

LIVING INSIDE OUT

An open architectural framework and timber-clad interiors give this young, outdoorsy family their very own life-sized treehouse

WORDS KARSHA GREEN **PHOTOGRAPHY** JACK LEVEL





DETAILS

HOUSE Wakanui Trail House
LOCATION Northcote, VIC
DATE COMMENCED 2018
DATE COMPLETED 2021

WE LOVE

THE TRANSPARENT
BACKYARD FENCE
THAT ESTABLISHED A
BOUNDARY WITHOUT
OBSTRUCTING THE
VIEW OF THE NATURAL
PARKLANDS BEYOND

LEFT The home takes various inspirations from the native parklands in its backyard

The Australian bush is full of inspiration — the delicate sounds of bird calls, the textures of the ironbark and the sweet scent of the eucalyptus. For this young family of five, the great outdoors is their favourite place to be, whether they're camping, hiking or mountain bike riding. The homeowners wanted a house that was completely immersed in nature, where the lines between inside and out were almost transparent. Together with Ben Callery Architects and Keenan Built, Wakanui Trail House provides an adaptable space for this growing family in one big, luxury treehouse.

"Our clients wanted an extension to comfortably accommodate their growing family and be flexible as they grow ... They wanted their house to connect with the outdoors, drawing their living rooms out to their backyard and in turn to the lovely parkland at the back of their property," says Ben Callery, architect and director at Ben Callery Architects.

The existing house was a single-storey, double-fronted, Californian bungalow that had been renovated a few decades earlier. While the living room and kitchen had been relocated to the back of the house, the ceilings were very low and a deep balcony with a solid roof blocked all natural light and the view of the parklands from entering the home. The project would involve a back renovation/extension, including new laundry and open-plan living/dining as well as a home office space.

Locally sourced materials such as Victorian ash lining boards and Tasmanian oak flooring were used due to their organic textures and inherent warmth



PROJECT
WAKANUI TRAIL HOUSE

The abundance of natural, raw material is contrasted by black accents that add a luxury element to this treehouse design



A second-storey addition would house a new master bedroom, bathroom and second living room, and the need for a new roof structure presented the opportunity to create an attic play area for the kids. The front facade and existing front bedrooms were retained due to their “nice period charm”, desire to contribute to intact streetscape, and avoiding unnecessary landfill.

A design feature throughout this home is the unique connection between internal spaces as well as the surrounding landscape. A central void connects the two levels of the home with sliding glass windows that can allow for both openness and seclusion. The study on the ground floor is also partially enclosed by a bookshelf, visually separated for efficiency but still open and connected to the living areas and view beyond.

“The void is designed to get warming winter sun into the living rooms for passive heating,” says Ben. “This void also provides visual connection to the treetops in the parkland at the rear of the site.”

A challenge that stemmed from such an open design and intimate connection with the outdoors was the exposure to the public realm



A central void connects the two levels of the home with sliding glass windows that can allow for both openness and seclusion



EDITOR'S FAVOURITE

THE EXTENSIVE USE OF TIMBER THAT CREATES A LUXURY TREEHOUSE FEEL

LEFT This home's combination of natural materials, natural light and visual connection to the outdoors has created a very serene living space

and unwanted heat gain from the backyard's western orientation. As well as glazing and internal sheers, adjustable external venetian blinds and folding-arm awnings give the homeowners full control over shading and privacy. The transparent back fence makes the backyard look like it never ends, but carefully selected plantings and built form help obscure the rear boundary.

The Wakanui Trail House is a luxury treehouse with an abundance of natural, raw materials being used throughout the home's interior. Locally sourced materials such as Victorian ash lining boards and Tasmanian oak flooring were used due to their organic textures and inherent warmth. Timber slats over the exterior extension block the summer sun and also provide privacy from neighbouring properties. "Their angle uses the synergy between the bevel inherent in their resource-efficient radial sawing and the angle of the low winter sun to provide passive solar heating," says Ben.

"My favourite part is the overall feel in the new spaces that are both calming while also quite exciting. The combination of natural materials, natural light and visual connection with the treetops is very tranquil," he continues.

"Ben Callery Architects has created a house that connects the inside and outside," say homeowners Avril and Rich. "We are a very outdoors family and enjoy the connection from the living space to our backyard and into the park, along with the use of natural timber in the design. The rooms are designed to allow us to connect as a family — for example, we can open upstairs and be part of the activity downstairs — but also enable us to retreat to our own space. We feel very privileged to be living in a house that provides such a warm and flexible space for our family." 🏡

