

# FAMILY TIES

Working with those closest to you can be risky business, but when it all comes together seamlessly, the greatest rewards can be reaped.







Among the undulating hills of Echunga, a striking contemporary home blends harmoniously with its surroundings. It is eye-catching, yet unboastful in its elegance.

The lines of the home are sharp and modern, but the silvertop ash facade adds a restrained natural element.

When Jimmy and Gabs Smart bought the property – then nothing more than a cow paddock and a shed – they hadn't been looking to move, but one look at the location and they knew they wanted it to be theirs.

It was their first time building, so they wanted the best people around them to ensure the process ran smoothly and culminated in the home of their dreams.

Luckily, they already knew the right person for the job. Architect James Allen – Gabs' brother – has cleverly created a home that is simultaneously cosy and spacious, perfect for the family of three.

Angular elements have been used both inside and out to create intrigue and

fascinating views. A Basket Range stone wall extends from the front door, adding a strong structural element, softened by a large rectangular peephole looking through to the greenery beyond.

Opening the heavy front door, constructed of the same wooden battens as the home's exterior peppered with cast glass spyholes from France, the entry nook is revealed.

A charming chequered inlay tile floor is the first thing you step onto, with the same stone walling and peek-through giving a view into the kitchen, while still allowing the space to be defined in its own right.

Gabs is from a cropping and sheep property in the South East and Jimmy grew up on a horse property in Oakbank – both in stone cottages – so the material was such an important, personal part of the design for both of them.

When they looked at cost-saving, they had to pull back on the stone, but James found a clever way to use it to its fullest effect, incorporating it into the design in

all the right places, so it can be seen from multiple angles around the home.

The corridors run diagonally, deliberately impeding the ability to walk straight in and through. It encourages a purposefulness and control over the line of vision, instigating a greater awareness of the surroundings.

Designed in three staggered pavilions; the centre of each section of the home aligns with the edge of the next. To maximise the view, the home has intentionally not been oriented as north-facing. The division of sections allows for more north-facing windows, maximising the amount of light and warmth filtering through.

The unique multi-zoned design of the home saves it from simply appearing as a rectangular box out in the open.

"Because it's a greenfield site, it would be easy for it to feel like something was just plonked in the middle of the paddock off the back of a truck, if it was long and rectangular," James says. "You wouldn't get that sense of different spaces.



**Above:** Interesting angles and peek-through holes create light-filled, open spaces. **Below:** A nook in the hallway doubles as a study with a gorgeous view of the Basket Range Sandstone stone work and greenery outside. **Opposite page:** Gabs and Jimmy Smart, pictured with son Alby, both grew up in stone cottages and wanted the material used as much as possible. **Previous pages:** The home's silvertop ash facade exudes warmth and richness.





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“There’s not a lot of landscaping that’s been done, but because the different areas jut out, it feels as if there’s more going on than maybe there is.”

While spacious, the home’s footprint is by no means palatial. However, the use of glass and cathedral ceilings in the living spaces gives the feeling of grandeur.

The home is ready to grow with the family, designed with the ability to add an extra pavilion on one end if more room is needed. Jimmy and Gabs currently live in the home with their toddler, Alby, who has ample space to run around outside on the 20-acre property.

Gabs says, while the space feels like a beautiful holiday home, it’s still so liveable.

“We do feel at home and comfortable; nothing about it is too precious. There’s nothing too sterile.”

Copious amounts of glass draw in the glorious scenery, although it did minimise the amount of wall space for art. Instead, quality



**Right:** Adelaide Outdoor Kitchens constructed the concrete benchtops to pair perfectly with the home’s flooring. **Above:** Stone has been used in all the right places to give you a peek of the material wherever you are in the open living space. **Opposite page:** Adelaide Outdoor Kitchens created an in-situ draining board and concrete sinks.

was prioritised over quantity, and one stand-out is a piece by Indigenous artist Julianne Turner Nungarrayi, hanging in a hallway, which has been cleverly multipurposed as a study nook with a serious view. The entire back wall of the nook is glass, looking to the greenery and stone walling.

The kitchen features a sprinkling of elements found throughout the rest of the home; chequered floor tiles, a splashback inspired by the home’s exterior and a concrete bench created by Adelaide Outdoor Kitchens to perfectly match the flooring.

The innovative use of space continues throughout the home, including a little bar and pantry area tucked away around the corner from the kitchen.

The laundry doubles as a mudroom and, like the kitchen, has a top-hung window to the outdoor entertaining area, making it perfect to pass through food and drinks when the family is entertaining.

The guest room provides a private getaway, and there’s no shortage of family









It's so apparent now the difference a good architect makes



and friends lining up to come and stay and enjoy the home they helped create.

"They say it takes a village to raise a child; we have found it takes a village to build a house as well," Jimmy says.

Aside from James, a host of people close to Jimmy and Gabs were instrumental in bringing the home together. The couple had connections with those who were involved in everything from cabinetmaking and electrical work, to fencing and water divining.

Both Jimmy and Gabs' direct family played a big part in the project through many working bees, usually culminating in a picnic and a cold drink. A number of the new neighbours even stepped in to help – some helped dig more than 100 holes needed for planting out, some loaned machinery to help with odd jobs and one offered their horse arena for Gabs to use.

In all, 25 friends and family were involved at some stage of the project.

"One of the really cool things is everyone has so much vested joy when they come to visit," Jimmy says.

"I'm sure when working so closely with



family, there is always potential for things to go wrong and add unnecessary angst, but we got through it so unscathed, and that's a testament to James."

Jimmy says he understands when people are hesitant to take on the extra cost of an architect during a build – he was the same – but he now sees just how integral his brother-in-law was to making the house feel wonderfully homely. The relationship between James and Build Theory, who took on the project as their first new build, made the process all the smoother.

"It's so apparent now the difference a good architect makes," Jimmy says.

"One of the things that just blows my mind now that we're living in the home is the way the light shines through and all the angles.

"It just baffles me that James can take a pencil and paper and design a house and for it to come together with every detail thought about and for it to be so incredible to live in.

"It's gorgeous in the sunshine, but if it's bucketing down with rain and you're in front of the fire with a glass of wine, it's still gorgeous."

The couple had originally scoped out



**Above:** Jimmy and Gabs' toddler Alby enjoys expansive views from a room that will grow with him. **Top:** The bathrooms feature classic white vertical subway tiles and stunning views. **Opposite page:** The guest area is spacious and comfortable, looking out to the paddocks; the master ensuite features an elegant curved tile wall (**below**). **Previous pages:** The master bedroom and ensuite have the feeling of a luxurious retreat.





**Above:** The living spaces flow seamlessly to the outdoors, with retractable windows allowing for easy entertaining. **Right:** The staggered design of the exterior allows northern light into many areas. **Below:** The home has room to grow for the whole family.



their dream home, irrespective of cost, and quickly realised they were going to have to rein it in.

"It was probably double what we were able to spend, so we went into full-on cost-saving mode," Jimmy says.

"One of the most valuable things James did was to gently encourage us to keep a few of the things that, now we live here, we feel are game-changers.

"To end up with the finished product within the budget we had to work with what was one of the most impressive parts – and doing so while not diluting the feel James was going for."

For James, it's satisfying to be so close to a project that he's able to revisit through all the seasons.

"It's so nice being so intimately involved in a project because I often don't get to see them again after completion," he says.

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