

# HERE AND NOW

A SYMPATHETIC RENOVATION PUTS THIS OLD-TIME QUEENSLAND BEAUTY BACK ON THE MAP AS A HOME THAT FUSES MODERN LIVING WITH TIMELESS STYLE

STORY ROSANNE PEACH STYLING LANA CAVES PHOTOGRAPHY ELOUISE VAN RIET-GRAY

**A SLICE OF HISTORY** The charm of yesteryear was one of the major attractions of this 19th century bayside Brisbane home, with Kirsten, her husband and their three children keen to reveal and restore the home's original features as part of its extensive renovation. One such period piece was the fireplace in the main living room. "This room was the original working kitchen and it still has the chain hanging down where they would have had a pot hanging over the fire," says Kirsten. Wicker chairs and baskets, and a jute rug from Pottery Barn provide texture to the crisp white space. Using a mix of textures - linen, jute, timber - is the key to balancing out the clean palette and the great volume of space, says Lauren Pearse, interior designer of Rylo, who worked with Kirsten on the home. "We needed to layer that texture to keep it warm and inviting, so it didn't feel like you couldn't go in there and put your feet up on the sofa," she says. Lush, leafy plants and pops of blue - in cushions from Rylo and a photograph of Cabarita Beach by Paget Thomson - add a touch of tropical style. "I just wanted the house to be coastal and relaxed," says Kirsten. >



**KITCHEN** With almost no overhead cabinets, the kitchen is bright and open, with all the focus on the light and views through the windows. Yet there's no shortage of cupboard space, thanks to a butler's pantry, which keeps the kitchen clutter-free. "It works well," says Kirsten (pictured below). "The kids can make their breakfast in the butler's pantry and I make lunches in there every day. It means everyone isn't on top of each other in the kitchen." Out in the main room, the space is classically finished with 2-pac double-beveled profile doors in Dulux Lexicon Quarter and a striking island benchtop in marble, with more hard-wearing Caesarstone on the back benches, where all the action happens. Glossy Italian tumbled subway tiles throw texture into the simple scheme. The ceramic artworks on the wall are by Jai Vasicek of Ahoy Trader in Byron Bay.

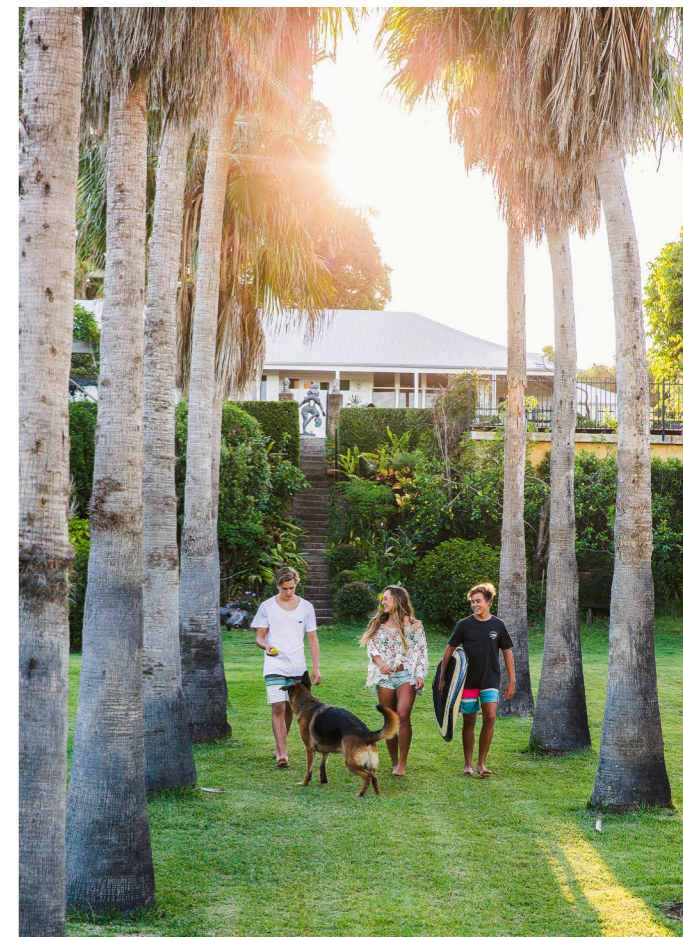


**BENCHTOP**  
Engineered stone surface in Snow, \$500/sqm, including installation, Caesarstone.

A giant 300-year-old Moreton Bay fig tree towers grandly, like a living signpost, above a heritage cottage in a bayside suburb of Brisbane. The native tree has marked the site on the peninsular for centuries, long before the house was built in 1864 and at least 100 years before Captain Cook sailed past, when the indigenous Koobenpul people dwelled in the area. "We call it our Avatar tree, our tree of life," says Kirsten who, with her husband, and their three children, Chloe, 17, and 15-year-old twins Will and Zac (pictured right), have made this home. "The tree is always full of birds and fruit. It has a life of its own."

