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VOL 8 NO 1



# *A forever* **HOME**

BY CHERISHING THE PAST BUT ALSO PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE, KAYLEEN AND SANTI HAVE CREATED A PLACE WHERE THEY REALLY COULD LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

STORY MARK VENDER PHOTOGRAPHY TONY POTTER STYLING KATHRYN BORGLUND



“It already had a soul and a real warmth to it. We’ve tried to make sure we didn’t trample all over that – to keep the same sort of feel.”





**OPPOSITE LEFT** The tram scroll lists some of the important ‘stops’ in Kayleen and Santi’s life so far. “I think it was meant to be on that wall,” Kayleen says. “It just fitted the space so brilliantly.”

**OPPOSITE TOP** Thanks to the clever window splashback, the parents can keep an eye on the kids playing outside. The mirrored splashback provides views of the other side of the yard and draws some of the outside in. Appliances include a DeLonghi Art Series oven, Ilve concealed rangehood, Liebherr fridge and freezer and Fisher & Paykel two-drawer dishwasher.

**LEFT AND OPPOSITE BOTTOM** Kayleen decided to make the most of the high ceilings and install cupboards right to the top, even if the uppermost ones contain less-used items. The top cupboard in the corner, for example, is big enough to store the family’s Christmas tree plus all their decorations! The large black cupboard underneath it is a walk-in pantry

**THE BEACHSIDE SUBURB OF MANLY IS A SPECIAL PLACE FOR KAYLEEN AND SANTI. IT WAS HERE THAT THEY COURTED EACH OTHER, THEN AROUND SIX YEARS AGO THEY FOUND A HOME – A CUTE THREE-BEDROOM CALIFORNIAN BUNGALOW.**

It had a wonderful elevated position and when they first inspected it, Kayleen climbed onto the roof and saw that they’d get amazing views if they added a second level... one day.

“That was always a dream of ours,” she confirms, “but our first dream was to have our family. So we had three little girls in three years and we didn’t really notice the time going by because we were so busy. We loved the house how it was, even though it was pretty small. It just had a really nice soul to it.”

#### A BIG DECISION

With three children, however, it wasn’t long before the house started to feel a little too cosy. Santi wanted to buy a brand new, bigger place; Kayleen wanted to renovate. In the end the emotional ties played a big part – this was, after all, where they’d started their family. “I know it sounds a bit silly,” Kayleen says, “but I was really sad to think that I would have to sell the house that the girls had all come home to from hospital and everything.”

And by renovating, they could tap into Kayleen’s enthusiasm and vision. Ever since they’d moved in she’d been doodling plans, cutting out pictures and jotting down ideas. For the ground floor, the plan was to extend and open it up. For the second floor, they wanted something more than just a couple of extra bedrooms and a bathroom.

“It’s nice to wake up in the morning and see views, but then you’re not really in there,” Kayleen notes. “We wanted to use the corner of the house, which is north-east and has the best views of the ocean, for an additional living area.”

#### ALL HANDS ON DECK

After interviewing various builders, they hired Adrian Geraghty, from AVG Constructions. His passion for craftsmanship struck a chord with Kayleen and Santi, as did his appreciation of the older-style features of the home such as the bay windows, the high skirting boards and panelled doors. Accordingly, some of these were replicated upstairs. “It makes the renovation more sympathetic to the original house,” Kayleen notes. “It already had a soul and a real warmth to it. We’ve tried to make sure we didn’t trample all over that – to keep the same sort of feel.”

When the building began, Kayleen visited the site nearly every day, sometimes to give her input on decisions, other times just to check in and say hello. While she admits it was challenging with three small children in tow, it allowed them to experience the process together. “We’d say, ‘There’s the wall of your bedroom going up,’ and they loved it. They knew all the builders’ names. They were little celebrities on site!” Kayleen recalls. And she credits this close involvement in the project – as well as the great work of Adrian and his team – for finishing on time and on budget.





#### A SOLID FOUNDATION: FAMILY

Perhaps the biggest factor in the success of the renovation, however, was the consistency of the vision for the house. The couple's three daughters were not just the motivation for the project, they were considered in every aspect of the design.

The girls' bathroom, for example, includes a bath within the shower compartment, so while the girls are young they can happily splash around and the water simply runs down the drain without wetting the rest of the bathroom. When they get older, the shower is also there. And each of them has a mirror and a storage space.

