

sea change

Peta and Greg escape the weekday world in a revived beachside cottage in Sydney that brims with breezy style

STORY & STYLING KAREN COTTON PHOTOGRAPHY SIMON KENNY



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In just three months, Peta and Greg's property on Sydney's northern beaches was transformed into a weekend sanctuary to share with friends and family, including niece Josie, pictured with Peta (top right). On the verandah (opposite), a timber table with striped bench seats, cane armchair and lantern, all from Beachwood, evoke a relaxed mood to suit the waterfront location. The nautical theme resonates through the whole house, with beachy vignettes, sea-green cabinetry (top right) and an oak coffee table (above right) – also all Beachwood – as well as 'Hem Stitch' bedding (above left) by Linen & Moore. The 'LOVE' poster was from an interiors trade fair – find similar designs on Etsy. >

LIVING ROOM Peta and interior designer Belinda Dowsett visited northern beaches store Beachwood to source chic neutral furniture and accessories. Their finds include the whitewashed coffee table, linen sofa, striped lounge chair, jute rug, porthole-style mirror and seafarer's lantern. The lounge room opens up to a combined study and sunroom, where a white armchair from Naturally Cane is dressed in cobalt cushions. Original timber panelling on the walls was refreshed in Dulux Hog Bristle 10 per cent.



"The moment we walk through the door here, we feel relaxed" - Peta



BAY WINDOW (above) Overlooking the water, the bay window seat is a prized seating spot for guests, such as Peta's six-year-old niece Meghann. The window frames are painted in Dulux Natural White.

DOWNSTAIRS LIVING ROOM (above right) With cushy beanbag chairs from Tokens of Living and a quirky lamp from Beachwood, the downstairs living space was turned into a comfy teenagers' retreat. The original exposed sandstone bricks were retained for their old-world appeal, and sit well with the coastal location. This look can be achieved on any wall with sandstone cladding – visit Bellstone or Sandstone Cladding for more information. The noughts and crosses set is from Beachwood and the stone tray is from Rust.



WHEN THEIR DREAM holiday home finally came on the market after five years of scouring Sydney's northern beaches, Peta and her husband Greg knew they had to act quickly, despite less than ideal timing. "The day we took possession was the day we were going on a family holiday for six weeks!" recalls Peta.

Luckily Peta had expert assistance on hand in the shape of trusted friend, interior designer Belinda Dowsett. The pair had met several years earlier when cheering on their boys at mini rugby, and had worked together on the interiors for the family's previous home. So Peta's initial absence from the project was never going to be a problem. "Belinda effortlessly picked up on what we wanted to achieve," she explains.

The 1920s weatherboard and sandstone double-storey cottage had plenty of charm, but it was rundown and in need of a facelift. Peta's brief was simple: she wanted to preserve the home's relaxed, beachy feel while reviving and adapting each space to suit her children Gabrielle, 20, Jarryd, 16, and Samuel, 13. The house also had to be easy to live in – nothing too fussy, yet still stylish, functional and fresh.

First on the re-tweaking list was the old kitchen, which was pulled out and replaced with a new one. Original dark timber panelling, which had been water damaged over the years, was repaired and repainted a very light Dulux taupe, as was the interior throughout. An ancient electrical system was replaced, windows were repaired and old linoleum removed to expose floorboards that were then sanded and polished. >



"We **transformed** the unused entrance next to the kitchen into a dining room" - Belinda, designer



< Upstairs, a spare bedroom was transformed into a study and the largest bedroom became a kids' bunk room; with room for nine, it's ideal for sleepovers. "The layout means the family is always together and interacting," explains Peta. Downstairs, she and Belinda created a casual lounge for teenagers that speaks of lazy days.

Most of the furniture – a mix of handmade timber tables, cane chairs and cosy linen-covered lounges with mountains of nautical stripe scatter cushions – was bought from local beachside shops. "I always make a point of buying items if they make me smile, because invariably they will continue to do so as they brighten up your home," says Peta. Beautiful collections of seashells and old glass bottles filled with fresh flowers decorate every corner, while inviting lamps cast a warm glow as the sun goes down.

