

BRANCHING OUT

Thanks to their architect son, Elspeth and Brian Noxon gained a beautifully bespoke home on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula – the perfect place to share with family and to savour their retirement.

STORY *Chris Pearson* | STYLING *Ruth Welsby* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Shannon McGrath*

Expansive window areas and views of the valley are afforded by the new extension. Herman Miller Eames armchairs from Living Edge. *Arethusa* sculpture on the deck by Douglas Stephen. Dining table from Zuster. Walls in Dulux Monument. The beautiful golden elm was an existing feature of the property. Landscape design by James Ross Landscape.

Georgia the cavalier King Charles spaniel sits on a Poltrona Frau 'Gran Torino' sofa from Leonard Joel. George Nelson Saucer pendant light, Eames stool armchair, all Living Edge. **OPPOSITE TOP** Architect Justin Noxon. *Arethusa* sculpture by Douglas Stephen. Blackbutt decking, Everist Timber. **OPPOSITE MIDDLE** *Pisces* sculpture by Douglas Stephen in an outdoor sitting area. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM** Muuto 'Pull' floor lamp, Living Edge. *Pisces* sculptures by Douglas Stephen. Cheminees Philippe Radiante double-sided fireplace from Wignells Heating & Cooking.



Many architects and interior designers avoid designing homes for family and friends. "It has the potential to go wrong," says Justin Noxon of Noxon architects, who challenged that notion by creating this luminous, airy house for his parents, Elspeth and Brian Noxon, on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula.

And what a happy outcome. According to his parents, it's the best house they have ever lived in, fitting them like a glove and future-proofing their retirement years. And who better than their son to understand and interpret their needs, now and in the future? ▶



“I WAS AMAZED AT THE VIEW THAT WAS REVEALED.
THE LIGHT WAS SO BEAUTIFUL ON THE TREES,
THE DAM AND THE HILLS.” *Elspeth Noxon, owner*

Poul Henningsen 'PH5' pendant lights from Cult. Antique dining table. No. 811 Hoffmann dining chairs, Thonet. Astra Walker 'Icon' tap, E&S. Island pendant light, Inlite. Kitchen designed by Noxon. Island clad in French oak; in-line cabinets finished in Dulux Natural White. Benchtops in Corian Glacier White, made by Homestead Cabinets. Oven from The Aga Shop. ▶



THIS IMAGE The former sitting room, now a music room, retains its original slate fireplace. Justin found the Grant Featherston rocker in a vintage shop and had it re-covered. Persian rug and antique chest. Artworks above fireplace by Lisa Stebbing (left) and A.E. Noxon. Sculptures on stairs by Douglas Stephen. **LEFT** In the kitchen/dining, the handmade clay bowl on bottom shelf is from Papua New Guinea. Study Maquettes sculptures by Douglas Stephen.

Elsbeth and Brian bought the property in 2015, with an eye to preserving the Mid-Century cottage at its centre, a small gesture of defiance against the increasing prevalence of ‘McMansions’ in the area. But as much as they loved its crisp style of architecture, the cottage had shortcomings: a leaky roof, mould, and tiny windows that short-changed the rural panorama at its doorstep. Most worrying of all, it was clad in asbestos sheeting.

At the time, the couple were living on an 8-hectare farm nearby and looking to downsize, but they weren’t convinced this home was the right place to resettle. While they considered whether to retain the property or on-sell it, Justin, a lover of Mid-Century domestic architecture, pressed on with rejuvenating the cottage.

He stripped the building down to the timber frame and restumped it. But the biggest transformation was the addition of a vast open-plan living area on the eastern side, which looks straight up the valley and down to an idyllic golden pond below. “We opened the house up to the view and the morning light,” says Justin.

When Elspeth saw what could be achieved, she was delighted. “I was amazed at the view that was revealed,” she says. “The light was so beautiful on the trees and the dam and the rolling hills. And the sky assumed terrific importance - it became an ever-changing thing.” ▶

“IT FILLS ME WITH JOY TO SEE MY PARENTS SO HAPPY LIVING HERE.” *Justin Noxon, architect*





Decision to stay made, Justin tweaked his plans to personalise the home for his parents and their lifestyle. The result is a house that combines the spectacular and intimate in equal measure.

