



FAMILY FOCAL POINT

*CLIFTON HILL
COURTYARD HOUSE*

CLIFTON HILL, AUSTRALIA

STUDIO MKN +
ELIZA BLAIR ARCHITECTURE

Previous: Apart from a new picket fence, roof sheeting, veranda tiles, and a fresh coat of paint, the double-fronted facade of the original weatherboard worker's cottage remains the same.

Below: A window seat is a sunny spot to look into the courtyard.

Opposite: The courtyard includes a silver top ash timber deck, blond brick accents, and sleek black steel framing around windows and doors.



At the end of this home's long and narrow central hallway, the interior courtyard offers a breath of fresh air. Glazed on three sides with operable windows and doors that are framed in a crisp black steel, the insertion was designed to bring light into the depths of this south-facing home on a long, narrow plot.

The circa 1890s weatherboard worker's cottage was updated to accommodate a family of five, including twin toddlers and a teenager. Along with the addition of a flexible garden studio that could do everything from accommodate out-of-town guests, to serve as a teen cave, to act as a privacy wall, the owners requested a light-filled extension with an open-plan living area.

The interior courtyard, approximately 160-square-feet, is a focal point that visually connects the spaces that surround it. It is backed by a neighboring red-brick wall that warmly frames a deciduous tree that the family watches change colors through the seasons. On one side is a multipurpose room that can be used as an additional guest room. On another is the kitchen (windows into the courtyard allow parents to keep an eye on their toddlers while they prepare meals). On the far end is the living room, which offers views into and through the courtyard space. From the interior courtyard, you can look right out, beyond the open area of the living and dining rooms, to a bottlebrush tree in the backyard, which sits between the new, glass-and-brick extension and the black-clad garden studio addition adorned with metal mesh on which lush creepers will eventually grow. "The living room enjoys a dual aspect to two different landscaped spaces," says designer Meredith Nettleton of Studio MKN.

The home's interior, lined in ash, tile, and terrazzo, feels calm, cool, and cozy. Its blond brick—incorporated into window seats looking onto the courtyard and making up the rear facade—creates continuity between interior and exterior in harmony with its central courtyard. "The courtyard serves as a conduit for natural light and fresh air," says Nettleton, "effortlessly enhancing the flow of both throughout the entire floor plan."





Previous: The courtyard effectively establishes a buffer zone, delineating the more private areas toward the front of the house from the expansive and communal living spaces located toward the rear.

Opposite: From the backyard, you can see right through the living room into the interior courtyard.

