



LOWER GROUND 1 Living 2 Bathroom 3 Store room
GROUND FLOOR 4 Entry 5 Dining 6 Study 7 Living 8 Sunroom
9 Balcony 10 Kitchen 11 Bedroom 12 Bathroom 13 Ensuite
14 Main bedroom
FIRST FLOOR 15 Bedroom 16 Bedroom 17 Bedroom



SPIRIT OF WELCOME

When your visitors knock on the laundry door instead of the front door, it is a very good indication that major renovations are going to be required

When Suzie and Scott Duncan renovated their home in Elanora Heights on Sydney's Northern Beaches for the first time, they thought they were doing the right thing. Instead of hiring an architect or designer, they decided to save money and allowed a draftsman to design and draw up plans for their house. With a growing family to accommodate, they wanted more living space and better service areas. The results were a bit of a mess, with many visitors confusing the obscured entrance with the laundry door at the front.

After living with it for a few years, Suzie and Scott called in some expert advice. But early discussions with a couple of architects did not go well.

"One guy did not work out for us because he was telling us what we could not do," says Suzie.

"Another man came but he was more interested in creating a groovy space that would win him an award in Sweden."

Finally, they chose building designer Angelo Pirrello to reconfigure the house.

"I had heard about Angelo from a friend. We loved the concept design for the front door and he was looking to create a space that was practical and liveable but still looks really good," says Suzie.

Angelo has a degree in architecture and a passion for making comfortable family homes work within their sites and budget.

Although the layout was confused, he quickly realised the block had much to recommend it.

Natural light flooded into the living spaces at the rear, with the



land backing on to the primary school where all three of Suzie and Scott's children attended.

Such were relations with their neighbours, none had bothered with boundary fences creating an enormous play space for three families.

But with energetic children to consider, Suzie and Scott wanted a pool for the backyard.

As it stood, the house offered access only from the external steps at the front door, and a large unused space underneath the deck was little more than a gardener's challenge.

Angelo took a multifaceted approach, and a new large entrance was created for the front door, which made it obvious where guests would be welcomed. The old kitchen, which was tucked in next to the front door,

BUDGET

General building work	\$290,000
Tiling for pool, balcony and lower living area	\$20,000
Landscaping	\$5,000
Pool	\$17,020
TOTAL	\$352,020

THE OWNERS

Suzie and Scott Duncan and their children, Madeline, 15, Lachlan, 12, and Annaliese, 8

THE BRIEF

To improve the entry to their family home as well as its connection to the backyard

THE DESIGNER

Angelo Pirrello, Pirrello Design Associates

THE BUILDER

Craig Teudt, Construction Sight

FACT FILE



was relocated to the other side of the living space overlooking the main lounge area.

Where the kitchen once stood, Angelo designed a comfortable study overlooking a leafy side courtyard. Large bi-fold doors opened the whole upper level on to an expansive L-shaped balcony, which not only improved access to natural light but created an extended living and dining space.

Internal timber stairs now lead down to a new living area, complete with bathroom, facing on to the pool.

"The design amply met Suzie's criteria.

"Our major goals were to create a really nice entry with a proper front door," she says.

"We also needed a second living room for our growing family, but in doing that we still wanted plenty of light with the outdoors coming in."

Team tactics

Having been through the design and renovate process before, Suzie was keen to leave nothing to chance.

With work set to commence during the July school holidays in 2006, the principal of the primary school gave Scott and Suzie access to the grounds to simplify bringing in building materials.

"I have been on every school committee over the years and it paid off. The principal was fantastic and she knew we would make everything good. I got the pool contractors to sign a letter to say they would do exactly that," says Suzie.

She hired her brother, Craig Teudt of Construction Sight, to carry out the work.

Despite their close relationship, Suzie insisted on documenting everything so there was no confusion.

"I have a great relationship with my brother and I did not want to ruin it by not having everything down on paper," she says.

A The study overlooks a leafy side courtyard B The kitchen features a skylight C Sunlight floods the rear D The extended living space E Bi-fold doors open up the entire upper level F The new and larger entrance

"I knew I would have to work really closely with him and wanted to help project manage so he could do another job in tandem if he wanted to."

Having a family member project manage the job also made it easier for the Duncans to stay in the house while the renovation work was underway.

"Craig would make sure at the end of the day that there was some space that was all right to live in. Because we swapped the kitchens over, we only went three or four days without a kitchen, which we could work around," says Suzie.

Perhaps not surprisingly, everything ran like clockwork with Craig calling Angelo just once to clarify the design construction.

The renovation was completed by November and now the family is enjoying the benefits of a well-designed home in an idyllic location.

Suzie says they would do the whole thing again "in a heartbeat" and lays the success of the job firmly at the feet of the team she put together.

"I understand why people would hesitate [using a designer] but they are worth their weight in gold, because without them you can end up spending all that money and having the same house with the same problems," she says.

ROBYN WILLIS

• **MORE INFORMATION** Construction Sight: 0416 263 644 Outside Living Landscape Design 9440 5451 Pirrello Design Associates 8819 6738, pirrello.design.com

PHOTOS: KATRINA TEPPER