

Hampton style with an eclectic twist

After more than a decade overseas, Renata and Warwick were keen to find a calm beachside oasis to enjoy with family and friends for years to come.

Story: Cornelia Schulze, photography: Atelier Photography

Homeowners Renata and Warwick had spent fourteen years living overseas: In the Philippines, USA, England and Singapore. After returning to Australia and settling on Sydney's upper north shore, the next item on the couple's to do list was finding the perfect holiday home.

"When we were in Singapore, it became clear that it was just time to come home," says Renata. "We were living in an absolutely fab apartment and yet we couldn't stand it. We wanted more space and we wanted to get out of the hustle and bustle."

"We do have our house in Sydney, but we wanted a holiday home on the coast that wasn't too far away." After apartment living in Singapore the couple craved a house that was calm and relaxing. So now it was about finding the right location.



"Nelson Bay was just a little bit too far away and the south coast is a bit too cold," says Warwick. "Plus, there aren't many affordable places directly on the water." With fond childhood memories of the summers he spent at his parents' holiday house in Avoca, Warwick wanted something similar for his family.

Then one day Renata saw an ad in the local paper for a new residential development in Catherine Hill Bay on the Central Coast. "It almost sounded too good to be true," she says.

However, once they had both seen the site, they immediately put down a deposit.

Warwick chose the corner block because he wanted to include a granny flat and it quickly became clear this would mean a custom build rather than a project home. After researching online >



TRADIE TALK

Melanie Symington from **Seaside Homes** worked closely with Renata and Warwick to make their dream of a beachside holiday retreat a reality. The home owners loved Melanie's creative solutions and her intuitive understanding of what they were after.
02 4976 3413,
www.seasidehomesdesign.com.au

Graph Residential is a multi award-winning building company based in Newcastle whose projects range from individual custom-designed homes to apartment buildings.
 Renata and Warwick were very involved in the project and were impressed that Graph provided them with itemized, detailed specifications of all components of the build.
02 4935 9400,
graphresidential.com.au

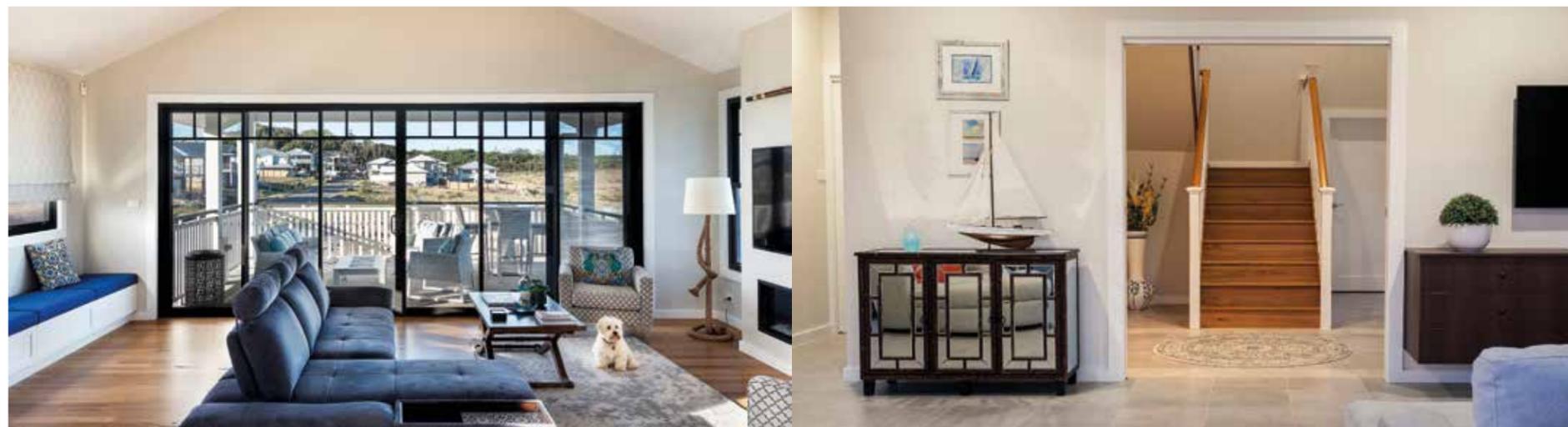


Renata found building designer Melanie Symington of Seaside Homes. Renata says, "When we started talking it was clear Melanie understood what we wanted and it just felt like the perfect fit. When she presented her design we loved it immediately."

Melanie had the perfect plan for the corner block: "A home on a corner site needs to present beautifully to both street frontages," she says, "So the natural form of the building is designed as an L shape, with a garden space or pool tucked into the form. I gave a lot of thought to what the view lines might be once the other sites in front of Renata and Warwick's home were developed. Thankfully, the stars aligned and the main deck has a generous, unobstructed view corridor directly down to the beach."

