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Story: Cass Proudfoot

stylish & family-friendly

Extending means working in a living space for the builders, and living on a worksite for the homeowners, but Build Professional has the process perfected.

Matthew Hall has been a builder in Canberra for 15 years. His company, Build Professional, now concentrates almost solely on renovations and extensions. 'I made a bold decision to specialise in renovations and extensions to improve Canberra homes offering a complete design and build service,' he says.

One big difference between new builds and extensions is that the clients will usually remain in the home while an extension is underway. 'So it's not just a building site, it is someone's home,' says Matthew.

In fact, Matthew sees the builder-client relationship during an extension as a bit like a marriage. This major two-staged project in the established inner suburb of Campbell took around 24 weeks, so it is a long time to spend in and out of someone's home.

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The project is now complete, and both Build Professional and the homeowners are thrilled with the result. 'They are great clients, and they're really happy with it,' Matthew says. 'The old house was a bit tired and it wasn't meeting the needs of the family. Now they have a beautiful home that is family-friendly and looks good.'

This job began with a single storey brick-veneer home in a small cul de sac, lived in by a family with three children. Rooms had been added on over time, but more space was needed, and a more modern and open design.

'It was an ordinary home, with a bullnose veranda that had been added, when the country flavour was going on in the 80s, but it wasn't a country style home,' Matthew explains.

'There had been a series of extensions done, adding small rooms, but we changed the configuration for the better, and updated the front of the house to have a modern street appeal.'

Build Professional designed an upper floor and front extension that would modernise the façade of the home. They also remodelled the existing floor plan, and opened up the kitchen and dining areas for better family living. Removing the old bullnose veranda created cleaner lines, while steel detailing and a horizontal awning to the front of the home are both functional and a design feature.

'We collaborate with our clients on a design that solves the issues in the house and meets their needs and budget,' he adds. 'Then we work out a staged process with the clients, and discuss access issues.'

A big consideration for a major renovation is planning the job such that the clients can have a functional living area through each stage of work.

For this renovation and extension project the owners lived in the home through the entire process. Build Professional developed a two-stage plan to enable the family of five to live as comfortably as possible throughout the construction phase. Stage one consisted of the construction of the new garage, ensuite renovation and remodelling of the back of the existing home. This enabled the family to use the new garage for storage while they lived in the back of the existing home.

'The clients moved all the furniture into the back rooms and used a barbeque for cooking. They had >

BUILD PROFESSIONAL DESIGNED AN UPPER FLOOR AND FRONT EXTENSION



THE FAÇADE OF THE HOME IS NOW STRIKING AND MODERN



REMOVING THIS OLD BULLNOSE VERANDA CREATED CLEANER LINES

the bathroom and laundry, and we left them the kitchen for as long as possible,' Matthew says.

Stage two entailed the complete removal of the existing roof and the construction of the upper floor extension and front entry addition and renovation.

The family accessed their home from the back door during the build process. 'Access is one of the challenges on a building site that is also a home – it requires a bit of thought,' Matthew says. 'We set up a safe taped path to separate their access area.'

Living through a significant renovation can be difficult, but when the result is a bigger and better home it can be well worth it. The Campbell homeowners are very happy with their transformed home. The façade of the home is now striking, and modern. Perhaps more importantly, the flow and function of the interior has been vastly improved and now works harmoniously, offering this busy family much greater open plan living space in the kitchen, dining and living and providing a separate entrance. The addition of the new bedrooms, bathroom and rumpus or the 'teenager's wing' in the upper floor extension has created a separate living and sleeping zone that has future-proofed the family's home.

'It is worth investing money back into this house,' says Matthew. 'It is a great location.'

The design takes careful consideration of the northern aspect and stunning views of nearby Mount Ainslie, and creates a warm, light-filled and solar passive home.

'We do a lot of work on the big, older established blocks. Often there is a bit more freedom of creativity on a big block,' Matthew says.

Build Professional look after the design, build and approvals, and have many years of building experience.

'We do a lot of work on sixties and seventies-era homes in Canberra. Many are brick veneer, and because we build in that method today they are easier to remodel and extend. We can do more with lightweight materials and glass than they could do 30 years ago, but the construction methods are similar.'

But there can still be surprises once the work starts. 'You never know what you will find, which is one reason we offer people a complete service. We do the design, the approval process and the build and pass the house through all the approvals. Having some idea what issues you might find in an older house is something that comes with experience,' Matthew says.

'We all have to work together, we have great clients, we have a great team, including all our trades and suppliers. Specialist trades need to work well while people are in the home.'

Matthew has put a lot of time into perfecting the client experience. He realised how vital this is after attending training in the US.

'They are light years ahead there,' he comments. 'The building process is much the same, but the customer relationship is top priority,' he says.

Every renovation offers different challenges. 'Every job we do is different,' Matthew says. 'There are a lot of variables – the clients, the street, access, the state of the existing home, the block. It keeps us on our toes, but it keeps life interesting!' www.buildprofessional.com.au 