

# SMOOTH LANDING



TAKING ITS DESIGN CUES FROM PALM SPRINGS, THIS FAMILY'S COASTAL HOME IN SYDNEY HAS BEEN GIVEN A GLORIOUS NEW LIFE

*Story JACKIE BRYGEL Styling LISA HILTON Photography SIMON WHITBREAD*

**PAVING THE WAY** Homeowners Danica and Mark took their time getting to know their home on Sydney's beautiful northern beaches before embarking on a renovation, living in the abode for nearly a decade with their three sons, Angus, Toby, and Ed before going ahead. Yet the couple knew exactly what style their transformed home would take. "I always had my heart set on a home with a nod to Palm Springs style," explains Danica, enjoying the home's many sunny spots (above & opposite, with Lulu). With its distinctively modernist facade, liberal use of crazy paving-style stone, beautiful breezeway blocks (opposite) and a treasure trove of restored mid-century pieces inside, the home pays loving homage to the iconic design era. >





They met and fell in love at flying college almost 25 years ago, and have since transported travellers to all corners of the globe, but to commercial pilots Danica and Mark, the thrill of landing a plane in their hometown of Sydney is a joy that never wanes. For this is the city in which the parents of three have created a sunny sanctuary for their growing family – a stylish yet relaxed haven that provides an idyllic base from which to revel in the beachy outdoors. “It’s always been amazing to fly in past the Harbour Bridge and Opera House and know you’re home,” says Mark. Adds Danica: “And we feel especially fortunate to be here, now that we’re grounded by the pandemic.”

With its crazy paving-style stone fence and dazzling white rendered facade, the abode Danica and Mark share with their three sons Angus, 14, Toby, 12, and Ed, 10, could be perfectly at home in California’s modernism mecca, Palm Springs. Yet, nestled in a quiet enclave in Sydney’s picturesque northern beaches region, this is a home that truly celebrates the laidback Australian coastal lifestyle.

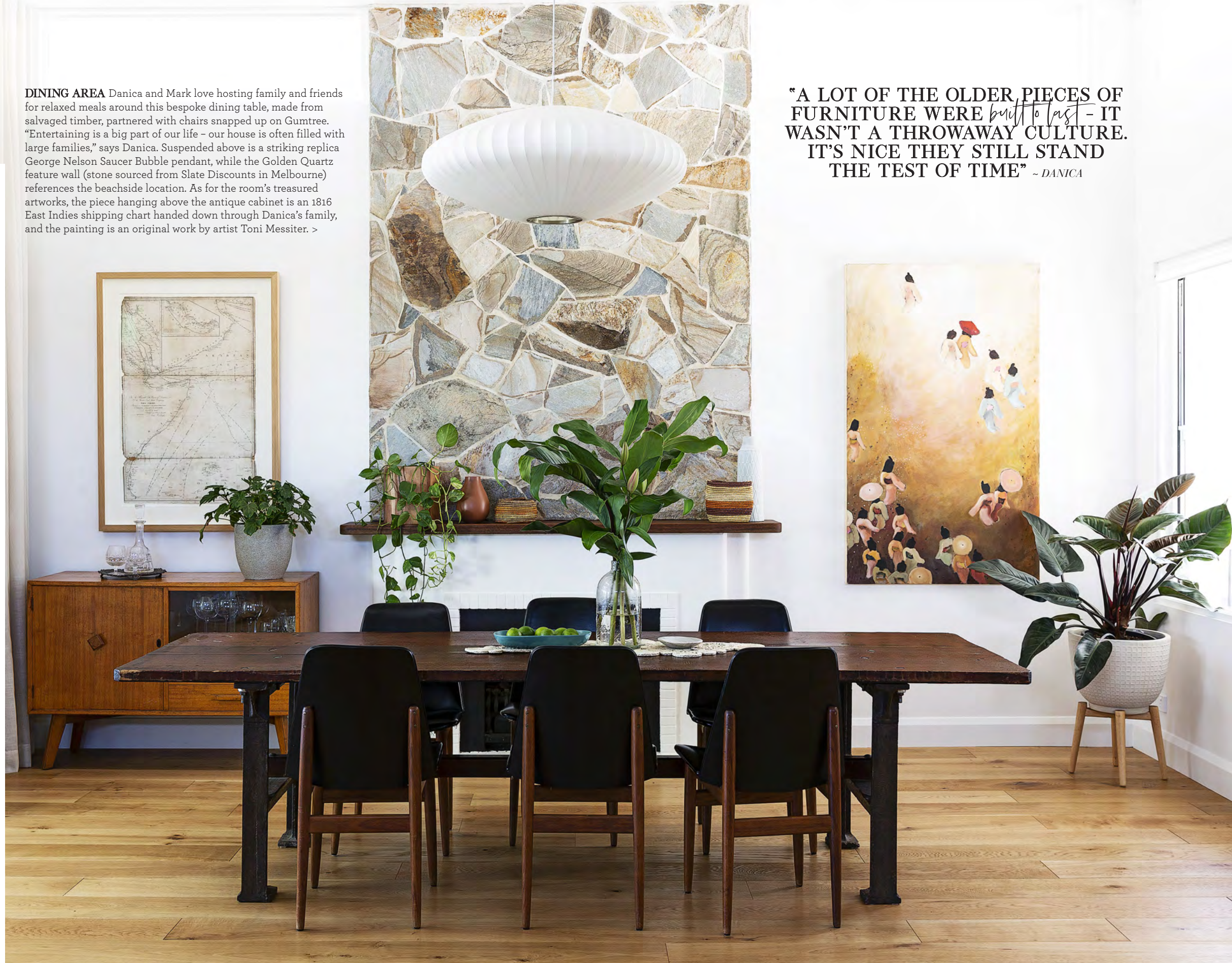
It’s little wonder the couple were instantly enamoured with the neighbourhood and the home’s close proximity to the beach – which is, “as the crow flies, about 200 metres”, says Mark – when they first inspected the property 13 years ago. Yet the house appeared vastly different to the light-filled delight it is today. “It was a rather dark and nondescript 1940s home,” says Mark. Danica, meanwhile, recalls being immediately won over. “Angus was six months old, and I was pregnant with Toby, so I was ready to take anything!” she exclaims.

