

DOWN MEMORY LANE

Inspiration for this elegant beach house came straight from its historic location. ➤

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According to architect Don Iannicelli of Glasshouse Projects, the brief for a unique sloping site in the northern “dress circle” of Port Willunga was simple. A large, covered indoor and outdoor area for entertaining, a private retreat for its recently-widowed owner, three more bedrooms with associated bathrooms to accommodate children and grandchildren, ample garaging, environmentally-friendly features and a wish to nestle into the beautiful tree-studded valley while capturing views to the sea and hills.

TOP: An elderly-friendly skybridge links the entrance to the road and creates a strong sense of arrival at the upper level.

CENTRE: The house has an imposing presence from below, but nestles happily into the landscape when viewed from the street.

LEFT: Timber and stone bring warmth into the home, and contrast with the dark-coloured shiplap cladding which helps it blend into its natural setting.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Bamboo flooring, double-glazing, passive orientation, cavity construction, large overhangs and limestone walling all contribute to thermal performance and the environmental sensitivity of the design.

The first thing Don did after winning the brief was to take a walk with his client down the path through the scrub to the beach. The architect used to visit Port Willunga as a child, and as they walked, the surroundings felt familiar. Don recalls saying, “I think there are some sandstone or limestone ruins off here somewhere”. And sure enough, the pair soon came across the remains of Port Willunga’s original Harbour Master’s Cottage, built around 1880, and immortalised in the paintings of Horace Trener.

Their discovery inspired one of the main features of what is now known as Kirrawilli

beach house: a limestone wall over two storeys separates the “public” living areas from the “private” bedroom wing, with a limestone fireplace providing a variation on that theme. The stonework in turn reflects the local palette of the cliffs and beach and serves to blur the lines between external and internal spaces and materials. The weatherboard cladding is a tribute to traditional beach house construction, its dark colour contrasting with the limestone and blending into the natural setting.

The idea of family is central to all aspects of the design, from the number of bedrooms to



ABOVE: The deck area wraps around the entire living wing to create two outdoor spaces; one exposed to views and the elements, and the other sheltered, private and intimate.

CENTRE: There is room on the wide balustrades to comfortably rest a plate and glass.

the flow of open spaces for congregation. The expansive verandah serves as a fluid extension of the indoor living spaces and provides exposed and sheltered areas where the outdoors and sweeping views can be enjoyed in all seasons. The east-west orientation of the living space takes advantage of the northern winter light, while the stonework, double-glazing, cavity construction and large overhangs all contribute to the building's thermal performance and solid feel. At the same time the exterior and interior design elements manage to achieve a deceptively lightweight beach house look.



BELOW: The mirrored splashback and super-durable compact laminate island bench in the owner's favourite colour bring light, fun and a casual touch to the kitchen area, while highlighting the limestone and bamboo elements.



This is a house to be loved
and a house to be shared. It's
brought all the family together.



ABOVE: Away from children and grandchildren, the owner's bedroom retreat and private balcony look straight down the valley to the beach. A separate dressing area and en suite provide views to the Willunga Hills.

CENTRE: Lighting along the entrance bridge and garden below provides a warm nighttime welcome.



While the design of Kirrawilli centers around communal spaces for family and friends, the owner identified a need for some privacy early on. A retreat area with a soothing jade-green tiled en suite, a light-filled dressing area with views to the hills, and a separate balcony takes advantage of the best sea views. Downstairs, the grandchildren's hangout is also self-contained, with kitchenette, bedrooms, laundry and bathroom facilities. The lower balcony houses the requisite outdoor shower, complete with hot and cold water. A solar hot water system

and rainwater tanks are tucked out of sight from the path to the beach, and a soakage system incorporates pits underground. The landscaping is simple and low maintenance, with ground cover, some smaller native shrubs, and an obligatory citrus tree cluster.

According to Don, the owner originally planned to open up the beach house only on weekends, for family and friends. She now however, finds herself there more often, spending less and less time in her city apartment, thoroughly seduced by Kirrawilli's special ambiance. 🏠