



left On a sloping site in a Sydney suburb, this prefab new-build is as bespoke as it comes, with a spacious open-plan interior, basement garage and terraced garden complete with pool

below Zinc- and timber-clad modules were made in Melbourne then transported to Sydney to be assembled on site

Off the RACK

It was a tight deadline that pushed Julie and Patrick Eltridge to choose a kit house for their build in Sydney, Australia, but they're left with a bespoke home that ticks all their boxes

Words Katie Hughes *Photography* Justin Alexander



When Julie and Patrick Eltridge approached builders about demolishing a house in Sydney's beautiful beach suburb of Clovelly, obtaining planning permission for a new, contemporary design and building it, all within the space of 12 months, they were greeted with the same response each time: Not possible. No way.

Their desire to build something from scratch arose after house hunting for several weeks. 'We just couldn't find anything we liked for the right price; everything we saw we just thought: "Wow, that's expensive – surely for that amount we could build a brand-new house that's much more customised to us",' says Julie.

The tight time frame, meanwhile, came about when their accountant mentioned they'd have to be living in the house within 12 months for it to count as their primary residence for tax purposes. Not ones to give up easily, however, the pair believed there had to be a way to achieve what they wanted. That's when Julie started to look into prefabs – houses built off site in factory-like settings, which are less affected by bad weather and other unpredictable factors that might delay →



this picture The living room is a striking double-height space dominated by the suspended floor-to-ceiling fireplace

HOMES Prefabricated House

the build process. 'I'd always been interested in alternative building methods and I'd heard of a company in Melbourne called Prebuilt Homes,' explains Julie who, before a successful career in IT, studied and worked in interior design. 'So we hopped on a plane and went down to see them.'

They also met with architecture firm Pleysier Perkins, which specialises in kit homes, and asked if it could customise one of the designs to the couple's own vision. 'This is what makes our house so unique – as much as it is prefabricated, nothing in it is the company's standard offering – not even the glazing or tiles,' Julie explains. 'We knew, too, that if we were to keep within our time frame, it had to pass through planning as quickly as possible, so we got some local town planners on board to ensure there was nothing that might cause problems.' As a result, the application was in and out of planning within three months and they were ready to start building.

The couple hired a construction firm in Sydney to demolish the existing house, then excavate and level the land before building a cellar, basement garage, pool and some terraces. Meanwhile down in Melbourne the architects heading →



left A large marble-topped island unit provides plenty of storage and creates a visual divide between the kitchen and living space

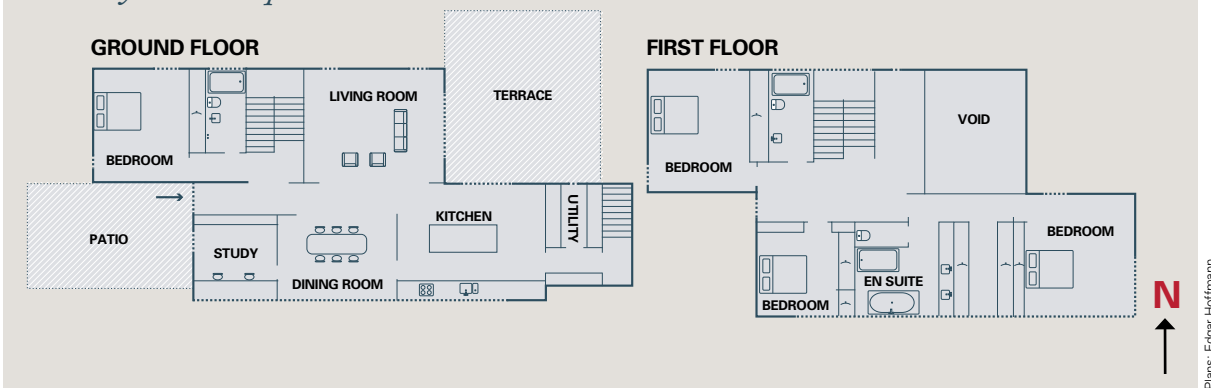
below Oak flooring and furniture in warm brown hues softens the white interior. A pocket door in the half wall between the kitchen and dining spaces slides across to close off the table area



this picture Julie and Patrick's love of contemporary design shows throughout the house; Tolix bar stools are perfect for sitting at the breakfast bar



The layout: 370sqm



Plans: Edgar Hoffmann



up the job – Ramon Pleysier and Berit Barton – and the builders began their own mammoth project, prefabricating four zinc- and timber-clad modules (including everything from the kitchen units to the bath and walk-in showers), which were to be transported up to Sydney in four trucks.

