BALANCING ACT

Creative minds and clever design have engineered the perfect work/life balance in this 1960s-inspired retreat on the Central Coast of NSW.

STORY **BECKY BARKER** ◆ STYLING **LISA HILTON** ◆ PHOTOGRAPHY **BRIGID ARNOTT**

Labrador Josh lies in wait at the Central Coast hideaway. **OPPOSITE** The home's bedroom wing occupies a cantilevered extension that projects out towards the horizon. Inspired by the area's rocky outcrops, this architectural form was an ingenious solution for the site's awkward slope. **For Where to Buy, see page 196.**

In the open-plan dining and living area, rich timbers, bluestone and fibre cement combine to create a calm backdrop. Wood-burning fireplace, Jetmaster. Pendant light, Ici et Là. Dining table, Matt Blatt. Dining chairs, Ikea. Sofa, Great Dane Furniture. Cream throw and yellow vase (on shelves), Koskela. Artworks by Jon Langford. Flowers from Mandalay Flowers. **For Where to Buy, see page 196.**

While working in Hong Kong in the late 1990s, homesick Aussie Tim Read would surf online property sites, looking for a coastal weekender back home. "He would send me links to houses and I would go and look at them," says Tim's wife, Jane Burridge. When Tim finally returned to Sydney, the couple continued the hunt for their ideal retreat, a place where they could wind down but also keep up with work.

"One day Tim drove up to the Central Coast and found this place, set in national park bushland," says Jane. Built in the '90s on a modest 521m² block sloping down to the water, the split-level, three-bedroom house offered filtered views towards Brisbane Water.

After buying the place, Tim and Jane leased it for nine years as a holiday letting. But by 2008 they were ready to transform the property into their personal getaway, inspired by the innovative '60s Leisurama homes of the US east coast.

Jane and Tim enlisted the help of award-winning local architect David Boyle for the 14-month project, which came in "pretty well on budget" at $430,000. "The main goal was to improve the entry and to open up the house to the views," says David. Most of the existing building was retained. The front door was repositioned, with the old point of entry given over to a new office space. Interior walls and low ceilings were removed to make one large, open-plan kitchen, living and dining space through ›

the centre of the house, which now connects via wide glass sliding doors to a tiered timber deck. A cantilevered wing was built over the carport on the western side of the house to accommodate a gently curved main bedroom and ensuite.

"The design was based on the landscape," says David. "The battens on the side of the stairwell are irregular, like the patterns of the trees. The supports under the bedroom are like the twisted branches of gum trees."

Colour also plays a subtle but key role. Laminex panels in a soft blue shade (Airlie Blue) back the open shelving of the 4.5m kitchen island bench and nearby bookshelves, and are reminiscent of the seaside setting. Green-stained blackbutt floorboards, reclaimed from a factory, share the aged hue of wharves in the village below.

"There's nowhere in the house where you can't see water, either directly or by reflection," says Jane, who now spends most weekends at the house with Tim and their labrador, Josh. From the cosy study to the built-in spa on the deck, there's plenty of space for both work and play.

David Boyle Architect, Pretty Beach, NSW; (02) 4360 1838 or www.davidboylearchitect.com.au.

'IT'S ALWAYS LIKE A HOLIDAY WHEN WE'RE HERE. THERE'S A BIG SIGH OF RELIEF AS WE ARRIVE.' JANE

RIGHT AND BELOW RIGHT A comfy armchair, rug and coffee table create an intimate spot within the open plan. For similar armchair, try Laura Kincade. Coffee table, Matt Blatt. Pendant light, Ici et Là. Rug, Cloth. **BELOW** Painted a warm red, the study has a cocooning effect that fosters concentration but, like the rest of the house, it also maintains a strong connection to the water, with framed views through the living room. Storage boxes, Kikki.K. Pendant light, Ici et Là. **OPPOSITE** Beautifully crafted hardwood joinery elevates the kitchen's island unit to the status of fine furniture. In the corner is a built-in daybed with a cushion by Adek Blinds & Curtains. Blue cushion, No Chintz. For similar vintage print cushion, try Sean the Prawn. Smeg cooktop. Qasair rangehood. Scala mixer tap. Throw, Planet. Chair, Ikea. Flowers from Summers Floral. *Sputnik '57* artwork, Jon Langford. **For Where to Buy, see page 196.**

Tim and Jane, with Josh, revel in the leafy charm of their renovated coastal retreat. The deck features different widths of blackbutt timber laid in an irregular pattern. Custom-made sliding doors in western red cedar frames. Table, Aero Designs. Glasses, Top3 by Design.
OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP A continuous picture window runs around the main bedroom over wall cladding of hoop pine veneer. Sheets, Ondene. Quilt cover and bag (on chair), Planet. Yellow throw, Country Road. Eames rocker, Living Edge. The deck has views through to the water. Mixed floor tiles mirror the natural tones and random forms of the environment outside. Tiles, Amber Tiles and CTM Tiles. Baroque bath, Renaissance Traditional Bathrooms.
For Where to Buy, see page 196. >

'SUPPORTS UNDER THE BEDROOM ARE LIKE THE TWISTED BRANCHES OF NEARBY GUMS.' DAVID BOYLE, ARCHITECT

A look we love

Inspired by the adjacent bushland and bay, a natural selection of materials and colours has evolved into this blissful retreat.

It's the easy conversation between the interiors of this home and its setting that makes every day here feel like a holiday, even when the owners are hard at work. The trick is to borrow from nature's own palette: blue accents reference the heavenly hues of water and sky, mixed tiles mimic the variegated tones of rustling leaves, structural supports resemble twisted branches. This approach calls for authenticity in the materials, from timber and stone to organic textiles and artisanal ceramics. Crucially, the open, inside-out aesthetic is artfully balanced with cosy nooks and cocooning elements for moments of quiet retreat. A touch of mid-century retro, including the print cushion and Space Age-themed artwork above, pays homage to the house's architectural inspiration while playing up its thoroughly modern sensibility. H&G

FROM TOP Lab glass, chrome and ash **pendant light,** $1149, Beacon Lighting. Juke ceramic **vessels,** from $50/each, Freedom. Eames plywood **coffee table,** from $1470, Living Edge. Doug Johnston Tall cotton **basket,** $75, Safari Living. Classic linen/cotton reversible **cushions** in Thatch (left) and Wattle, $150/each, Cloth. Copper **butterfly chair** with canvas seat, $195, Orson & Blake. For Where to Buy, see page 196.

Produced by Imogene Roache & Ashley Pratt.