Building blocks

The next step was to find the right builder. They chose Graph Residential, even though they knew their holiday home would be Graph's first building project at Catherine Hill Bay. "The people from Graph were lovely, but they were also extremely professional and gave us very



Clockwise from left: The sleek, modern kitchen; the living area seamlessly connects to the dining area and kitchen; a beautiful staircase leads to the main living area upstairs; the dark window frames make the view even more spectacular.

detailed quotes and cost breakdowns. We are both quite specific and wanted to know exactly what we were paying for. With Graph, we knew every detail. Because we could see it all itemised so clearly we were actually able to make much more informed decisions about things we would otherwise not have noticed early enough. Kieran and Josh from Graph were just fantastic to work with. They were always available and would promptly respond to our questions," says Warwick.

The couple had a clear idea of how the layout would work, with the kitchen, main living spaces and master suite all upstairs. "That was really a very personal choice," says Renata. "We've had quite a few people comment on that and wondering whether it's such a good thing having to climb up and down the stairs all the time. But that's definitely what we wanted. Upstairs we have that beautiful ocean view and we have the spacious balcony that is directly connected to the

main living area. It's actually my favourite spot in the house," she smiles. "I can cosy up on the couch, feel the breeze coming in, listen to the sounds of the waves and enjoy the fireplace all at the same time," she adds.

Easy living

The raked ceiling in the main living space was one of their non-negotiables and it extends seamlessly to the main balcony and its stunning ocean views.

Warwick and Renata both wanted low maintenance, easy living and that's reflected in many of the choices they made. Warwick says, "For the balcony we used ModWood, which is a material made from a combination of recycled plastics and wood fibres. It's pretty much maintenance free and ages really well." Inside they chose solid Blackbutt flooring, another item at the top of their wish list. "A lot of builders wouldn't do that, but we definitely wanted the real thing," says

Warwick. "We discussed it with Graph and they were happy to make it happen."

The sleek, modern kitchen with its large stone benchtop island offers clean lines with perfectly fitted stainless steel Smeg appliances. A walk-in pantry provides additional storage and helps keep clutter at bay. "I didn't want a second sink or dish washer in our holiday home because it just means another thing to keep clean and maintain," Renata says.

The hallway next to the kitchen leads to the main bathroom and the mastersuite with its own walk-in wardrobe and ensuite bathroom. "We always knew that the ocean view from the bedroom wouldn't last forever and as new houses went up, part of that view became obstructed. But we still have the view of the National Park and it's the view from the upstairs balcony that's really important to us," Warwick points out.

The colour scheme is 'beachy' with plenty of whites and blues, but it's ▶



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From top left: the main bedroom has a colour scheme of whites and blues; the bathrooms all feature clean lines; the one-bedroom studio in the garden.

understated, not clichéd. Renata says, "We wanted a Hampton's feel without going full on Hamptons. I think of it as 'beachy' with a touch of elegance and a bit of an eclectic twist, with simple lines and colours." One of their more controversial choices was dark window frames. "The colour is called Monument and it was the darkest we could go based on the design guidelines from the property developer. Melanie actually had to get it approved by Council but it went through very quickly. Everybody said don't do it, but we wanted something to stand out and give the house a slightly different look," she explains.



The eclectic twist

Renata did all the styling in the home: "I know it's eclectic, but we really like it. We brought back pieces from overseas that fitted the feel of this house. Whether it's the Balinese daybed, or the petrified wood Warwick found in Indonesia, everything has a story. And with the right choice of artwork, we were able to tie it all together." It's clear they both contributed favourite pieces and that creating the right vibe is more important than adhering to classic styling rules. Fortunately the couple are usually on the same page. "One day I got a phone call from Warwick telling me he'd bought a couch," laughs Renata. "He

said, 'It's fabulous, you will love it'. And thankfully, I do."

On the ground floor there's a study, two guest bedrooms, a bathroom and a large living area that's connected to a covered terrace and the garden area. The couple wanted to have separate spaces for their adult children or for friends.

Next to the garden area is a separate one-bedroom studio that began its life as a pool house. "Initially, we were only allowed to build a pool house," says Warwick. "But we decided in the end to delay building the pool as we were in no rush for the additional maintenance and have a beach at our doorstep. We decided instead to

convert the space to a one bedroom studio. That was done after Graph had completed their work. As it turns out it has become a really great additional space to have for friends and family."

Renata and Warwick love spending time at their holiday home, recreating wonderful childhood memories and making new ones of their own. "This build was something very close to our hearts and we loved seeing it all come together. We invited Melanie, the people from Graph and our trades over for drinks when it was complete because we wanted to say thank you for a great experience and a home that we will enjoy for years to come." ◇



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