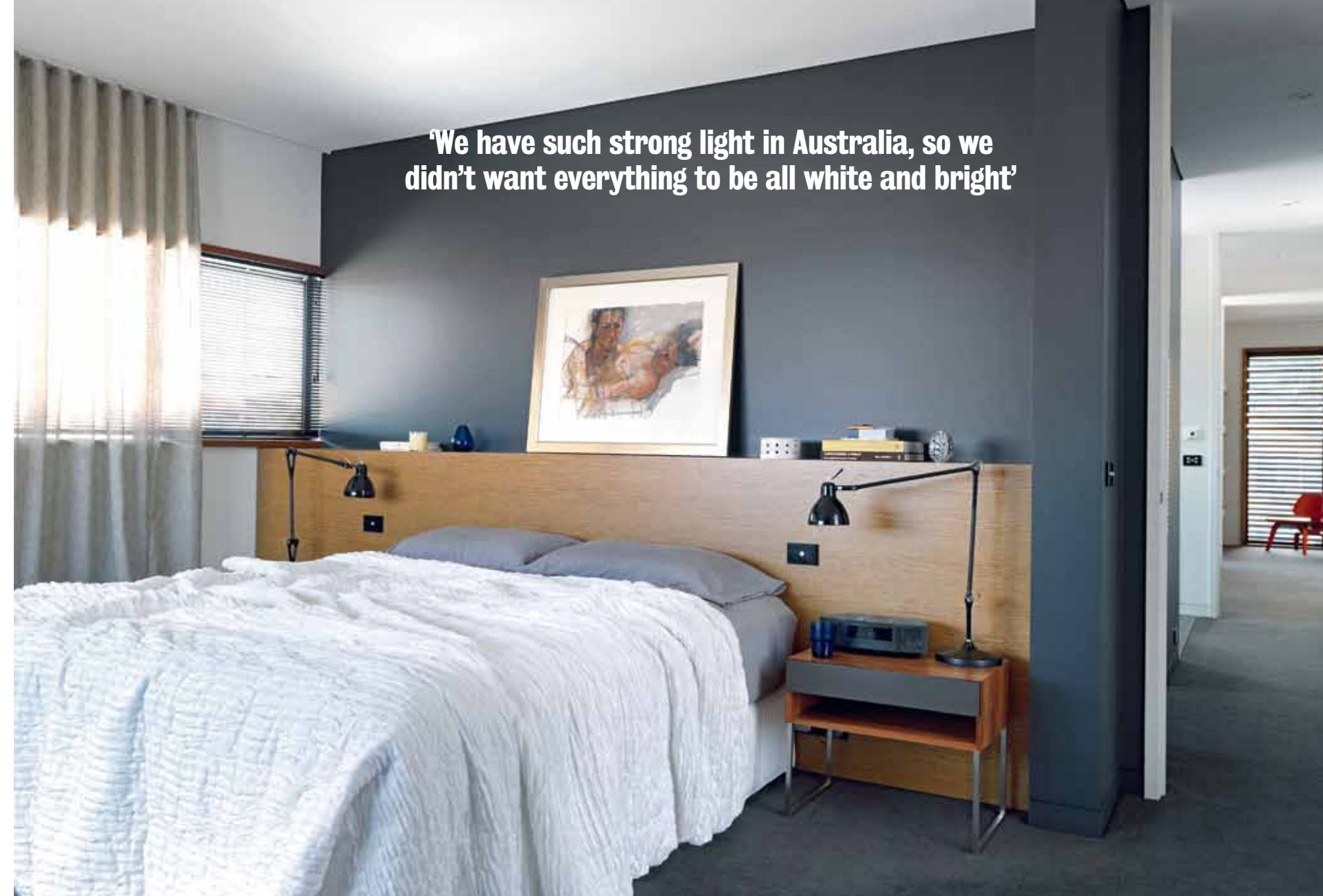
‘On top of having two sites, two building companies, and a timeframe that, even now, I can’t believe was achieved, Patrick was working in Singapore, so Julie was travelling back and forth between there, here and Sydney,’ recalls Pleysier. ‘I think the fact she has experience managing complex IT projects helped her run this project – co-ordinating all the different parties and tasks – all of which was made tougher by their bespoke design. One of our standard prefab houses would have been a piece of cake in comparison. The Eltridges definitely deserve recognition for commissioning an unconventional building; their house shows that prefabrication is a viable approach to residential construction.’

Julie was equally impressed with the architects; she recalls how extraordinarily in tune Barton (who worked a lot on the internal design) was with their vision. For example, she went

down to Melbourne one day, armed with samples, to choose all the materials for the interior only to find that Barton had selected many of the same. ‘She even had the exact same wood for the kitchen, from the exact same company,’ recalls Julie. ‘We’d discussed what feel we wanted for the interior, but we hadn’t discussed materials at all.’

Julie and Patrick were keen to use some dark colours inside to create a softer feel than most modern Sydney homes. ‘We have such strong light in Australia, so we didn’t want everything to be all white and bright,’ explains Julie. Hence, the charcoal ceiling that defines the open-plan ground floor – a colour that reappears in the master bedroom as a feature wall, and also in the beautiful black-mosaic-clad walls of the three bathrooms.

