



High and mighty

This post-war Queenslanders has evolved, and expanded, to accommodate a growing family. Story by **Fiona Surtees**

Chris Schroor was out in his garden one weekend when a man got out of his car and said he'd grown up in the house. From that encounter, Chris and his wife Tania also learned that part of the house had been used as a doctor's surgery at one stage. A few weeks later, the Schroor's unexpected visitor dropped off photos of their house in its former glory, showing a predominantly white colour scheme in the ageing black and white images which are now treasured by the Schroors. "I think they need to be framed and hung in the living room," says Tania.

Today the commanding post-war Queenslanders in Norman Park is a light and airy five-bedroom home designed – and expanded – to meet the needs of five growing and active children. And it has a gleaming new white exterior with timber detail in keeping with its past, ending a period of mint green paintwork from previous attempts at modernisation.

But that has been a finishing touch on the cherished family home that has undergone four phases of renovation and expansion in recent years to meet the needs of the Schroors and their five children Oakley, Remi, Paxi, Archer and baby Rafa.



Renovations began even before the family moved in four years ago with the dreary galley kitchen the first thing to get the Schroor's touch. It is now open and functional with a line of sight to the living room, back deck and yard. Skirted on one side by stools, the large island bench is the perfect family refuelling station. But, for all its functionality, there's one dramatic difference in this kitchen and that's its hot pink colour splash, which has been effectively introduced in the splashback, the face of a clock and a pink-hued canvas. "I like white and natural tones but a little bit of colour gives character and pink is my favourite," says Tania, who combines a mother's practicality with obvious creative flair.

With her brood of five children under



No detail has been overlooked in the four-year makeover



The Schroors



Tania added a splash of her favourite colour, hot pink, in the kitchen

10, Tania is well-acquainted with the daily upkeep required of a young family so some labour-saving devices were an essential part of the design process — including a laundry chute from her walk-in wardrobe and a dumb-waiter installed in the new larder.

“Part of the brief was for more pantry space, so we designed a larder to be built onto the side of the house with a slide-through window from the kitchen,” explains architect Shem Guthrie, part of the Deicke Richards project team. “Within the larder there’s a dumb-waiter so when Tania drives into the garage with the groceries she can load them in there, rather than hauling them up the stairs.”

And Tania is forever grateful. “It is so handy,” she says with glee, next pointing out a row of hooks and shelves affixed to the garage wall for the kids’ school bags, shoes and sports gear.

A generous outdoor room with a skillion roof, accessed by timber bi-fold doors from the kitchen/dining space, was stage two of

the renovation and is well used for dining, playing and entertaining. Today, wooden spoons and stainless steel whisks dangle from the rafters — vestiges of a recent *MasterChef* themed birthday party.

As the children grew so did their need for open space, so the next logical step was an overhaul of the backyard. The slope was terraced to provide a playing field complete with a stage in one corner and “cubby town” in the other. A miniature Queenslander-style cubby, built by the previous owners, now has a neighbouring fort.

The backdrop to the yard is a water feature which cascades down a slate-tiled wall. “Those tiles are probably 30 years old,” Tania explains, “they’ve been stacked and re-stacked at my parents’ house, but never used. I decided their time had come and I sifted through hundreds to find ones that were unchipped and perfectly square.”

More large tiles, this time pool tiles, appear on the front of the house on approach to the newly configured entry.

The cathedral-like entry void, containing the Tasmanian oak stairway and glass balustrade, was a significant part of the biggest and most recent renovation done by PTF Constructions In Touch Renovations. It involved changing the upstairs floor plan and extending the veranda on the north-western side to provide access from the bedrooms through French doors. The vacant undercroft was also transformed into a rumpus/media room, two additional bedrooms, bathroom and laundry. An adjoining double garage was also added.

“Last year, we’d planned a six-week holiday, then I was pregnant with Rafa, so we suddenly decided that this was our opportunity to get a big chunk of the renovation done while we were away,” Tania says. However, it wasn’t quite as easy as that. “Towards the end of our trip, Chris received a text saying the house had fallen down.” Well not literally but, as builder Paul Farthing explained,

the existing columns and stumps had deteriorated and the house needed to be propped up and “quite extensive structural work on the footings and foundations” undertaken. “It meant that six weeks in we were four weeks behind,” Tania recalls now with good humour.

Already high-set, the home did not need to be raised, although a large amount of plumbing, water-proofing and re-wiring was required. Nevertheless, in spite of some unforeseen events “not unusual when renovating old houses” and a few changes “to fit the budget”, Tania says she enjoyed the renovation process and would happily do it again. “The builders promised we’d be in the house by Christmas and we moved in five days before, with 10-day-old Rafa.” No doubt, the result of some hard labour all round!

The Norman Park residence is nominated for a Master Builder’s Housing and Construction Award in the Renovation/Remodelling Project over \$401,000 to be announced in Brisbane on 9 July.