"My builder did laugh at how much we talked about the girls during the process," Kayleen recalls. "They were all under four and I'd say, 'I'm going to have three hair-dryers in here or three hair-straighteners or three lots of hair products and make-up.' But I wanted to think about things like that so that in 10 years' time you don't have a completely unfunctional bathroom for teenage girls."

**OPPOSITE** This dining setting finally has room to breathe. "It's travelled with me interstate and everywhere," Kayleen says, "and it was actually squished into the original bungalow. Now it's got all this wonderful space around it, people can sit down at it and you can walk past easily. I just can't believe we had dinner parties in the old dining room, looking at it now!"

**ABOVE** Classic features of the home such as the beautiful bay window with stained glass, the picture rail and, in the downstairs bedrooms, decorative ceilings, have been given the respect they deserve in this renovation. The Jocelyn lounge in St Andrews Navy is from Harvey Norman.

**LEFT** With a choice of five beaches only minutes away, the seaside theme was "a bit of a no-brainer". While new windows and these beach-style shutters were installed throughout, Kayleen and Santi stuck with the wide-framed look from the original house.





Looking out from the upstairs living area the family can see boats sail across the harbour or watch storms roll in across the sea. The Phoenix lounge in Moccachino leather, from King Furniture, was too big when they bought it for their old place, "but I had a vision in my mind that it would be upstairs and how it would be," Kayleen says. The fireplace is a Heat & Glo from Jetmaster.



**ABOVE** For the moment the girls all share a bedroom, but when they start needing their own spaces there are rooms enough for all of them.

**RIGHT** The starting point for the girls' bathroom was the tile – it's exclusive to Amber Tiles and is called Sea, from the Sublimage Series. Kayleen saw it in a magazine three years before the renovation and cut it out to keep in her project book. The cute stools are from Freedom.

**OPPOSITE** Visitors often comment that they feel like they're on holidays when they stay here, and with spacious bedrooms like this and the airy seaside atmosphere, it's no surprise. The beach name cushions are from Adairs.



It's not just immediate family who have been considered, either. Most of their relatives live in Queensland, so the couple knew the two guest bedrooms would come in handy. And they weren't wrong - their first Christmas saw 21 visitors over 29 days. "They don't have to rent a hotel room, we don't have to kick one of the kids out of their bedroom or anything like that. Everyone can still live normally and they can stay as long as they want." They might, however, have to start taking bookings!

#### LIVING DOUBLE

The open living spaces on both levels also meet the family's needs for the short- and long-term. The downstairs kitchen, dining and deck area is perfect for keeping an eye on the kids as they run around outside. On cold or rainy days they can move upstairs where there's a beautifully furnished living room, an outdoor kitchen and plenty of room to play. "We've got the choice now - we never used to have that with the old house," Kayleen says. It's ideal for entertaining their friends, and their friends' children, too.

"When the girls become teenagers, maybe they'll be upstairs and we'll be downstairs," Kayleen muses. "Or when we've got different friends over we can both be doing things like that, and not trample over each other. I'd really love it if they felt comfortable to bring their friends back to our house because it's a nice fun place where they can entertain. You never know what happens in life - you might have to sell one day. But we really were building a forever home."





**[TOP TIP]**

“Don’t lose sight of why you’re doing it,” Kayleen counsels. “I think some people may get caught up in the process and have to make quick decisions and they might not be the ones you want to make because you’re under pressure. If it means you have to take time to make the decision, you have to stand your ground.”

She also recommends getting as involved as possible during the building. “You do have to trust your builder and hand over your property – you can’t be standing on top of them and looking over their shoulder all the time. But the more you’re involved and the more you’re onsite, I think that helps your timeframe and it definitely helps your budget.”

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**LEFT** While the kids’ requirements were paramount in designing the home, Kayleen and Santi also took their own needs into account with this retreat-style ensuite that includes a freestanding stone bath from ACS (Australian Construction Supplies) – which had to be lifted into the house by a crane! – and rain shower big enough for two.