Below the fig tree lie formal gardens, rolling green lawns and an avenue of palms that lead down to the nearby water. It's here that the youngsters often scoot out on a stand-up paddleboard as the sun rises over the sea. "It had always been our dream to live by the water," says Kirsten. "When we saw the property, we had a feeling this was where we should be."

The home, like the tree, told them a tale of a life well lived. While it needed a major revival, there were clues to its original beauty, most notably a covered-up cathedral ceiling and two concealed original fireplaces. Two separate cottages had been built close to the original in the 1870s, with the three joined by open verandahs. The team from Rylo – builder Ryan Pearse and his interior designer wife Lauren Pearse – came on board to merge the three structures into a functional family home that pays homage to both the site and the history of the place.



*"Stay true to yourself and your family's needs, and most of all be practical and make it a home" ~ Kirsten*

The pair fused the cottages to form a central living space and added a children's wing on one side and a main suite on the other. "We wanted to reinstate the cathedral ceiling that had been covered up and make that space the hub of the home," says Lauren. It was a strategic design move that has given nearly every room a sea view.

The formerly boxed-in kitchen was opened up and redesigned to centre around the original timber windows, which frame an idyllic outlook over the gardens. "Cooking is less of a chore when you have a beautiful view to look at," says Kirsten. To equip the home for life with three teens, Ryan and Lauren also added a butler's pantry off to the side. "It leads out to the side verandah, so if you're barbecuing, you can go straight out the French doors from the butler's pantry and take everything out there," explains Lauren.

The beautifully soothing interiors have been pulled together by Kirsten to reflect an effortless approach to coastal living. "I didn't want the house to be too done," she says. "I wanted my personality to shine through as well." A mix of new and vintage finds, with plenty of textiles, lighting and advice – care of Rylo – create a fabulously relaxed and beachy vibe against a backdrop of bright white walls and ceilings, and contrasting dark-stained floors. It's a palette that works to celebrate the original features of this home while anchoring it into the now.



**KITCHEN**  
The island bench (above) is positioned to take advantage of the view over the garden and out to the water. "Keeping it clear and not having a sink in it makes it more practical for conversations," says interior designer Lauren. The Ikea 'Ingolf' bar stools fit perfectly in the scheme.



**FOYER**  
Mixing pocket-friendly high-street finds with special pieces is one of Kirsten's favourite tricks for creating a stylish interior. Falling into the latter category is this very chic wicker drinks trolley, a vintage piece from The Old Boathouse in East Brisbane. >

**WE LOVE...**

*a sense of history*

The stunning cathedral ceiling, along with the original fireplace at the end of the room, are lovingly restored reminders of the home's history. While on a more personal note, the dining space has been furnished with an important piece of the family's own history, a generous vintage table.

"My husband and I made a decision 24 years ago that we were going to purchase a big old table that we could bring our family up around, and that's what we've done" says Kirsten.



**DINING**  
Mismatched chairs around the vintage dining table (above) keep the dining space feeling relaxed. A palm tree photograph by Warranbrooke and the glamorous 'Palm Springs' chandelier from Gypset Cargo link the interior to the garden and its avenue of palm trees.

**FOYER**  
A chic beaded chandelier from Emac & Lawton defines the entry space between the kitchen and dining area. A print from Oz Design Furniture above the Ikea 'Liatorp' console provides a splash of coastal colour against the carefully preserved original VJ boards. >



*"The dark floor grounded the look so we kept everything else really light and bright" ~ Lauren Pearse, interior designer*



*“You don’t need to spend a lot of money to make things nice – it’s how you put it all together” ~ Kirsten*

