

Living a dream

Building this house was smooth sailing all the way, says **Ann Pilmer**.

WHEN a client knows exactly what they want in a house, the project can be a dream — or a nightmare.

If the designer doesn't measure up or the client is a poor communicator who is vague on detail, trouble will follow.

Luckily for Susan and Joseph Kolenda and architect Ray Demkiw, it was a meeting of fastidious minds when they worked together on the Kolendas' new Camberwell house. Susan, a textile and surface designer, had a file the size of a telephone book containing the looks and ideas she liked. Her husband visited the house daily during building, so he knew at a glance if something wasn't right.

Demkiw and project co-ordinator Cheryl Misson were meticulous about the detail, and all parties — who met through Joseph's brother, John — had weekly meetings to chart the course of work, so the union was a happy one.

The original house on the block was a 1930s clinker brick and home to the Kolendas for three years. As Jason, 8, and Dean, 4, grew, their parents considered renovating to get more room. But it would have needed a major renovation, says Susan. "We would have kept just the three front rooms and what would we have done with them?"

The Kolendas considered all the options, including building a "spec" house or moving. But they wanted to stay in the area

and decided to start from scratch, despite the limitations of a block that had the front of the house facing north and an area covenant specifying a tiled roof.

"We like contemporary architecture but it must have longevity, and we knew the rooms we wanted and how we lived. I collected as much information as I could on architectural and decor elements," says Susan. "So I was able to communicate with Ray and Cheryl in a visual format."

"The regular meetings were great. There wasn't an element of the house that wasn't drawn up. I got a mock-up and a CAD drawing. I didn't want any surprises. Ray and Cheryl were incredibly thorough."

The house has clean lines, is single-storey at the front and double at the back. The front facade of Ecoply and render hides the tiled roof with solar pool panels.

Clockwise from right: Huge panes of glass provide views everywhere; a timber deck with a shallow pool is linked to the back pool; a low passage window allows additional water views.

PICTURES: DAVID PAUL
The Kolenda family, from left, Dean, Jason, dad Joseph and mum Susan.

PICTURE: SIMON SCHLUTER

There's a large central courtyard to let in sunlight and huge panes of glass, many of them sliding doors, so there are views wherever you look, and the house can be opened up from front to back through sliding glass doors. "There's not a space we don't utilise or see," says Susan.

High-traffic areas have recycled messmate floors. Susan steered away from neutrals in favour of greys and blacks. But the pool, sitting near the back boundary to get maximum sun, has white tiles.

Beyond the huge pivot front door and split-face brick wall, which runs from outside into the hall, is a den with a TV overlooking a timber deck with a shallow pool linked to the back pool and separated from the back living room by a wall of glass. A low passage window provides additional water views.



A room with workstations for the family is designed like a studio, to encourage creative thinking. Walls are opaque glass for privacy and light.

The house has two kitchens, each with a sink and oven, one gas and one electric. The second oven is part of a large pantry area with open shelves and an under-bench freezer. "I do preparation out of sight and cook (in the front kitchen)," says Susan.

The main kitchen presents a neat, white face to the house and has a stainless-steel integrated bench with a sink. The island bench — like the dining table and barbecue — is on castors for easy movement.

Upstairs are four bedrooms with charcoal-coloured ribbed carpet and two bathrooms. The windows have aluminium canopies to frame views and prevent overlooking.

"We're looking forward to how we can use (the house) and how it will work," says Susan. "We want it to grow and evolve with the children."

ELEMENTS

Granite Concrete pavers are all very well but consumers are realising the advantages of natural materials. Simon Leslie, of Granite Works, East Hawthorn (9813 5999), says granite lasts, has colour-fastness, is easy to maintain and ages uniformly despite sun and moisture. It only needs sealing if it's used around a barbecue. He sources granite from all over the world and cuts it for just about anything — from cobbles 100 millimetres square, to slabs two metres by one metre, pots, water features, walls, benchtops and outdoor furniture. There are about

100 colours, ranging from dark blue to grey, white, red, yellow, green and purple, and about 20 different finishes and textures. No matter what the application, it's cut to order and ranges from about \$60 a square metre to about \$120.

Good ideas Benches and tables mounted on castors can be moved wherever they're needed. (Quality castors have a locking device so they don't slip around the room.) A sleek splashback doesn't need to be



punctuated with power points. Mount them out of sight under overhead cupboards for infrequently used appliances, so the cords will dangle only while the appliance is being used. If you've got the space — and the funds — build a second kitchen or scullery behind the main area. Include a second sink, stove and masses of open shelves.

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