Three years ago, the couple decided to undertake a major renovation. “The main motivation was that the internal living area was small and dysfunctional,” says Mark. “The house also only had two bedrooms, with the boys bunking in together.” The couple decided to extend out the back and up, with the upper level featuring four bedrooms and two bathrooms, and the ground level making room for a new kitchen, dining and lounge area. “And I really wanted to go with a mid-century aesthetic,” says Danica. “Having visited Palm Springs in 2013, I fell head over heels with the modernist era. I love the structural and practical simplicity of mid-century homes – the large windows, interesting shapes and lovely indoor-outdoor feel.”

To bring their vision to life, Danica and Mark turned to their longtime friend Anna Williams, who runs Your Beautiful Home in Sydney. “Danica and Mark wanted to work with the footprint of the old house as much as possible to keep costs reasonable – and were also conscious not to create a home that would be overbearing or dominant on the block,” says Anna, whose worked with the couple from initial planning all the way through to final decor finishes. “They were a joy to work with and we’re beyond thrilled with the end result.”

As are Danica and Mark. With a base palette of crisp white, earthy timber and organic stone, this is now an inviting home awash with a palpable sense of space, texture and sunlight – just perfect for sharing with others. “We have always wanted the house to feel warm and welcoming, and to fill it with family and friends,” says Danica. “We do pinch ourselves that this is where we live.”

**DINING AREA** Danica and Mark love hosting family and friends for relaxed meals around this bespoke dining table, made from salvaged timber, partnered with chairs snapped up on Gumtree. “Entertaining is a big part of our life – our house is often filled with large families,” says Danica. Suspended above is a striking replica George Nelson Saucer Bubble pendant, while the Golden Quartz feature wall (stone sourced from Slate Discounts in Melbourne) references the beachside location. As for the room’s treasured artworks, the piece hanging above the antique cabinet is an 1816 East Indies shipping chart handed down through Danica’s family, and the painting is an original work by artist Toni Messiter. >



“A LOT OF THE OLDER PIECES OF FURNITURE WERE *built to last* - IT WASN'T A THROWAWAY CULTURE. IT'S NICE THEY STILL STAND THE TEST OF TIME” ~ DANICA



**LIVING ROOM** Bathed in daylight and presenting a gloriously verdant outlook, it's no surprise the new sunken living zone is one of the family's favourite places to relax. "Natural light is very important, and this is now such a bright house with so many sunny spots," says a delighted Danica. The timber coffee table originally belonged to Danica's parents, while the restored FLER green armchair was found at vintage furniture store Tangerine & Teal. Adorning the timber cabinet - another fabulous Gumtree discovery - are an eye-catching green vase from Armchair Collective and a gorgeous basket Danica and Mark bought during a visit to Arnhem Land.