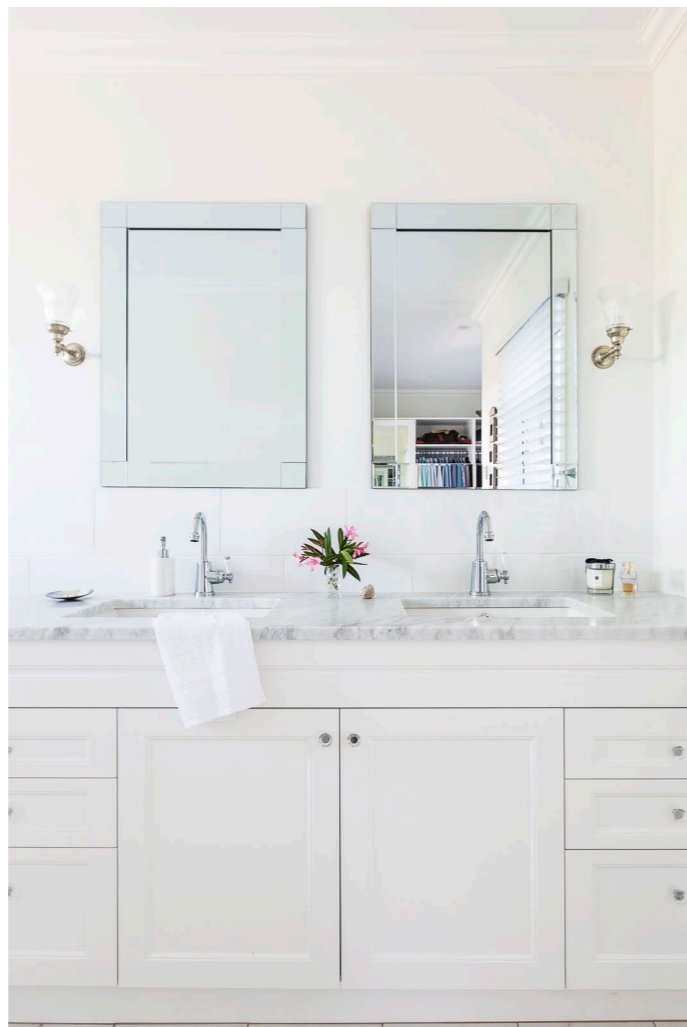
**WILL’S ROOM**

After years of being a stay-at-home mum or working part-time, Kirsten says she has learnt to be savvy with her purchases. Will’s room (above) proves that you can create a chic look on a budget, with bedlinen from Target styled up with a throw from local store Ebb & Flow, and a bedside table that interior designer Lauren – also a keen bargain hunter – found on the side of the road.

**MAIN BEDROOM & ENSUITE**

The main bedroom is an extension to the original footprint that affords the parents privacy, garden views through French doors (opposite), and a majestic

walk-in robe (right) and ensuite (top right). Luxe meets ‘less’ in the ensuite, with a Carrara marble-topped custom vanity paired with wall sconces from Rylo and a pair of mirrors from Kmart. The light-drenched walk-in robe, hidden behind a giant cavity slider, is one of Kirsten’s favourite features. “That was a surprise,” she says. “I didn’t think I was going to fit all the beautiful cabinetry in there.” The bedroom itself is simply styled with a taupe bedhead from French & English and ‘Caribbean Pineapple’ lamps from Emac & Lawton, with floaty linen blend drapes giving the room a touch of island resort luxury. >



**PAINT**  
Lumbersider  
in Sea Fog,  
\$78.33/L, Resene.

**LOUNGE ROOM** French doors open the second living room to the gardens. Serenely furnished in white and blue, with cushions sourced by Rylo on the Ikea sofas, a neutral rug from Freedom and a vintage coffee table from The Boathouse, the space is one of the home's most peaceful corners. Greenery from Flower Haul gives the scheme a pop of bright colour, as does the tropical artwork, which was bought on the couple's belated honeymoon - "20 years later!" - to Bora Bora. Kirsten had the painting of the island framed for their 20th wedding anniversary.



## SOURCE BOOK

### INSIDE STORY KIRSTEN & HER FAMILY'S HOME

#### Who lives here?

Kirsten (pictured left), currently studying to be a yoga instructor, and her husband; their three children, Chloe, 17 (pictured far left), and twin sons Will and Zac, 15; and their German Shepherd.

#### Describe your typical Sunday.

Kirsten: "If the tide's in, the kids will be out on the water. My husband and I like to spend time together working in the garden. Then in the afternoon we might sit down at the bottom of the garden under the coconut palm and enjoy a cold beverage."

#### Favourite spot inside the home?

"My favourite spot is in the front lounge room, where I sit and have my first cup of coffee every morning and watch the sun come up. It's just beautiful."



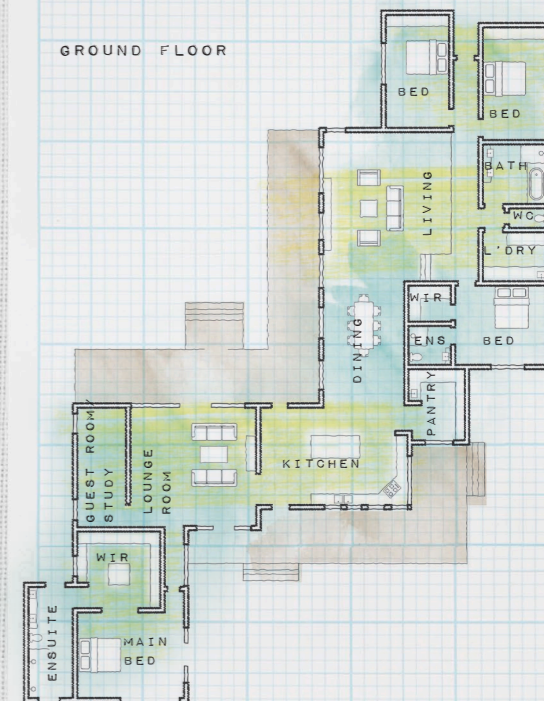
#### CHLOE'S ROOM

With an ensuite and grassy courtyard, this is the perfect getaway for daughter, Chloe. Interior designer Lauren chose a few bright and cheerful pieces to bring youthful colour to the space; a flamingo

lamp with patterned shade in Raoul Textiles fabric, a shell mirror, and a spotty cushion from Mrs Darcy (paired with a flamingo cushion picked up by Kirsten) all serve to temper the elegance of the space with a touch of humour.

## PLANS

### GROUND FLOOR



*"It's one of those houses that feels good. You walk in and it feels like the house is hugging you"*

*~ Lauren Pearse, interior designer*

## CONTACTS

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