

Bent Cottage, BENT Architecture  
Photos: Brendan Finn

# WEATHERBOARDS AND PITCHED ROOFS ARE THE FAMILIAR, THE EVERYDAY,

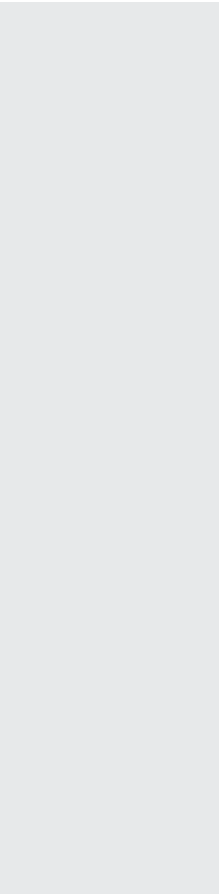
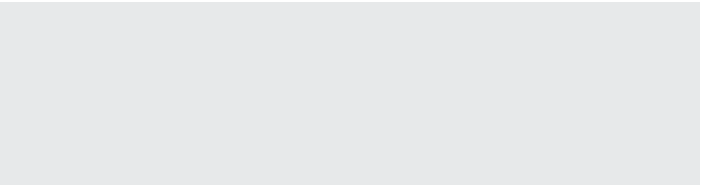


...in the inner suburban context of places such as Hawthorn in Melbourne's east. An existing single-fronted weatherboard cottage on a reasonable amount of land has here been transformed into a compact four-bedroom family home with spatially thoughtful living spaces. All-important outdoor space has been maintained, which is a rarity—all too often extensions eat up the outdoors for bigger, but inferior, indoor living areas. This failing is due to their lack of amenity—a living room is only as good as the space it looks out to.



“ADDITIONS ARE CLAD IN WHITE WEATHERBOARDS AND CORRUGATED SHEET ROOFING, AS THE ORIGINAL HOUSE IS METAPHORICALLY STRETCHED TO ENVELOP NEW SPACE.”  
—PAUL PORJAZOSKI & MERRAN PORJAZOSKI

While extensions are often designed to open up living spaces to the rear garden, this house utilises the strip of land down the side to open the lounge onto both the front and backyards, making a bridge through to the outdoors and expanding the size of the interior living spaces and seemingly the site itself. The resulting lounge space is akin to a side verandah—with glazed bi-fold doors open it is hard to determine whether you are inside or out. The location of the living space on the side ensures that north light comes directly in, which would not have occurred if the architect had taken the standard ‘open-up-to-the-back’ approach.



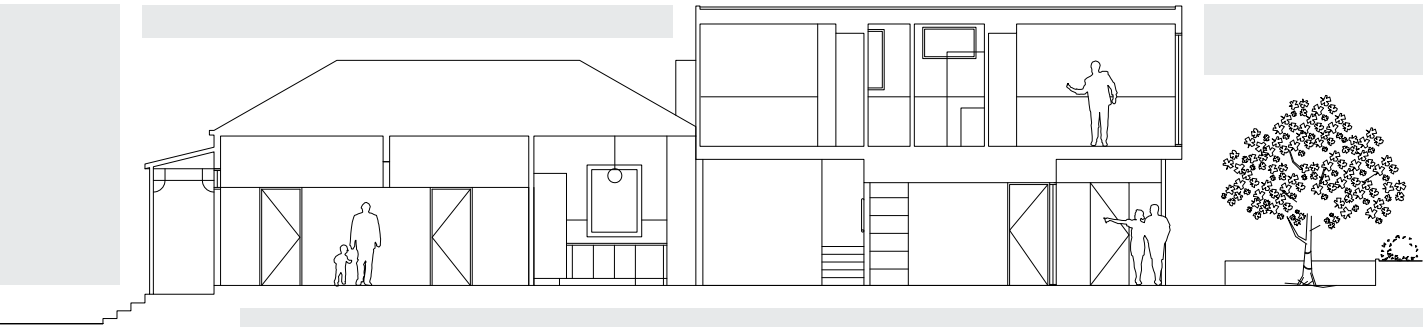
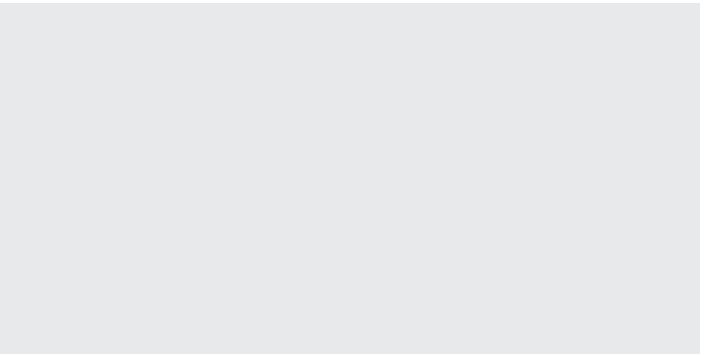
THE LIVING SPACE IS IMPORTANTLY OPEN IN TWO DIRECTIONS.



The living space is semi-open plan—the kitchen nestles within the existing house, the dining area sits on the threshold between old and new. Here, the timber floors of the old house meet the distinct boards of the new floor, the line between them drawn with a steel plate on both floor and ceiling. This key living space not only derives from the richness of the old and the more angular geometry of the new, but constantly reveals the outside. There always seem to be multiple outlooks at any time, as well as multiple cross-ventilation paths.



Bathrooms, laundries, storage and sheds are often compressed in new houses, but are a good size here. A service wing runs along the rear eastern edge to contain all these functions, along with an efficient staircase to the upstairs. Two new bedrooms upstairs share a bathroom, rather than privileging one with an ensuite, ensuring maximum flexibility in future use. The two bedrooms downstairs fall within the existing house, and also offer flexibility—particularly the front room, which could be used as a home office, adjacent to the original front door.



Entry to the house is appropriately informal—either via the original front door, or along the driveway to the first deck, and directly into the living space. The house successfully knits the site together through the transparency of the living space, making it seem bigger than it really is. From the rear garden the form of the house is evident, its steeply pitched roof ramping up to a high point at the southern tip, creating space underneath. Three windows of different sizes are punched into the new elevated weatherboards of the upper bedroom, shifting the sense of scale of this special remaking of the ordinary.