**KITCHEN** As the epicentre of the home, the carefully designed kitchen is a joy to work in for the couple, both of whom are keen cooks. The domain is also perfectly reflective of the couple's warm and welcoming design style. "We really wanted the entire home to be neutral but have a warmth," says Danica. "That's why we chose to incorporate a lot of timber. That was definitely Anna's influence." While the breakfast bar has been topped in Smartstone Nieve White, the front has been clad in blackbutt timber. Crisp overhead cupboards in Dulux two-pack in Lexicon Quarter contrast a treat with under-bench two-pack cabinetry in Taubmans' Knight Grey. The black 'Polk46' pendant lights were sourced from Mica Lighting. >

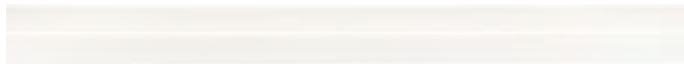




“A happy surprise WAS THE OUTLOOK FROM OUR BEDROOM THAT WE GAINED DURING THE RENO. WE DIDN'T REALISE HOW lovely IT WOULD BE” ~ DANICA

**BATHROOM** Form meets complete practicality in the family bathroom (top left) that showcases a Caroma 'Aura' freestanding bath and a bespoke blackbutt vanity topped with hardy Smartstone Nieve White. The floor and wall tiles were found at Tiles by Kate. “The sandy tiles are so forgiving and the large wall tiles have minimal grout to clean – plus, the sink is under-mounted so it's super-easy to clean,” says Danica.

**BEDROOM NOOK** In an inviting and cosy corner of Danica and Mark's main bedroom, a striking artwork by indigenous artist Edna Dale – a Ngarinyin woman and chairperson of the Imintji (which means 'the place to sit down' in Ngarinyin language) Community in the Kimberley region of Western Australia – has found a natural home. The inviting Tangerine & Teal mid-century armchair awaits at reading time.



#### FLOOR PLAN



**MAIN BEDROOM** Relaxation beckons in Danica and Mark's bedroom with sumptuous layers of texture, pattern and soft linens rendering the couple's sleep zone a true sanctuary. The custom-made bedhead in Warwick 'Husk' fabric in Steel marries beautifully with a French linen 'Mondo' striped quilt cover from L&M Home and cushions from Walter G. A framed antique map of Dublin above the bed completes the room. >



WE LOVE...  
*glamour touch*

There's nothing quite as luxurious as a floor-to-ceiling curtain to step up the opulence in a sleep zone. Here, a sheer 'Hush II' fabric in Linen from Marlow & Finch offers both five-star appeal and privacy. For a range of custom-made curtain options visit [wynstan.com.au](http://wynstan.com.au). >



**DECK AREA** Beautiful all year round, this home truly comes into its own in summer. Conveniently located off the dining domain, the sunny spotted-gum deck – furnished with a table from Temple & Webster and chairs from Osmen Outdoor Furniture – perfectly fulfills the couple’s brief for indoor-outdoor living. “We’re very much an outdoor-loving family,” says Danica. “We feel very fortunate to be here.” As for the home’s gloriously lush garden, “it’s very much Mark’s domain,” says Danica.

**SOURCE BOOK**

**PLANNING, INTERIOR DESIGN & PROJECT MANAGEMENT**  
*Your Beautiful Home,*  
[yourbeautifulhome.com.au](http://yourbeautifulhome.com.au).

**BUILDER (ARRANGED THROUGH YOUR BEAUTIFUL HOME)**  
*Signature Building,*  
[signaturebuilding.com.au](http://signaturebuilding.com.au).

**LANDSCAPING**  
*Space Landscape Designs,*  
[spacedesigns.com.au](http://spacedesigns.com.au).



**EASY LIVING**

**INSIDE STORY**  
**DANICA AND MARK'S HOME**

**WHO LIVES HERE?**

*Danica and Mark, commercial pilots who also run water efficiency irrigation business Landscape Technologies; their sons Angus, 14, Toby, 12, and Ed, 10; and Lulu the kelpie.*

**BEST PIECE OF RENOVATION ADVICE?**

*Mark: "It would have to be Anna's advice to shoot for what you want and work backwards from there if need be."*

**FAVOURITE ROOM IN THE HOUSE?**

*Danica: "I love waking up in our bedroom and looking out at the treetops. The sunken lounge has to get a mention, too! It's always sunny with those beautiful big windows and is such a lovely place to be."*

**FAVOURITE PIECE OF FURNITURE?**

*"I'd have to say my mid-century Fleur armchairs from local restorer Tangerine & Teal."*

ACTUAL PAINT COLOURS MAY VARY ON APPLICATION

1. A seascape bought in Bali hangs above the King Living 'Jasper' modular sofa in the living room.
2. A cherished artwork by Edna Dale.
3. The Toni Messiter artwork, bought by Danica for Mark's 30th birthday, in the dining room.
4. A stone feature wall in the dining area.
5. A round mirror from Temple & Webster in the downstairs bathroom.
7. Distinctive breeze blocks were used for the feature pool wall.
6. Mark and Danica with sons (from left) Toby, Mark and Ed plus kelpie Lulu.