



01 A steel window insertion lends more floor space to the new kitchen, where commercial elements are offset with residential.

STORYTELLER

• MA ARCHITECTS •

A converted Victorian pub with a long and colourful history is respectfully reimagined for a family of four.

Words by Anna McCoee
Photography by Derek Swalwell



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02 Inspired by traditional butcher's blocks, the island comprises a weighty marble slab on an industrial steel frame.

03 The built-in bench serves as a warm congregation point for the family to huddle around. Artwork: client.



There was a murder in this house. Back when it was a pub, the publican's wife was found dead in the bathtub. Years later, students packed in – one even setting up in the cellar. It was divided into two offices for a while, stately bedrooms making way for lowered ceilings and airconditioning units. And throughout the building's 160-year history, the surrounding Melbourne suburb of Carlton has transitioned from working-class slum to melting pot, to gentrified university town. MA Architects' clients – a couple with two children – enjoy their home for everything it is and has been. But it's hard to function as a family under the cover of darkness.

The home, on a tight, triangular block with limited outdoor space, fronts directly onto the street. Architect Karen Alcock and her clients embraced Carlton as the home's front yard and, much to the clients' amusement, they are not alone in this approach. On sunny afternoons, twenty-something-year-olds often congregate on the grassy verge in the middle of the street to drink beer.

"[The clients'] attitude was, 'We live in this great location, let's be part of what's outside our front door.'"


For Karen, that meant creating a connection with the street. A new rooftop deck was installed in prime position for people-watching. Meanwhile, one of the seven original bedrooms was converted into the main ensuite upstairs. While all the other rooms in this wing feature shutters on the windows, the ensuite employs

half-shutters to allow permanent views of the street trees.

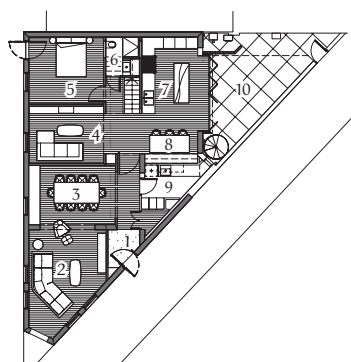
Steel-framed screens were manufactured to showcase the 3.3-metre ceilings while barricading the shower and toilet, and the choice of washstands and subway tiles complements the home's age. A similar approach was used in the family bathroom but a pop of yellow introduces playfulness.

The kitchen is key to the home's reawakening. Punched openings connect the space to a new family room and sitting area, while still recalling the Victorian building's original scale. Karen added extra floor area with a boxed-out steel window insertion. This gesture also opens the kitchen to the courtyard – "but in a classic way," she says.

Commercial details befitting an old pub are balanced with residential elements – the stylized edge profile to the stainless steel shelves, for instance, introduces refinement to the industrial material. Grooved wall panelling conceals storage and balances the Victorian-era detailing of the original parts of the home, while the marble-topped island nods to the traditional butcher's block.

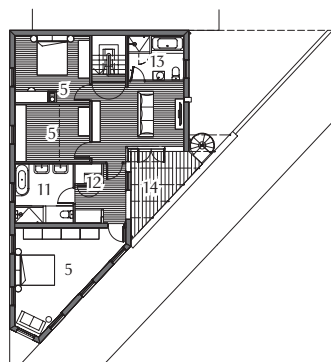
The past is important but so is future nostalgia. Karen was careful to select "living finishes" such as brass, "to record the history of the kitchen as these materials acquire patina." In the end, the design goes beyond form and function. "It's about telling the story of a home." 

04 Affordable subway tiles are used to counter the cost and inherent luxury of marble.



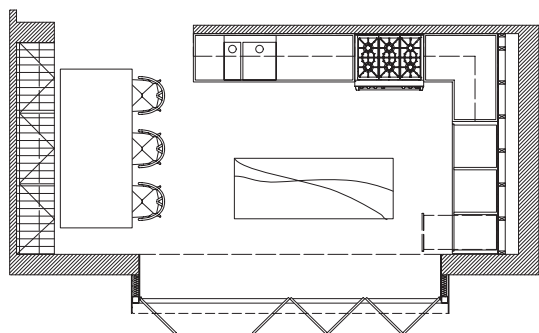
Ground floor 1:400

0 3 m

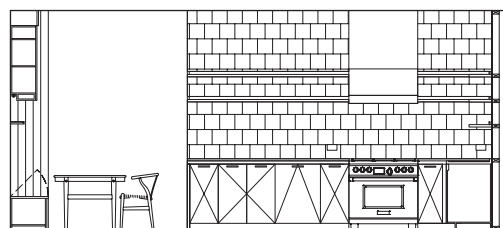


First floor 1:400

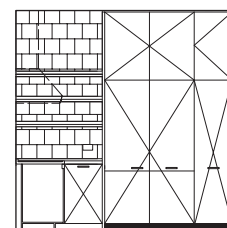
- 1 Entry
- 2 Lounge
- 3 Dining
- 4 Sitting
- 5 Bedroom
- 6 Powder room
- 7 Kitchen
- 8 Meals
- 9 Laundry
- 10 Courtyard
- 11 Ensuite
- 12 Study
- 13 Bathroom
- 14 Deck



