

GRAND compact

WORDS NOEL PROBERT
PHOTOS MIKE SMITH

When it came to creating his ideal family home and workspace, local architect Don Iannicelli looked no further than his own backyard.



“It’s a really great little neighbourhood. Everyone on the block knows each other, there’s a good, safe community feel.”



Don Iannicelli’s home opens via a 350kg front door and (far right) the rear courtyard ensures lots of light in the living area.

“It’s the little things that make a difference,” Don Iannicelli says. He’s talking about thermal performance but it applies equally to every aspect of his Beulah Park home. From the front courtyard to the rainwater tanks that form the back fence, every detail has been carefully considered, creating a spacious and stylish family home on just 360sqm.

Don’s wife Sharon grew up in the house that formerly occupied the block and the couple planned to live there, but wanted something contemporary that would also accommodate Don’s architecture practice. Three years ago, they demolished the original house, replacing it with two attached houses.

“One of the design principles was to create something contemporary, but with a reference to the symmetrical cottages of the area,” Don says. “It’s loosely based on that streetscape context. There’s symmetry across the two dwellings – the two doors in the centre so it looks like a single dwelling.”

The design gives a nod to the classic cottages of the neighbourhood, but the scale is much more generous – the cedar-clad main doors are 3.6 metres high and the glass doors on either side are similarly proportioned. On Don’s side, these open into his office, the northern aspect allowing the winter sun to stream in, providing light and warmth. With the doors open, his office spills out into a small courtyard framed by low, open fences and deciduous shrubs.

“The courtyard is a key element. I didn’t want a tall, hard wall to detach it from the street. There’s a connection between the street, the courtyard and the office. It blurs the lines between public, work and casual spaces. It’s a really great little neighbourhood. Everyone on the block knows each other, there’s a good, safe community feel.”

Don and Sharon's one-year-old son Cruz enjoys visiting the nearby parks, and Don is looking forward to seeing him explore his neighbourhood as he grows older. "When you're designing compact, consolidated dwellings, you have to rely more on things like neighbourhood parks," he says.

The amenity of the area is one of the reasons Don and Sharon wanted to bring up their family here. "Norwood has always had an eclectic mix of residential, commercial, industrial warehouses and so on," Don says. "Beulah Park feels quiet, but you can walk to the Parade for lunch, you've got easy access to doctors, sporting grounds, schools, galleries, swimming pool – everything you could potentially need."

Mindful of the importance of maintaining the character of the neighbourhood as greater population density and consolidation occurs, Don did more than tip his hat to the symmetrical design so common on his street. "I wanted to maintain a single-storey frontage. It's two-storey behind, which we needed for the space, but it's very discreet from the road." Building the upper level into the roof and using raked ceilings upstairs gives the building a low profile. From most angles, it looks like a compact, single-storey house, but it's surprisingly spacious once you swing the 350-kilogram front door open and step inside.

Bypassing the office, a walkway passes a glassed-in central courtyard which floods light into the living space and can be opened up to provide extra space and airflow. The

northern wall of the courtyard is covered with a climbing ficus. At the opposite end of the house, bamboo defines the rear courtyard, providing lush bookends for the living space. "The greenery is integral to the design. It's a defining element that's really important for compact spaces. It creates coolness. If you take it away you're left with hard surfaces."

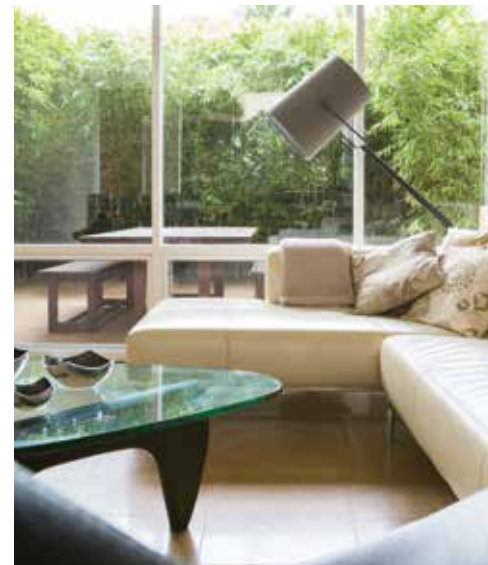
Along the walkway wall run the same western red cedar battens that clad the front door. Polished travertine floor tiles continue outside and run up the courtyard wall, blurring the definition of indoor and outdoor space. Only three finishes are used throughout the house – cedar, travertine and render – providing visual and tactile connections between different areas.

Three parallel benches define the kitchen/dining zone – a table and two benchtops. The central bench is clad either side with mirrors to give a floating effect. This is enhanced by the mitred edges of both benchtop and mirror, which impart a delicate, refined look. A sleek white rangehood is the only interruption overhead.

Mirrors are also used in the timber joinery that lines the western wall, serving as a cocktail bar, bookshelves and a display for Sharon's collection of her father's silver cigarette cases. "The mirrors almost make it look like a dividing feature rather than a wall." Hidden behind it are the service areas, including pantry, guest powder room and laundry. These areas help provide a thermal barrier and can be closed off on hot days to keep the living areas cool.

Beyond the kitchen, the lounge area is open and uncluttered. Audio-visual gear is hidden and glass doors open to the rear courtyard, where the continued use of travertine tiles blurs boundaries. Stands of bamboo provide privacy and hide the slimline tanks that store 6,000 litres of water and also do duty as a back fence.

Upstairs there are two bedrooms, two bathrooms and an informal lounge that can double as a work space. Dormer windows break up the sloping, low-profile ceilings, which provide a cosy feel without loss of



floor space. There are cupboards and storage spaces everywhere. "You can never have too much storage. We kept the cabinetmaker busy. He kept asking, 'Are you sure you want more cupboards?'"

Don and his business colleague primarily design residential projects, with environmental considerations always part of the mix. "We always model projects for thermal performance," Don says. "Three-D modelling shows the sun's path at different times of the year, allowing us to work out eave projections, window heights and so on. Some clients want to push things further, others are happy with a basic assessment. But if you don't consider it, it's just irresponsible design."

For his home, the focus on orientation, insulation, cross-ventilation and attention to detail has paid off – despite a summer of record heatwaves, the air-conditioner ran for just 12 hours. Don Ianicelli has created a home for his family that is spacious, private, beautiful, comfortable and efficient, all on a block smaller than a basketball court. That's a small footprint, but it's no small feat. •

HOME & GARDEN



This page, clockwise from top left: A neutral colour scheme, concealed storage, repeated use of materials and mirrored surfaces make the living space feel much larger; raked ceilings upstairs keep the roof profile low while allowing in lots of light and concealing extensive storage; Don and his colleague at work in the office. **Opposite, clockwise from top left:** Precious items are displayed in the living area, including kitchenware, a collection of antique cigarette cases from Sharon's father, a tea set the couple bought on their travels in Bali; and a collection of Vitra's miniature Panton chairs.





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