



Top deck

A rotting deck leads to a home's total transformation from the outside in, writes Laura Stead

What began simply as a deck rebuild for Bruce and Pauline Atterton-Evans triggered a year-long transformation of their Bardon home. The house had been built in the 1990s and the three-storey beauty nestled among the trees had started to show some troubling signs of age, according to architect Andrew Watson. "They called me because they had problems with their decking, which essentially was rotting in parts," he says.

Exposed to the elements and in dire need of attention, the owners set their minds to rebuilding the multi-storied deck that was such a defining feature of the home, as well as the other aspects they'd thought to change over 12 years of living at the property.

Bruce says it took 12 months of consultation with the architect before a final plan was in place. "We knew that we had to do some work to the deck and through talking about the process and what we were

hoping to achieve, renovations were also on the cards," he says.

"We looked at it and thought maybe there was a better way of doing the deck to incorporate it into the house. Once we decided to do the deck, the kitchen and bathrooms were of the same age so it made sense to do those too."

When work began a portion of the side of the deck which was rarely used was removed which allowed an area on the upper level to be extended. The dark kitchen was opened up to flow out to the new deck and entertaining areas with the aim to convert what was a dark space and uninspiring area into one the family wanted to spend time in.

The space was increased only five square metres but it was enough to take the kitchen from dead-end space to one that had more connection with the living area and more sunlight from the outdoors. Watson says they used light colours inside to allow the

light to reflect as much as possible.

Both the master ensuite and main bathroom were redesigned for better functionality. "In the master bedroom there was a small ensuite and a little walk-in wardrobe, but we removed the walk-in robe, rearranged the ensuite to relocate the shower and toilet and make it feel more spacious, put in a larger window for a view into the top of the trees outside, then put some new furniture into the bedroom to make up for the lack of the walk-in wardrobe," says Watson. "The main bathroom and toilet were separate rooms so we also combined those to create one larger, more functional space."

The \$400,000 budget wasn't small but Bruce says it has been worth the investment to make the most of the family home that ticked all the boxes in other ways. "It's just a great area here. It's so handy to everything, it would be silly to move," he says. "We've



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01 The bushland view from the deck



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02 The previously dark kitchen has been opened up to flow to the deck for entertaining



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03 The ensuite was redesigned to look more spacious

got a great setting out the back and wanted to make the best use of the outdoors that we could. If you don't look hard you don't even see the other houses, which I love."

Watson says more and more homeowners are choosing to undertake substantial renovations rather than sell up and start over. Whether it's the flat market, the attachment to a neighbourhood or the sustainability benefits that make the decision for them, he agrees it's a practical scenario.

"These owners didn't necessarily need more space, but they wanted to use some parts of the house better," says Watson.

"There are a lot of people who are still after large spaces, the media room and the double-fronted garage. I'm more of the persuasion that we should be building smaller and using the space more effectively. From a sustainable point of view it's much more ideal to work with an existing building to provide some minor changes to get better

use out of the house."

However, working with an existing house can present unique challenges, says Watson. In this case the deck extension from the main living and kitchen areas called for a low pitch to the roof to allow maximum head height. "In this case we used a new type of sandwich panel roof for the deck, which meant we didn't need to have any framing built as such, it's a self-supporting roof," he says. "Essentially it's corrugated iron with a foam core - it provides its own rigidity and insulation. It can also be applied at a low pitch, which is also why we used it."

He says this project is a good example of a home that was able to transform to serve its occupants' needs in a way they might never have imagined on their own.

Houses need to be thought of as being adaptable in a way. It's a matter of thinking about how you use the spaces more effectively," Watson says.