

# INNOVATION

By JENNY BROWN



Sung Dobson House by Sam Crawford Architects has been redesigned to control heat without the need for blinds or airconditioning.

## Deck canopy creates solar flair

She was a gracious old girl in her Queen Anne-Federation brick semblance. “Three bedrooms with beautiful vaulted ceilings and period detailing,” says architect Sam Crawford.

But, as they did in the 1970s, the Cremorne house had spawned “badly lit and badly ventilated” rear additions courtesy, he thinks, of former residents “designing their own extensions and getting a builder in”.

Facing due west, the resulting bathroom, kitchen and living room baked in summer. Since Crawford has overseen replacement additions in the form of a full-width living-dining and kitchen extension — off which projects the battened canopy of a three-metre-deep deck that is all about “filtering sunlight, taking the heat out of it, avoiding the use of blinds”, and delightfully striating daylight as it moves into the house through the hours — conditions have changed.



BRETT BOARDMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Given the hothouse conditions of the summer just past, and the challenge he set of not having to incorporate airconditioning, “the contemporary architecture that presents as a simple cubic form” performed perfectly.

The heavily insulated living areas maintained ambient temperatures. “After that run of 40-degree days, I

got emails from the owners saying it worked really well,” he says.

While the new silvertop ash component is the casual converse of the period formality of the brick house, the hallway that steps through a portal between a bathroom and laundry, down a deep cascade of new steps, then meets a room with a four-metre-high ceiling that re-establishes a relationship of scale.

“It’s a simple space, a direct space,” says the architect. “You understand it quickly.” Because it is west, however, “we couldn’t put in clerestory windows, so we intentionally went for a high ceiling in that one volume that then moves into an enclosed screened ‘underneath’ deck.”

The deck crosses two-thirds of the rear facade. What takes over on the north-west corner is a sequence of windows with cedar screens that can be opened to whatever degree is appropriate to the season.

The screen theme is ever-present in the new part: it appears outside the low slot windows of the kitchen and the bathroom (mainly for privacy) as thin battening fixed out half a metre beyond the glass. Shutters are a traditional remedy for harsh tropical sunlight “and wooden screening,” Crawford explains, “was used a lot in early Queensland buildings.”

“What we’ve done here is to reflect that thinking.”

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