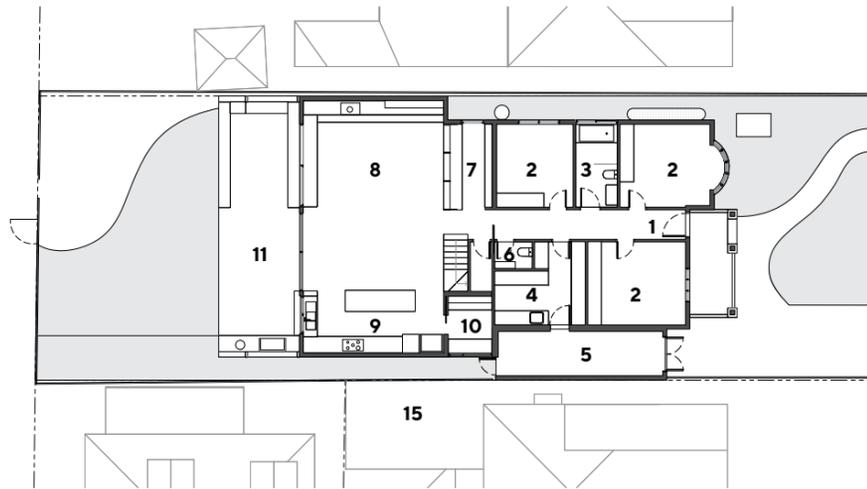
"MY FAVOURITE PART IS THE OVERALL FEEL IN THE NEW SPACES THAT ARE BOTH CALMING WHILE ALSO QUITE EXCITING. THE COMBINATION OF NATURAL MATERIALS, NATURAL LIGHT AND VISUAL CONNECTION WITH THE TREETOPS IS VERY TRANQUIL" — BEN CALLERY



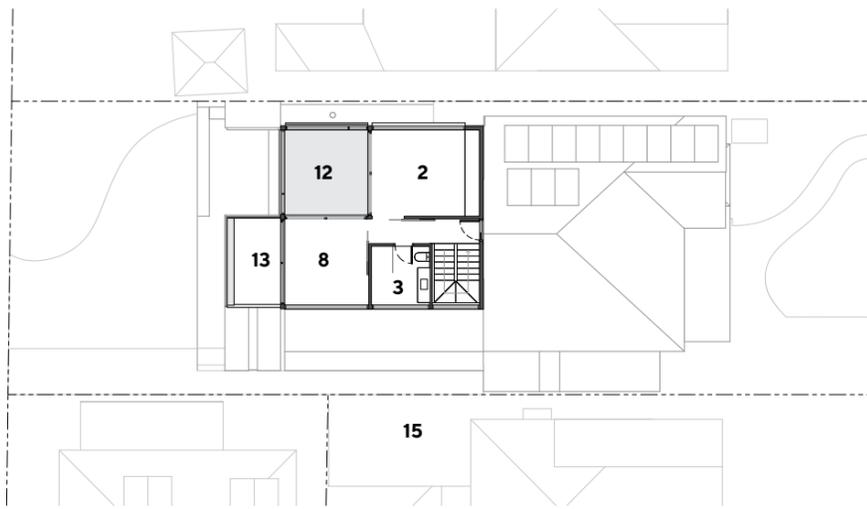
In every space and from every angle, a connection to the exterior landscape has been carefully created



PROJECT
WAKANUI TRAIL HOUSE



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

LEGEND

- 1 Entry/hallway
- 2 Bedroom
- 3 Bathroom
- 4 Laundry
- 5 Bike storage
- 6 Powder room
- 7 Study
- 8 Living
- 9 Kitchen
- 10 Walk-in pantry
- 11 Deck
- 12 Void
- 13 Balcony
- 14 Roof storage
- 15 Private open space



BELOW The study on the ground floor is partially enclosed by a bookshelf, visually separated for efficiency but still open and connected to the living areas and view beyond

PROJECT TEAM

ARCHITECT Ben Callery Architects, bencallery.com.au
BUILDER Keenan Built, keenanbuilt.com.au

STRUCTURAL TEAM

Structural engineer Richard Rees

FIXTURES & FITTINGS

Basins Concrete Nation
Mixers Brodware
Showers Methven
Toilets Kado Lux

Appliances Miele

External blinds Shade Factor

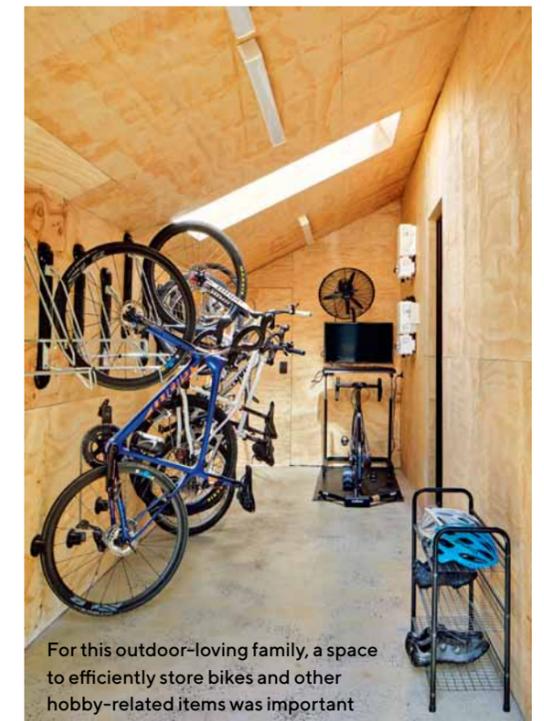
Windows Rylock Windows & Doors

Metalwork Artweld

FURNITURE & FURNISHINGS

Couch, coffee table, armchair RJ Living

Internal window furnishings SOM Blinds



For this outdoor-loving family, a space to efficiently store bikes and other hobby-related items was important