

The upper level of this home appears enveloped by the surrounding landscape, securing that connection between outdoors and in.

COASTAL CONNECTION

A STUNNING HOME FROM SCRATCH IN AUSTRALIA

“My design is always driven by the site context,” explains Dan Clift, founder of Square Design, a Sydney, Australia-based boutique design studio that specializes in bespoke residential projects. When Clift began work on this home, the plan was to remodel the existing house on the property. As the design brief evolved, Clift realized the significant alterations needed would limit the design options and fall short of what the clients wanted. Ultimately, Clift and his clients opted for a completely new, dream design that would maximize the site’s potential.

The homeowners wanted a second home in Killcare, a community north of Sydney in the Central Coast area of New South Wales. They needed a place to entertain family and guests and a contemporary home that made the most of the natural light, water views, and expansive vistas of nearby Bouddi National Park. “The style of this home is certainly not the typical coastal beach house and yet by layering the spaces with different textures and reclaimed materials, we achieved a very comfortable relaxed home that draws on the tones of the natural surrounding landscape,” says Clift.

Clift explains his approach to every new build. “Orientation for natural light, available views, the natural contour of the site, and consideration of privacy from surrounding properties all play a major role in developing the building form,” he says. “Retaining existing trees and vegetation is also an important consideration in the early design stages.”

The site’s slope created challenges and had to be addressed with care. “The main challenge was to achieve the correct proportion of the spaces and a fluid connection between the interior and outdoor spaces,” notes Clift. He planned to retain existing trees, particularly the gray gums at the front of the property, as those sentinels helped frame the home’s entry. Many of the materials chosen for the exterior were inspired by the tones and textures of the local landscape. “The external views and vistas of the trees and surrounding rock formations are framed and very much contribute to the experience of each space,” says Clift.

The building orientation takes advantage of natural light, allowing it inside the interiors for much of the day and shade that controls both the interior temperature and glare. Judicious use of light is a common theme throughout. “I like to use lighting to create warmth. It should light the multiple materials used within the space to create a more

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KILLCARE,
AUSTRALIA





landscape lessons

"Materials used externally are carried through the interior. You feel very much embedded in the landscaped surroundings," says Dan Clift, principal designer and interior architect of Square Design. Here are some of his tips to connect indoor and outdoor spaces.

Use recessed sill details at door thresholds. In this home, door sills are flush to the floor, creating no barrier (visual or otherwise) between the interior living space and the great outdoors.

Install full-height windows and glass doors. With views as beautiful as those found here, it's wise to invite them in. Windows extend floor to ceiling, allowing full views of the surroundings, even from indoors.

Continue material use from one space to the next. Concrete, wood, metal, and stone show up in the interiors and exteriors of this residence. Repetition creates design cohesion and harmony between the home and its surroundings.

Blue and gray artwork, accessories, and furnishings enhance the cool feeling generated by the concrete and white surfaces. Darker colors fade to the background allowing richer, earthier tones to stand out. The glass surround on the exterior provides safety without blocking the expansive views.

KILLCARE,
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Earthy natural tones found in wood furniture and textiles make a visual connection between the interior and the natural exterior. Floor-to-ceiling windows invite those views inside, making them part of the overall decor.

interesting, rich interior. I like to combine light sources to control and create varied light environments,” explains Clift.

The coastal home embraces natural light and, with that, the lush surrounding views, which pour in through wall-height windows with minimal framing, leaving the space feeling expansive yet cozy. The interior color palette draws from outdoor hues—creams, grays, and blues. The gray exterior almost recedes into the background, allowing the natural green landscape to take center stage.

Materials serve both utilitarian and aesthetic purposes. Concrete, for example, can withstand the harsh and abrasive conditions of coastal living. “The tonal variation and surface finish in the concrete creates instant character offset by adjacent white surfaces. It is also used for

thermal mass to keep the building cooler in summer and warmer in winter,” says Clift. Timbers also provided a practical choice. “Recycled and reclaimed timbers were used throughout the building to add warmth and texture,” he notes, referring in part to the infinity pool that’s surrounded by a natural timbered deck. Clift wanted the pool to play an integral role in the design, connecting to the main living space on the upper level of the home. It is suspended and cantilevered from the upper level and can be viewed from the kitchen, dining, and living areas. It lives in the foreground but looks out to the ocean view.

“The external views and vistas of the trees and surrounding rock formations are framed and very much contribute to the experience of each space,” says Clift. “Every space within this home connects to the outdoors.” ■