From a humble facade that reflects the essence of the original cottage, the entry hall passes through the old section of the house with a study to the left and music/living room to the right. Next door to the living room, the main bedroom suite was enlarged and zoned into two separate sleeping areas, each with ensuite, connected by a dressing room. The spaces can easily be reunited, if desired.

In order to accommodate any future mobility issues, level changes are kept to a minimum, and there's wheelchair access should it be required. A separate studio was upgraded to become Elspeth's light-filled workspace and a new lap pool added for the active octogenarians.

Upstairs, two bedrooms - mostly used by visiting grandchildren - are tucked under a roofline raised subtly so as to not disrupt the profile. Down a flight of steps from the hallway, there's a living area in the 60 square-metre extension. Beyond, valley vistas are framed by expanses of sliding glass that lead to a large deck.

In keeping with the local farmhouse vernacular, Justin clad the building in weatherboards. "I love the texture and the shadowlines they create," he says. "They continue the story of the neighbouring cottages, helping this house sit quietly in its surroundings."

Mid-Century accents are sprinkled throughout, including classic Eames armchairs and tables, and George Nelson and Poul Henningsen pendant lights. Meanwhile, sculptures by Justin's grandfather, Douglas Stephen, and artworks by Elspeth and other local artists lend a personal touch.

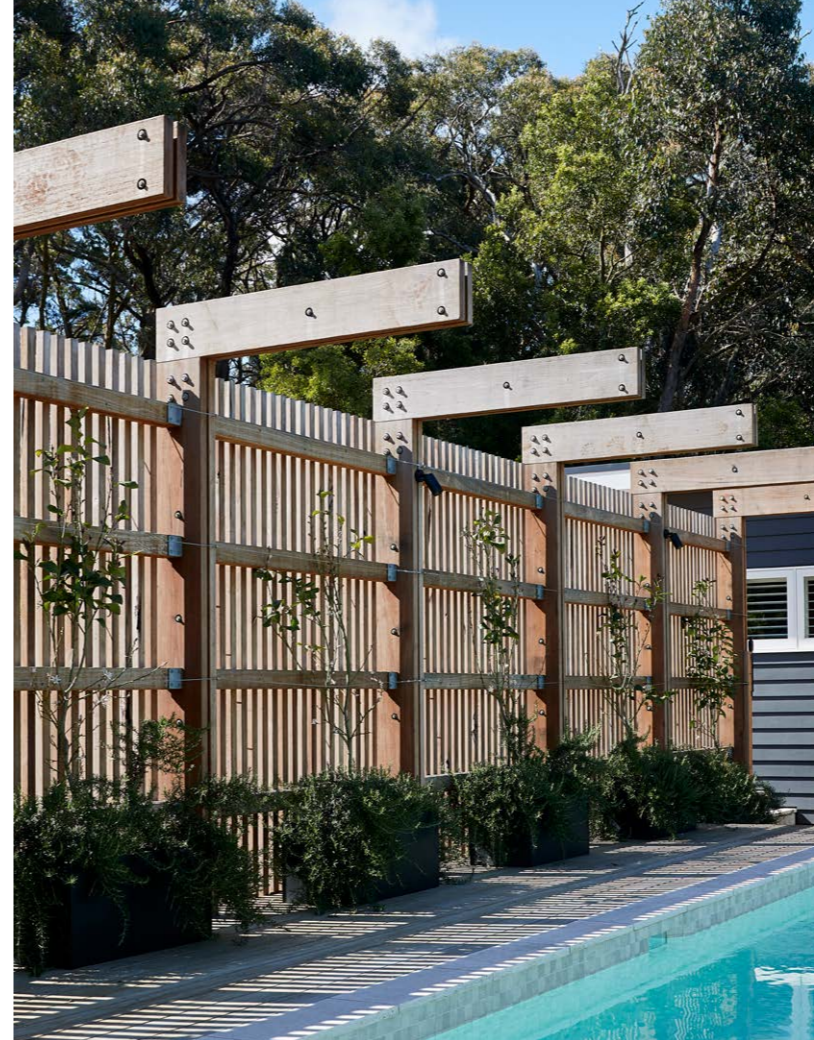
"I like the fact we kept the section at the front, which everyone thought we would demolish," says Justin. "The spirit of the old house is retained, but now it has a surprise at the rear. It's sensitive and subtle, humble and gentle."