With the help of builder Ryan Stidwill, a team of trusted tradesmen and Belinda's expert eye, the home transformation was completed in a speedy three months, ready to enjoy in time for the school holidays. And while for now, the cottage serves as a welcoming retreat, its combination of beachside locale and laidback style may see it evolve from holiday haven to everyday abode when the couple retire, says Peta. "We hope the home will continue to provide beautiful memories for all those near and dear to us for many years to come."

DINING ROOM (above left & opposite) The home's original entrance was converted into a small, casual dining area. The rustic table from Tokens of Living, surrounded by crossback chairs from Beachwood, is perfect for entertaining guests of all ages. A vintage jug – an op-shop find – adds a vibrant splash of blue. "My tip is to fill your home with colours and pieces you love, regardless of their value," says Peta, with Josie (opposite).

KITCHEN (above) Designed to a tight budget, the kitchen is petite and practical. Laminex Polar White laminate was chosen for the joinery and Caesarstone in Snow for the benchtop. A touch of colour comes courtesy of the splashback; Academy Tiles is a good source for similar tiles. The island bench actually sits on wheels, offering flexibility and a hint of Hamptons style. >

we love
Easy coastal style

Blue hues and natural textures give this home a fresh and beachy vibe. Here, an artwork from Beachwood sets the scene and an ivory palette is punctuated by navy accents. Visit Love Loans + Linen (loveloansandlinen.com.au) or Rustic Coast (rusticcoast.com.au) for inspiration and stylish buys.



VERANDAH (above right) The views to the Pacific Ocean provided all the inspiration Peta (at right, with friend and designer Belinda Dowsett) needed when deciding on the decorating direction of her family's sandstone cottage. The seaside setting is reflected in the displays of shells and curios in the lounge (right & below). Find rope-wrapped glass bottles at Two Tiny Feathers on Etsy. On the front porch, Adirondack and rattan chairs under a retractable awning offer another spot to sit and enjoy the sun (left). >





MASTER BEDROOM Peta and Greg's cool and calm bedroom is embellished with a Linen & Moore 'Boston' quilt and 'Bergomo' paisley throw. The bedside table and lamp, both Beachwood, tie in with the crisp white linen.



INSIDE STORY

Who stays here?
 Peta, a psychologist, her husband Greg, a business executive, their children Gabrielle, 20, Jarryd, 16, and Samuel, 13, and visiting nieces Meghann, six, and Josie, three.

What is your favourite piece of furniture in the house?
 Peta: "I love the bunk beds from Beachwood – you can still smell the pine even though they're a year old. They also allow us to have lots of family and friends to stay!"

Your best design tip?
 "Get an expert on the job, preferably someone you know and trust. We couldn't have achieved the result we have without Belinda's vision and footwork."

Anything you would change or do differently next time around?
 "Not really – we're so happy here. If anything, just add a few more bedrooms so the kids don't have to share."



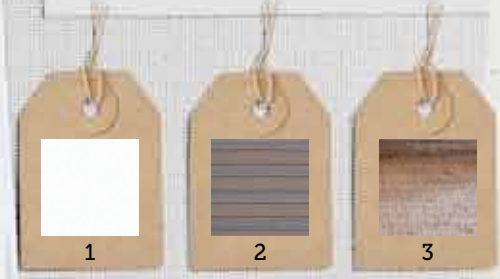
The kids' bunk room blends smart storage with nautical style.

CONTACTS

Interior designer
 Belinda Dowsett of BM Interiors, 0400 889 536, bminteriors.com.au.
Builder
 Ryan Stidwill of RW Stidwill Constructions, 0413 365 410, rwstidwill.com.au.

THE DETAILS

- 1 *Kitchen cabinetry*
 Laminate in Polar White, from \$86/sqm, Laminex.
 - 2 *Living room chair fabric*
 'Hampshire Stripe' linen, from \$100/m, Westbury Textiles.
 - 3 *Living room rug*
 Jute rug, \$395/200mm x 250mm, Beachwood.
- Stockists, page 214



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