

AGAINST ALL ODDS

An excessively run-down Brisbane cottage, without any of life's creature comforts and with the odds stacked against it, is brought back to life with love and a distinctive American flavour

The cottage has an aura of *Desperate Housewives* about it, with a wide verandah, beautiful gables, grey exterior and white picket fence





Words Danielle Townsend
Photography Clare Sophia Photography

To say this Brisbane house was derelict, unloved and unliveable is somewhat of an understatement. In its original 1920s condition, there wasn't even a proper bathroom, just an unusual shower space under the house. The property was filled with rotted timber, borer and termite damage and asbestos, the roof was rusted out and the front and back stairs weren't safe to use. In fact, the house was so far gone, the bank would not loan me any money against it, says homeowner Rachael Turner of Front Porch Properties. Luckily, I won it cheap enough at auction that I was able to borrow enough against the land alone.

Despite its neglected state and lack of creature comforts, the house became

affectionately referred to as "Charlie's House".

The neighbours would often pull us aside to tell us stories of Charlie, the sweet old man who used to live here," says Rachael. "He was born here, raised here and stayed here for the rest of his life.

It just amazes me that, in this day and age, just moments from a CBD, this old man would trek outside, down the rotting staircase and under the house to use the exposed toilet! Neighbours also said he would sit in the front room of the house at night because there were no lights or power points in any other room! I guess this is just how he grew up and he knew nothing else.

Fortunately, Rachael recognised the home's possibilities. It was important to me to retain as much of the original house as possible, she says.

My goal was to transform this abandoned ugly duckling into a beautiful and functional home, creating a modern living environment while

keeping the original cottage charm. Another goal was to stick to my very tight budget and a 12-week timeframe.

Rachael's admiration for American-style homes inspired her project. I have a real love for Americana, slightly Hamptons, modern-vintage-style homes, she says. Think *Desperate Housewives* wide verandahs, beautiful gables, soothing colour palettes, grey exteriors, French doors, windows with glazing bars, lots of light, white picket fences, cool breezes, symmetry and casual yet elegant decor.

I believe Queenslanders are great blank canvases to fuse with the more sophisticated and elegant American equivalent they share a lot of the same core elements. I also think this more American adaptation of the traditional Queenslanders sits beautifully in the Brisbane streetscape. Although this particular house was

Rachael wanted to create a new kitchen that was both beautiful and functional, with plenty of bench space. The kitchen doors and panels are all high-gloss Alabaster for the lower cabinets and the full-height cupboards are Mountain Pepper



Above and below VJ boards from the removed walls were reused to line the ceiling of the new dining area. A banquette/dining booth was built against the new bathroom wall, allowing the dining table to be tucked closer to the wall, freeing up space

a cottage, not a traditional Queenslander, the above was my starting point.

Construction work was undertaken by Construction Co: the residence was re-stumped, levelled and all asbestos removed. New flooring was installed throughout, as the original timber flooring was badly damaged by borers. The entire roof was replaced and all new electrical wiring and plumbing installed. Walls were removed to create an open layout, structural beams were installed to support the ceiling and walls were added to create a new bathroom.

Although the new bathroom is quite small, I tried to make it as functional and luxurious as possible, says Rachael. I did this by including a heated towel rail, floor-to-ceiling polished porcelain tiles, dual rain shower and hand shower unit, double vanity, recessed mirrored cupboard storage, LED vanity strip lighting, a





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Above The back exterior wall and stairs were demolished to allow a new rear deck for outdoor entertaining

Opposite top One of the three bedrooms in [Charlie's House] it fits with Rachael's love of the Hamptons and modern-vintage-style homes

beautiful Aster pendant light and a hidden shelf for shampoo etc, she adds. The mirrors on the cabinets open inwards, too, which means us girls can easily see the back of our hair!

By adding a bathroom, space was significantly reduced for dining, and VJ boards from the removed walls were reused to line the ceiling of the new dining area. A banquette/dining booth was built against the new bathroom wall, allowing the dining table to be tucked closer to the wall, freeing up space.

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Blum hardware was installed with full-extension drawers and soft-close drawers and doors, along with an undermount sink, stone benchtops, a clever microwave and appliance cupboard hidden behind bifold doors, breakfast

bar, laundry chute to the new laundry built directly under the kitchen (under the house) and a servery to the back deck. Rachel also selected an Asko gas cooktop, Fisher & Paykel oven and energy-efficient LED downlights.

