals. Vases, Papaya and Black Blaze.



## lessons learnt

**"Good communication is essential"**

LYNN NICOL, HOMEOWNER

"You need a strong communicator when you're involved in the renovation process. If somebody isn't communicating every last aspect and, to some degree, over-communicating, it will fall apart. For us, that person was Helen. She was very thorough and we are really grateful for that."

tidy up after breakfast. I can just close the door and get to it later, while the open-plan area is still under control," says Lynn, a big fan of order and neatness.

Her kitchen's elegant finishes sing through the updated living and dining area, where Helen's clever joinery designs minimise the clutter of everyday things. The sophisticated palette of crisp whites contrasts with the inky blue tones, burnished brass highlights and touches of bright colour in Lynn and David's art collection. Thick heritage-style skirting boards and architraves nod to the past but sit harmoniously with the modernised Shaker-profile joinery and luxurious stone benchtops. "The updated aesthetic represents us well," says Lynn. "We like the traditional elements of the home but now it feels fresh."

By all accounts, plenty has fallen into place at the Nicols' new home. They are hosting their extended family for Christmas this year, and Lynn is confident that their welcoming abode will provide comfort for everyone. "While we have room to accommodate the extra family, when we don't have visitors staying over, this house really is the perfect size for us," she says. "Many homes have larger extensions with voluminous rooms, but we don't need more space. Our home suits us perfectly." **10**

HB Design is at [hbaumanndesign.com.au](http://hbaumanndesign.com.au) and @helenbaumanndesign



**BUTLER'S PANTRY** (this page and opposite top) Greater functionality comes with an extra sink, fridge and dishwasher, and all the equipment needed for the family's daily breakfast rush. "We thought long and hard about what we needed in this space," says Lynn. "The temptation is to build yourself a second kitchen, but that's just not necessary for daily use. Though the dishwasher is really handy when we have people over." The butler's pantry is accessed by a pivot door and has a line of sight to the picture window. Splashback, Carrara marble hexagon tiles from Madison Tile. Benchtops, Caesarstone Supernatural Vivid White. Coffee machine, Leilit. Kitchenware, Mud Australia. **LAUNDRY** (opposite bottom) Tucked into a cupboard of the rumpus room (and much closer to the garden's washing line than before), the appliances sit at a raised height. "I had seen various designs that elevated the washer and dryer and thought, how wonderful not to have to bend over to take things out of the machine!" says Lynn. Handy pull-out shelves can even fit a washing basket and ironing equipment.



## good news

The Amendo engineered-oak flooring by Havwoods is Cradle To Cradle-certified, a globally recognised standard for responsibly made sustainable products. In the laundry, Miele appliances were chosen for their highly rated energy efficiency.



## GREAT FINDS

**CLOCKWISE** (from top left) Veera 'Brezza' rug in Smoke (160cm x 230cm), \$549, Hardtofind. Dulux Renovation Range tintable satin paint, \$9790 per 2L, Bunnings. Arturo Onn pendant light, \$1800 for large, Jardan. Milan velvet bar stool, \$645, Darcy & Luke. Tweed towels in Marine, \$68 for bath size, L&M Home. Billi gooseneck mixer, \$1059, Harvey Norman. Bertie basket, \$129, Freedom. Finley upholstered dining chair, \$999 for two, West Elm. Encaustic-look hexagon tiles in Ocean Beach, \$145 per sq m, Tile Cloud. Quick-Step 'Majestic' flooring in Desert Oak Warm, POA, Choices Flooring. Tezra textured cabinetry pull, \$134.90, ABI Interiors. Momo Handles 'Ona Lip Pull' handle, \$22, The Blue Space. J'ai Soif carafe and glass, \$89, Maison Balzac. Marrakech paddle board, \$44.95, David Jones. Bloomingville 'Ade Deco' sculpture, \$145, Designstuff.

**"The laundry cupboard has internal lighting and was deepened to accommodate the washer and dryer behind bifold doors"**

LYNN NICOL, HOMEOWNER