#### [ COLOUR CODE ]

DULUX LEXICON HALF WHITE

DULUX FAUNA

Inside, Kayleen and Santi used Dulux Lexicon Half White throughout for a crisp, clean backdrop. Outside, the render is painted in Dulux Fauna, the boards in Fauna (quarter strength) and the window frames and bifold doors in Dulux Lexicon Half White.

#### [ BEHIND THE SCENES ]

##### [FAVOURITE PIECE]

"I love so much about the house!" says Kayleen, struggling to narrow it down to one piece. In terms of the building, she chooses the hardwood roof of the deck with a skylight at the back. "The craftsmanship of that is quite stunning," she says. "It gives the area a beautiful warmth. When it rains you hear it fall on that skylight section and in the winter the sun comes through and warms it up. Everyone who's come to the house has commented on it and many people driving down the side street stop and take photos."

When it comes to decor, Kayleen gives special mention to the pendant lights in the kitchen and the dining room: Form 1 Light Domes from Beacon Lighting. Having one set in black and the other in white helps zone the two areas, but links them at the same time.

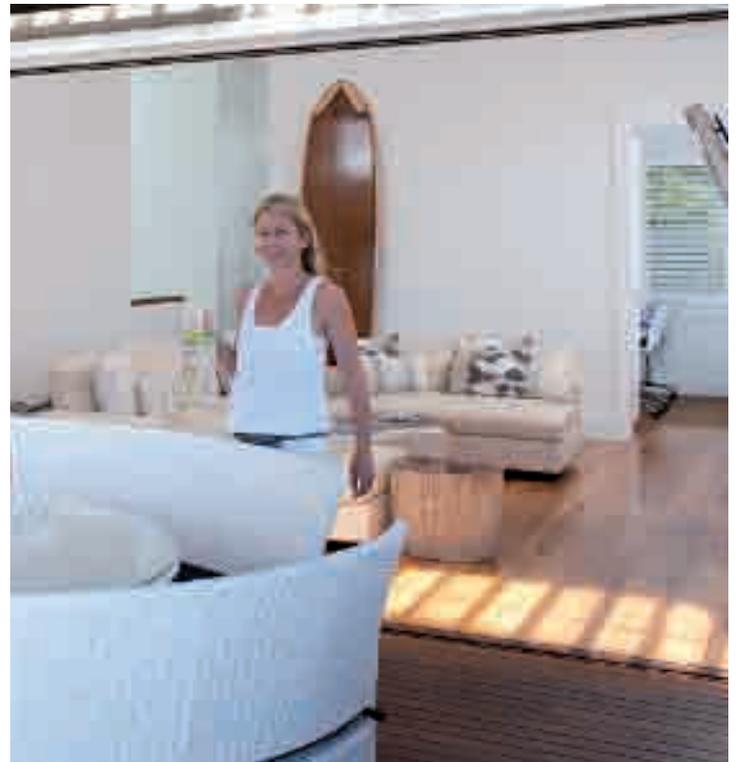
##### [LUCKIEST FIND]

Santi likes artwork on the walls, and so with his birthday approaching, Kayleen went searching for the perfect piece. She found the tram scroll – a large black canvas with the names of towns, cities and other places printed on it. While they usually come with set place names, she discovered a Queensland company that could personalise them.

"They're all significant places for us: where we were born or got married or special holidays we've gone on and things like that," she says. "It makes that area of the house just feel even more family, more our forever place."

##### [BIGGEST CHALLENGE]

"Having three girls so young – one, two and three – for that nine- to 12-month renovation period was a bit of a challenge for me," Kayleen remembers. "I had to make sure that they were still going to ballet lessons, swimming lessons, they were still going to the park, we were still doing all those things. Even though we knew we were building the house for them and for our family, it was a bit of a challenge trying to split myself between not losing sight of my first job, which is to be a mum, and also building this house properly."



**OPPOSITE** The upstairs living area gives off a happy, beachside vibe with the cushions, the Cabin Washed Rattan basket from Freedom and, of course, the surfboard – a present for Kayleen from her brother, who makes new boards and these great-looking vintage ones. The study area in the background offers enough privacy but still lets mum and dad keep an eye on the kids' computer screens.

**ABOVE** The upstairs deck and living area is the perfect place to hang out on a winter's day. The round five-piece Orbit setting from Harvey Norman softens the predominantly square lines of the house, and evokes an intimately casual atmosphere.