The kitchen doors and panels are all high-gloss Createc by Polytec and all lower cabinets are Alabaster, while the full-height bank of cupboards is Mountain Pepper. I carried this same aesthetic through to the bathroom, using white and mocha-coloured tiles to create a similar effect," says Rachael of the same 100x50mm pearl subway splashback tiles incorporated in both the kitchen and bathroom.

Outside, the back exterior wall and stairs were demolished to allow a new rear deck for outdoor entertaining. Meanwhile, at the front of the house, a new study was added and as the original front verandah had been closed in, it was now opened up and new handrails built. A portico and footbridge were also constructed to dress up the front facade and create easy

street access. The most practical part of the renovation is the footbridge, says Rachael. "What a huge difference it has made for access and street appeal.

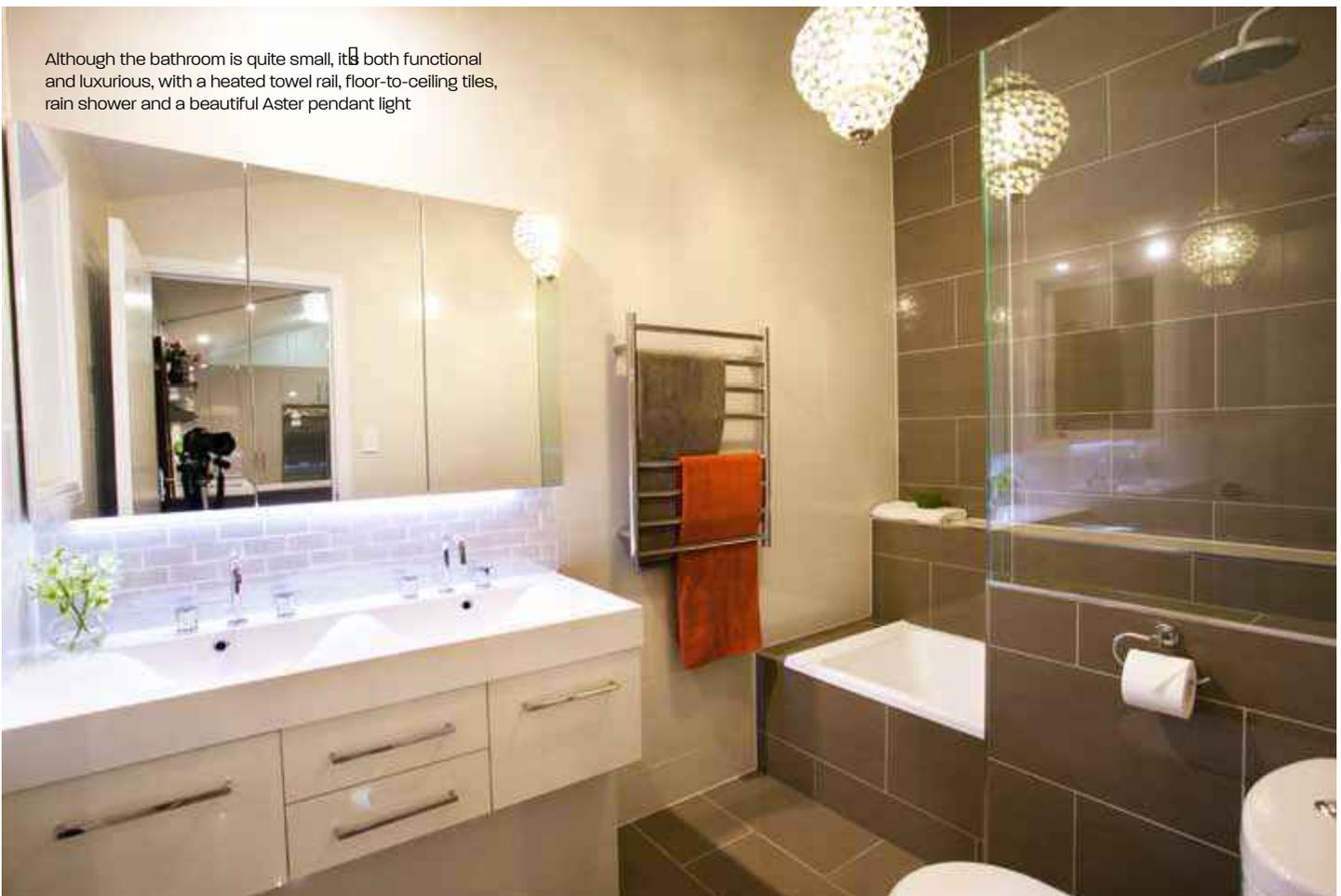
Also at the front of the property, to create a wonderful welcoming effect, a new driveway, carport, front picket fence, retaining wall, side fence, landscaping and turf have made a world of difference. Naturally, the entire house was also repainted for a lovely fresh feeling.