The layout of the kitchen-dining zone is also a slight departure from the norm, as Julie explains: ‘It’s very much in vogue here to have completely open-plan kitchen-dining areas, but sometimes you walk into a place and, within several seconds, you’ve already seen everything – there’s no element of surprise left. So we wanted to create a layout →



‘We have such strong light in Australia, so we didn’t want everything to be all white and bright’

above left In the study, tall fitted shelving and an Eames lounger match the interior palette of dark furniture and wood

above Warm grey walls and flooring give the master bedroom a welcoming feel. The wooden headboard doubles up as a handy shelf



left A small reading area at the end of the first-floor corridor makes the most of the light from a tall window



above Large-format floor tiles create a seamless look in the en-suite bathroom, while shimmering mosaic wall tiles add a touch of glamour; a slim glass panel divides off the walk-in shower

that was open, but also allowed us to close off the dining area from the kitchen completely; it's nice to make the dining area a bit special sometimes,' Julie says.

The kitchen and eating spaces are made more spectacular in that they open on to a stunning living room with a high ceiling and enormous fireplace. Julie hadn't specified a double-height void, but when the plans came back with this included, she and Patrick both loved it. 'We just thought: "Wow, won't that look good?"' recalls Julie. 'Other people might have preferred to put in another bedroom or bigger bathroom, but there's just the two of us and we'd always been keen to do something a bit different or striking in the main living area.'

Opting for a prefab home helped to keep the budget in check, especially as Julie and Patrick chose everything up front – from the bath and tiles to the kitchen sink – and didn't change their minds on anything. They did, however, allow an extra 10 per cent for the on-site work in Sydney as they knew this was more susceptible to change. This was just as well as, when the builders were excavating, they hit upon more rock and water than expected, which caused costs to rise slightly.

The couple also added several eco features, including an automated louvered pergola that shelters the living space, two huge water tanks and a watering system with rain detector, plus solar panels and increased levels of insulation.

'The end result is amazing; every morning, when we wake up and look out towards the ocean, we pinch ourselves,' says Julie. 'The other night we had the fire going and I went up to the terrace to pick some sage for dinner. I could smell the smoke from the fire and the salt coming in off the ocean and I just thought: "It doesn't get much better than this".' **GD**

Check out the selection of buys on p96 to bring a touch of Julie and Patrick's warm, natural style to your interior

Money matters

Professional fees \$220,000 (approx £145,930) **Garden landscaping** \$95,000 (approx £63,015) **Prefab home** \$1,200,000 (approx £796,000)

Suppliers

PROJECT TEAM Architect

Pleysier Perkins (+61 3 9533 6766; pleysierperkins.com.au) **Contractor** Prebuilt (+61 3 9761 5544; prebuilt.com.au); One Up Building (+61 2 9531 0233; oneupbuilding.com/splash.htm) **Landscaping** Secret Gardens (+61 2 9314 5333; secretgardens.com.au)

STRUCTURE Glazing

Rylock Windows (+61 3 8335 4400; rylock.com) **Roofing** Lysaght Klip-lock metal deck roofing (lysaght.com)

ECO FEATURES Louvred pergola

Vergola (+61 2 9450 3300; vergola.com.au) **Panel heating** Nobo

(nobo.com.au) **Solar gas-boosted water heater** DUX (dux.com.au)

External heaters Thermofilm heat strips by Reece (+61 3 9274 0000; reece.com.au)

FIXTURES & FITTINGS Kitchen

Bespoke design by Pleysier Perkins (as before) **Joinery**

Custom joinery in evenaged-oak veneer by Evener (+61 3 9499 7776; eltongroup.com) **Bathroom**

Bespoke design by Pleysier Perkins (as before) **Sanitaryware**

Rogerseller (+61 2 8396 8700; rogerseller.com.au) **Tiles**

Black matt tiles by Moorabbin Tile (+61 3 9555 6999; moorabbintile.com.au); Mosaic and white tiles by Signorino

(+61 3 9427 9100; signorino.com.au) **Flooring**

Precision Flooring (+61 2 9690 0991; precisionflooring.com.au) **Fireplace** Focus Fireplace

at The Good House (+61 3 9416 0400; tgh.com.au)

FURNITURE & ACCESSORIES

Sofas Marcus by Moran Furniture (+61 3 9790 9000; morancomfort.com.au) **Coffee table** Charles

Wilson at Zenith Interiors (+61 2 9125 6700; zenithinteriors.com.au) **Pendant lights**

Euroluce (+61 2 9380 6222; euroluce.com.au); Mondo Luce (+61 3 9826 2232; mondoluce.com) **Rugs** Armadillo & Co

(+61 2 9698 4043; armadillo-co.com) **Dining table** Artifex Interiors (+61 2 9948 2340) **Dining chairs**

DSR chairs by Charles and Ray Eames for Vitra at Living Edge (+61 2 9640 5600; livingedge.com.au) **Bed**

Sealy Australia (sealy.com.au) **Bar stools**

Tolix at Pedlars (01330 850 400; pedlars.co.uk)