And family ties have been strengthened rather than stretched by this collaboration between parents and son. "Working with my parents set the bar high," says Justin. "They are sensitive clients who were not afraid to ask, 'Why are you doing that?' But that just means they were passionate about the project. It fills me with joy to see my parents so happy living here."

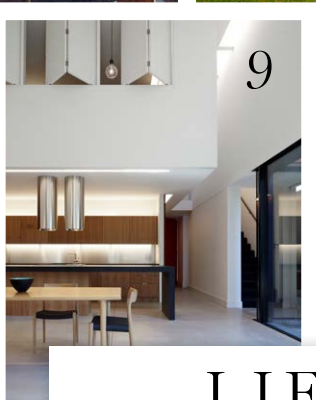
Noxon, South Yarra, Victoria; (03) 9650 8988 or noxon.com.au. RD McGowan Building, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria; 0408 513 303. James Ross Landscape Design, Noosa, Queensland; 0401 669 927 or jamesrosslandscape.com.au.



The unassuming facade segues into interiors of supreme elegance. Door in Dulux Baby Blue. James Hardie 'Linea' weatherboards painted Dulux Monument. Landscaping by James Ross Landscape Design. **BELOW LEFT** Pool by East Coast Pools is bordered by travertine coping tile and a blackbutt trellis. **BELOW RIGHT** Elspeth, Justin and Brian with cavalier King Charles spaniels Maddy and Georgia. **OPPOSITE Top and bottom** The simple, elegant main ensuite is fitted with a Duravit 'Cape Cod' bath from E&S, 'Icon' spout from Astra Walker and a custom vanity by Noxon. Bisazza 'Ghiaccio' wall mosaics, Academy Tiles+Surfaces. November floor tiles, Classic Ceramics. *For Where to Buy, see page 192.*



H&G AT HOME WITH



LIFE & STYLE

Justin shares some firsts and favourite things.

FIRST ADULT HOME? My wife Emma and I bought an unrenovated Victorian workers' cottage in Rozelle, Sydney. Our daughters, Stella, now 18, and Poppy, 12, were born while we were living there. We returned to Melbourne in 2010.

BUCKET-LIST DESTINATION? Tasmania (7). I have been once with our extended family. We toured all around for two weeks and I cannot wait to get back. Further afield, I am looking into a long, long walk across the Pyrenees.

DREAM RESTAURANT TABLE? Any one of the many fine eateries along the Mornington Peninsula. I love anything locally sourced and made. The farm-to-table experience just can't be beaten.

DREAM CAR? I'd enter any lottery with an Aston Martin DB4 GT on offer (6).

FAVOURITE DOWNTIME PURSUIT? Relaxing around the fire pit after a day's work on my property, Walden Cottage, in Flinders. A favourite tipple is Ten Minutes by Tractor pinot noir (8).

FAVOURITE MUSIC? Depends on my mood – my playlist is pretty eclectic.

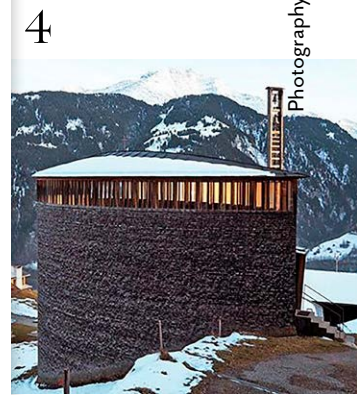
FAVOURITE COLOUR? The sky at dusk.

PROFESSIONALLY I'M MOST PROUD OF... Main Ridge Dairy (1). I designed it for my brother, a local cheese maker, so it's very close to my heart. The structure is simple, elemental and beautiful. Another project, Manning Road House in Melbourne's Malvern East (3, 9), is more dramatic but equally special.

WHO INSPIRES YOU IN THE WORLD OF DESIGN? Swiss architect Peter Zumthor. I visited many of his buildings, such as Saint Benedict Chapel in Sumvitg (4, 5) and the Thermal Baths at Vals (2), when my son Felix, now 20, and I were in Switzerland in 2018. It was great fun and a real privilege.

NEXT MAJOR PURCHASE? Paying off the mortgage.

WHAT ITEM CAN'T YOU LIVE WITHOUT? The pandemic reinforced the joy of a simple life. I really treasure time at Walden Cottage with family and friends. **H&G**



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Photography by Shannon McGrath (1), 7132 Therme (2), Peter Clarke (3, 8), Alamy (5), Getty Images (6).