

Party favourite

Room to socialise takes priority over top-floor views for this family of five

For people who were never going to build, Cathy and Mark have done a remarkable job with this grand new home, completed last year. Five years spent searching for the perfect house to buy proved fruitless, and then they found this 1215sq m site in Wavell Heights. The house on that block, a 1940s bungalow, was too difficult to renovate, so they asked architect Scott Peabody, who was working with Ellivo Architects at the time, to come up with a design for a new house that would reflect their love of family life.

"Our brief focused on the fact that we have three older teenagers, so we're virtually like a family of five adults, and we're hoping the kids will be living with us until they are 25," says Cathy. "We wanted the kitchen and indoor-outdoor living area to be the centre of the home because a lot of time as a family is spent there."

The family zone is on the ground level of what is essentially a three-level house, albeit with split levels between those levels. On the very bottom level is the garage, accessed from the side of the house, while the uppermost level has the main bedroom suite and Mark's home office.

The parents' suite on the east side of the house is connected, via an internal bridge, to the children's rooms on the west side. With its glass balustrading, the bridge provides transparency between the middle and upper floors. It's a vantage point from where you can see into many parts of the house.

From upstairs there is also a magnificent view of the city. Why then did Cathy and Mark not insist on having the kitchen and communal family zone, where they spend so much time, on this level to make the most of that panorama? It's a question they're asked regularly.



Cathy's response is: why would they put the kitchen up high when it would mean running up and down stairs from the outdoor entertainment area on ground level?

"It was important to have views," Cathy explains, "but not as important as getting the kitchen and living area right so we can all be together as a family. If we had the kitchen upstairs, we would have ended up putting a kitchenette downstairs."

When they put a couple of trestle tables end to end, Cathy and Mark can seat 30 people on the back terrace, which is only a few paces away from the kitchen. Also in close proximity are the media room, which also accommodates a pool table, and another living area with windows opening to the terrace. Under these windows on the terrace side are cushioned bench seats – an additional spot to relax.

"What we want is for everyone to feel connected to the party, whether they are outside or indoors," Mark says. "And if the kids are playing pool, we can still see them because that room is right beside the kitchen. We want them to interact with us, not be locked away where we can't see them."

For visitors who need a private retreat, however, there is a guest suite in a front corner on the ground level. Cathy and Mark had their parents in mind when Scott designed this space. The bedroom is large enough to accommodate a sitting area, and also has a bathroom and direct access to the garden.

With its private access, the guest suite may have been a better position for Mark's office, which he confesses is where he spends most



GATHER ROUND ... a ground-floor zone makes this home a sociable centre for a growing family. **PHOTOGRAPHS** - Christopher Frederick Jones



of his time when he is not travelling. "It's a bit unusual to have the office on the top level, but I don't have a lot of people coming to see me on business-related matters," says Mark, who adds that if needed, the office could be converted into another bedroom.

At the moment, however, Mark seems settled in his office with the inspirational view.

"Six months after the job has been completed, it's such a joy to come back to the house," says Scott Peabody, "to see that the spaces are being used exactly as the family had intended."

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