



DESIGNED AND BUILT FOR ALL

STORY AND IMAGES MARILYN COLLINS



Three generations of one family prove that living together under the one roof is achievable and successful.

Family had always been the ultimate number one in Denise Sinclair's life; however, after the passing of her husband Tony, it became even more important. So after twelve years of living on the waterfront foreshore of Lake Macquarie at Kilaben Bay, near Toronto, Denise decided to opt for a tree and lifestyle change.

The family cruiser had sat idle on the marina, as her two sons Warwick and Matthew were rather keen to develop an enterprising agriculture experiment and "get their hands dirty" after working in the IT field all the week. So Denise reevaluated her lifestyle and took brave steps to start a new chapter in her life.

In December 2005, after investigating many of the Hunter Region's most picturesque rural settings, she decided that a Rothbury 25-acre property was perfectly located for her Sydney-based son, Matthew, and his wife Jennifer to travel up weekends and close enough for Newcastle-based son, Warwick and his wife Lisa and one child at that time. These

days the family has grown as each has had a son and daughter apiece.

"The acquired property was a going-concern farm stay with two cottages at the top end of the property, aptly named 'Top Paddock' and was close to the Lovedale vineyards and its attractions," said Denise. "Our initial plan was that each son had a house and I would build a small cottage for my home further down the block."

After taking into consideration the cost factors of renovating and extending the older-style cottages to suit their growing families and then building a new one especially for Denise, they decided it would be more practical and viable to build a completely new residence to accommodate all three families under the one roof.

Denise Sinclair approached national award-winning builders Stibbard Homes of Singleton to design and construct a country residence which would adequately accommodate and provide privacy for herself and the two young families. ►



The property was a haven for wildlife, so an environmentalist had to camp out for three days to do a study of the prolific native fauna and flora, with tawny frogmouth species, micro bats and upwards of one hundred resident kangaroos, before the building was approved.

After months of poring over home design books Denise, Lisa, Jennifer, Warwick and Matthew came up with a floor plan and presented the concept to Stibbard Homes. The end result is a 650 square house.

Under the cover of a drive-through portico, you step through double Victoria Ash custom-made front door into an open living space. To the far right is a staircase which leads to Denise's private apartment-style living space upstairs. The concept was a large central living area with high raked ceilings combining a large lounge space and dining area and kitchen.

The communal kitchen is the meeting place for everyone – it's as a kitchen should be – warm and welcoming – an environment that enhances a home and makes cooking and preparing food a joy.

The owners, being an extended family who constantly have visitors staying over, had to be able to have room to cope with the movements of each person at busy times of the day, especially when Chef Warwick was in command of cooking his speciality big-pan dishes. ►





Osborne's Kitchen of Rutherford created the joinery for the kitchen and bathrooms. In the centre of the massive jet-black granite island benchtop is a series of hotplates and cooking tops so the chef can actually face the guests and family whilst cooking.

On the wall behind are illuminated white laminated glass doors on hinges which pull upwards to reveal shelving and counter space, as well as ample storage drawers and allocated space for a twin fridge.

Behind the kitchen is a large butler's kitchen with pantry shelving, cupboards, sink and washing-up area complete with dishwasher and glass dishwasher (pictured bottom left). The highlight is a massive, shelved walk-in cool room housing all

the fresh produce imaginable. The next room is the laundry, opening onto the side grassed lawn area.

The main living space is warmed by a Chiminees Philippe double-sided glass-door wood fireplace, which is also accessible from the external courtyard.

Attached to either side of this central hub are two identical family wings, both of which have three bedrooms, two bathrooms and a study, forming a U-shape with a courtyard area in the centre where the children can play supervised through the living space's floor-to-ceiling windows.

Upstairs, Denise has her private space – the landing accommodates a study area and a void used as a shelved library, which overlooks the downstairs living space. ►



There is a spacious en-suite bathroom opening onto a master bedroom with ample storage and wardrobe space in a dressing room.

The lounge area has a hidden surprise – behind bi-fold doors is a kitchenette – where Denise can make herself a cuppa and toast etc. with a sink, bar fridge and cupboard storage space.

The living room opens out onto an open verandah which provides a sitting area if required.

Throughout the home the colour scheme is neutral and of similar style – except for a different coloured feature tile in each of the three bathrooms – a choice by the occupier.

Before building was under way (four years ago) the family had commenced with project “Tiliaris” – creating an orchard, regarded as the Hunter’s first plantation of 250 trees of Australian Native finger limes, which are considered to be gourmet delicacies in upmarket restaurants.

The plants are well suited to the area’s frost-free cool winter climate and by the end of this year the family hope to be certified as 100% conversion organic and look forward to a bountiful harvest next March.

