

# Masterful makeover

Swell Homes applies its skills in converting a 70's house to a Cottesloe landmark.

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Swell Homes was contacted by interior and landscape designer Liz Prater to transform her 1970's duplex house into a modern home that would fit in better within her Cottesloe neighbourhood. Liz's own flair for design, coupled with Swell's ability to tackle complex extension and renovation work, has resulted in what can only be described as "a modern masterpiece from a nondescript 1970s building".

Swell Homes recently completed the extension/renovation on this home to "lock-up" stage for Liz to then complete a number of finishing items. The job was completed reasonably close to the Liz's anticipated timeframe, but more importantly, to an excellent standard. Given the age, condition and layout of the existing duplex, it is no wonder that the fabric of the original building was substantially altered to achieve the transformation. No room was left untouched.

In the project's early stages, Swell provided Liz with a budget which it supplemented with supporting quotations from suppliers and trades. This budget was used as the basis for a cost-plus contract between Swell Homes and Liz. With the contract in place, Swell began to carry out the extensions and new work as per approved design which was prepared by Karl Spago.

Essentially, this project consisted of relatively standard concrete slab/double brick/timber framed metal roof sheeting construction. The fact that the home to be renovated was attached to two other buildings was not so standard. This had a considerable influence on the design and how this extension was carried out.

One resulting limitation that Swell faced was that it could not change the upper storey roof as it was directly connected to the other strata units. Furthermore, given the extensive remodelling work that was planned, underpinning the existing upper storey slab brickwork and tiled roof while pulling out lower walls took considerable planning (not to mention lots of effort) to achieve successfully. Andrew Annandale (Swell's site supervisor) is credited by Swell Homes' director Anthony Pillinger for carrying out these tricky structural changes with great skill and understanding of structures.

Upon reflection, Anthony thinks the alfresco area is one of the great spaces that has been created, and is also a notable achievement (on top of the aforementioned construction planning and challenges).

"It has a tiered roof, and beautiful styling and landscaping. I think that Karl Spago (the designer), Liz Prater (the interior designer/landscape designer/owner), and the engineer were all very innovative in creating the two-tiered alfresco roof. It was interesting to build, and has provided an outdoor area that stands up very well to many top end examples. The dominant use of travertine throughout the house (which also flows outside to the alfresco area) then combines with the architecture to set this place apart from most others for me."

Naturally, extending older homes can present builders with their fair share of other problems and this extension was certainly no exception. This is when experience married with the right attitude can prevail.

So did Anthony find it difficult or near impossible to overcome some of these challenges?





"No, we just used tried and true old-school extension builder tricks to tie everything in, and humoured the errors in the old structure. It's all part of renovating old homes," he says. "What we did learn from this project is how rewarding it is to push the boundaries, resulting in a beautiful home that now stands as a testament to our team's skill."

Being a designer, owner Liz was very closely involved with the project on site and gives credit to Swell Homes and all of its staff and trades for being professional, helpful, polite, clean and prompt. Liz mentions Andrew Annadale in particular as being very communicative, amenable and happy to tackle any changes and problems that arose. She also says that it was also beneficial to the project's delivery given the fact that Andrew was very organised.

Anthony (a trained quantity surveyor, project manager and registered builder) entered the building industry when he was 16 years old. From that point, he started his own building maintenance business and worked with his grandfather, a Bondi tram driver who was also an old-school handyman. Anthony's first company, Mt Hawthorn Period Extensions, eventually morphed into Swell Homes into 2008 when he and his family moved to Fremantle. Anthony now has more than 30 years' experience in renovations and extensions.

He has also been a practicing Greensmart Professional since 2006, and has embraced the emerging technologies that have become available in recent years. Swell Homes' work is largely composite construction, utilising conventional methods of construction for mass, and then using alternate methods to achieve insulation and airflow. Water saving and energy efficiency are high on the agenda for all of the homes Swell works on – whether new homes or extensions to existing ones.

"At Swell Homes, we believe in building for the present as well as the future," says Anthony. "We specialise in reduced footprint and energy efficient property development using natural and renewable resources. Our approach to sustainable living is to

minimise negative environmental impact through skilful use of modern technology. Our main aim is to create highly liveable spaces with embedded energy efficiency.

"Our particular expertise includes incorporating modern living spaces into heritage homes and building new urban infill projects on small blocks. We build for the unique outdoor lifestyle of metropolitan Perth and Fremantle, with a focus on pairing modern innovations with traditional construction techniques to create climate-efficient homes that suit the way our clients and their families live."

(This home can be viewed on Houzz.com where more than 27,000 people from around the world have taken the images and saved them for future projects. Swell Homes is currently working on many new projects. The company has six supervisors each working on one job at a time, with a second job soon to start or just commenced for each supervisor). **BC**

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