Kitchen plan 1:100



Kitchen elevations 1:100



0 3 m

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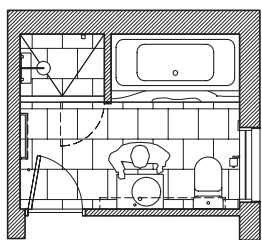


05 The family bathroom is accessed via a concealed door that appears as a continuation of the wall panelling.

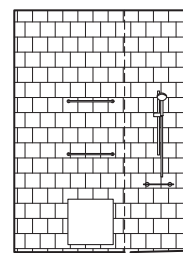
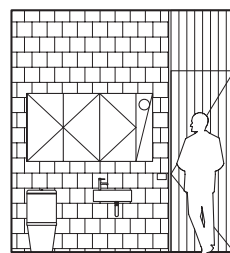
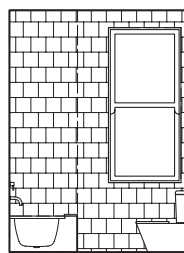
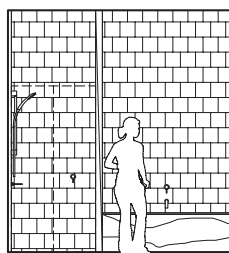
06 The family bathroom shares a similar palette to the ensuite but with a pop of yellow.

07 Elba floor tiles in the ensuite were chosen for their opulence and ability to age well in wet areas.

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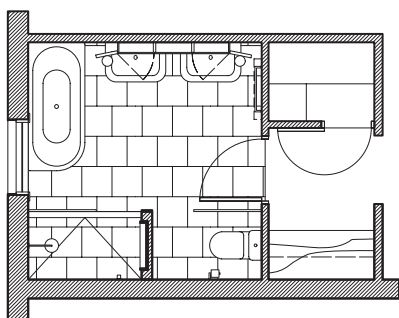


Bathroom plan 1:100

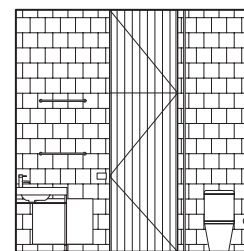
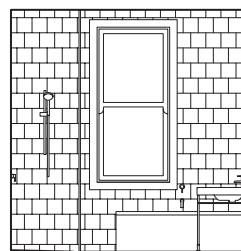
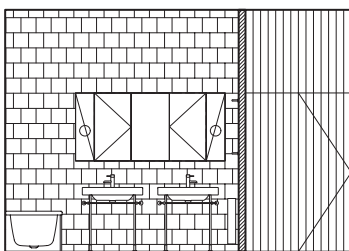


Bathroom elevations 1:100

0 3 m



Ensuite plan 1:100



Ensuite elevations 1:100



08 High-end washstands allow for less expensive materials such as the subway tiles.



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Practice profile

A boutique practice focused on creating considered contemporary architecture, interiors and urban design.

Project team

Karen Alcock

Builder

M&H Broadbent Builders

Consultants

Engineer: BCM Structural Engineers

Joinery: Phelan Interiors

Building Surveyors: Wilsmore Nelson Group

Kitchen products

Internal walls: Subway tiles from Schots

Flooring: Solid strip flooring in Roasted Peat

Joinery: Custom-made stainless steel benchtop with wet edge; Arebescato marble island bench from Adriatic Stone; Watty half-strength 'Porcelain' 2-pac paint finish; custom-made shelves in limed oak veneer and stainless steel

Lighting: iGuzzini spotlights

Sinks and tapware: Astra Walker Icon mixer; custom-made stainless steel sink

Appliances: Wolf oven and rangehood; Miele dishwasher; Liebherr fully integrated fridge

Furniture: Muuto Split table; Thonet No. 18 dining chairs

Bathroom products

Internal walls: Subway tiles from Schots; Bisazza mosaics (ensuite)

Flooring: Elba tiles from Adriatic Stone

Joinery: Custom-made mirror cabinets

Tapware and fittings: Astra Walker Icon tapware; Hansgrohe showers

Sanitaryware: Duravit Happy D basin with stand, and Kaldewei Centro Duo 1 bath (ensuite); Duravit Scola basin; and Bette Form bath (bathroom)