I don't think I have a favourite part of the home in particular, says Rachael of her completed project. "I love all the light fixtures and I think the built-in banquette works particularly well. I also really like the design connection between the kitchen and bathroom.

And what would Charlie say about the transformation, some might ask? We think he'd be mighty impressed and somewhat amazed with what the home he knew and lived in for so many decades, without any creature comforts, has become. **R**

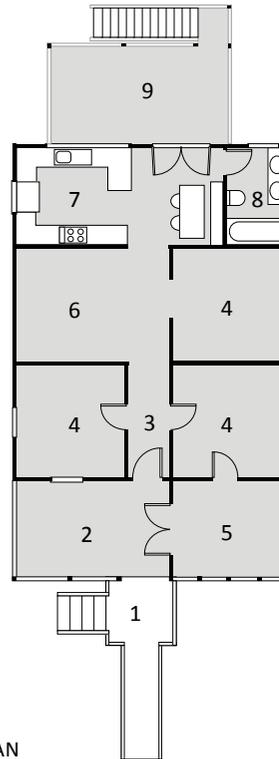


Although the bathroom is quite small, it is both functional and luxurious, with a heated towel rail, floor-to-ceiling tiles, rain shower and a beautiful Aster pendant light



LEGEND

- 1 Portico
- 2 Verandah
- 3 Entry
- 4 Bedroom
- 5 Study
- 6 Lounge room
- 7 Kitchen
- 8 Bathroom
- 9 Deck



FLOOR PLAN



before

Project particulars

This project was designed and project managed by:

Front Porch Properties

Brisbane Qld

Tel 0432 937 499

Email rachael.jane.turner@gmail.com

This project was built by:

Salt Construction Co

Tel 0425 071 937

Web saltconstruction.com.au

FLOORING

Kitchen/dining/living/study Waterproof, scratch- and dent-proof vinyl planks

Bedrooms Carpet

WALLS

Exterior Porter's Paints Old Stone Wall semi-gloss

Interior Dulux Wash & Wear Beige Royale quarter strength on ceilings

Dining flooring extended up dining room wall

KITCHEN

Benchtop Caesarstone Snow

Splashback 100x50mm pearl subway tiles

Cabinetry Createc by Polytec high-gloss doors and panels in Mountain Pepper and Alabaster

Internals Blum hardware full-extension drawers, soft-close drawers and cupboards

Appliances Asko gas cooktop, Fisher & Paykel electric oven, dishwasher

Lighting Energy-efficient LED downlights, three-light retro servery from Early Settler

BATHROOM FITTINGS

Cabinetry/basin 1800mm double vanity/sink from Tradelink Bathroom Design, unit re-laminated in Polytec Alabaster to match kitchen cabinetry

Tiles/walls and floor Floor-to-ceiling high-gloss polished porcelain tiles in Alabaster and Mocha

Taps Caroma tapware and fittings

Shower/bath Dual rain shower and hand shower unit

LIGHTING

Kitchen Three-light retro servery from Early Settler, energy-efficient LED downlights from Beacon Lighting

Bathroom LED strip lighting under mirrored cabinets from Beacon Lighting, Aster pendant from Early Settler

Dining room Pendant light from Freedom

Hallway Aster pendant from Early Settler

Back deck Pendant lights from Beacon Lighting

Study Clermont chrome pendant from Beacon Lighting

Front portico Monaco exterior pendant light from Lightworks Online

Front verandah Industrial Provincial wall light from Stella's House

WINDOWS & EXTERNAL DOORS

All new doors and windows were sourced second hand from local demolition yards

OUTDOOR

Roof Colorbond Woodland Grey

Furniture/accessories Some furniture was Rachael's own, some was hired. She styled the house herself