Finger limes are an amazing fruit package that resembles caviar in shape and size, but with a burst of zesty, tangy lime flavour. Finger limes make a great addition to seafood, work brilliantly as garnish, and also work well as jams and chutneys. The skin even serves as a spice when dried and ground up. Finger limes are one of a variety of Australian Bush Foods (such as riberies, and muntries) gaining popularity in restaurants in Australia and overseas. ►






This has been an all-hands-on project for the family, especially at weekends.

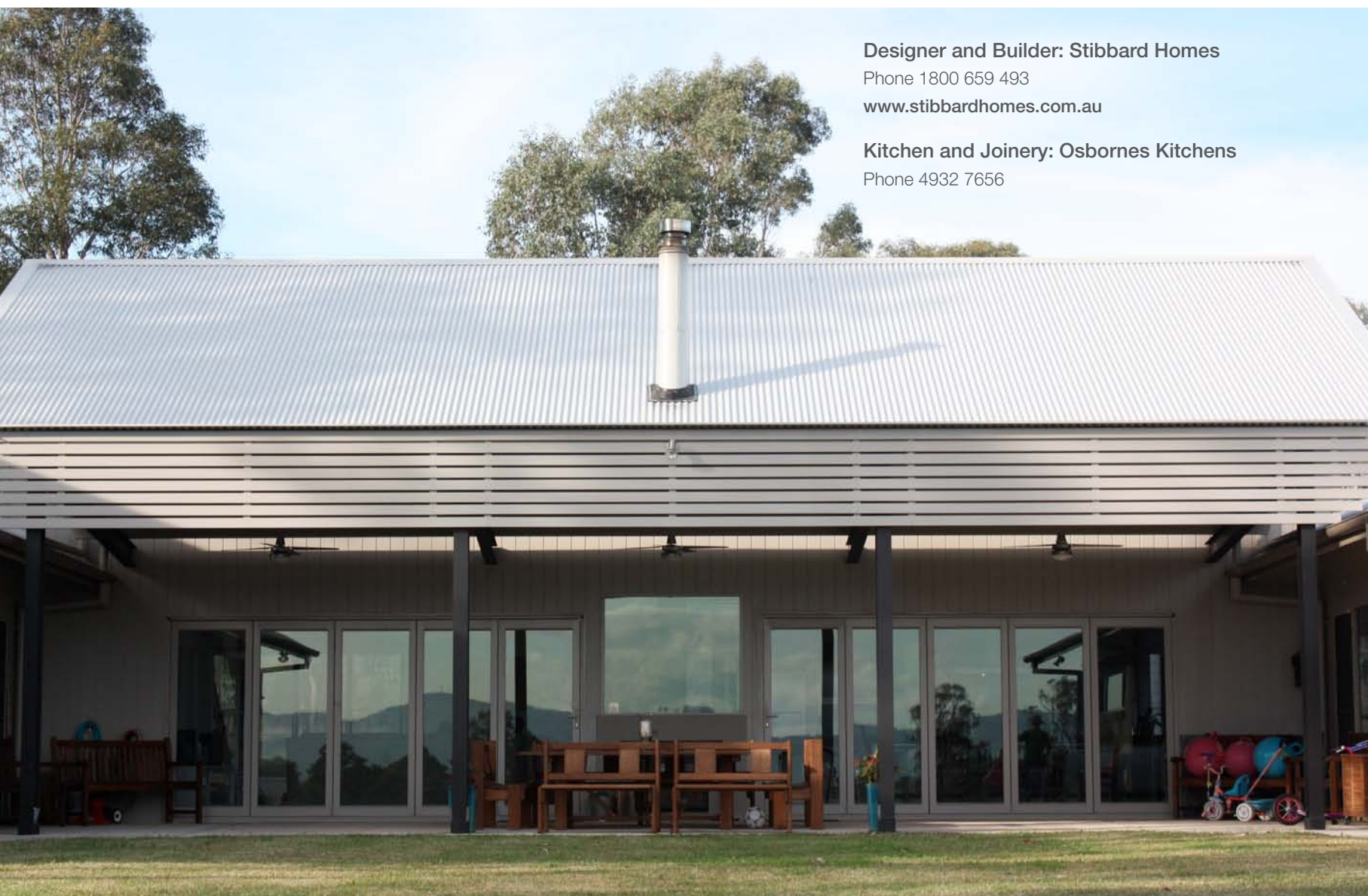
The property is now a full-time home to Denise, son Warwick, his wife Lisa and two children, whilst Matthew, Jennifer and their two visit from Sydney at weekends.

"We have become accustomed to cooking up a meal for at least fifteen people," says Lisa. "There is always a visitor or guest staying over with us and extra children in tow – we all work together well and respect each other's privacy when required."

Denise says her good relationship with her two daughters-in-law is regarded by many as being unusual, however, for them it works.

Perhaps the only sticking point is what style of artworks are to be chosen and hung in the communal living area. Now that's a subject of family debate! 

Pictured Left: Flynn, Ruby and Myfanwy Sinclair.



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