

DEVELOPING OUR CITY \ Clients enjoying their projects is a key for Kent Homes, writes LIZ McLACHLAN

For builder Craig Kent, designing and building new homes and major renovations is about giving families better lives with greater connection as well as peace and relaxation.

His family-owned business, Kent Homes, has decades of success in designing and building new homes and major renovations to existing homes in Melbourne's east and north-east and he says it's most important to create spaces that encourage communication, as well as zones for relaxation, study and work.

"People build new homes and undertake large renovations because they want to live well, and a key to this is the old-fashioned notion of being able to gather and sit around the kitchen table and talk about everything from your day to world peace," Kent says.

"The old kitchen table is now the island bench or the table in the open-plan family kitchen, dining and living. It is the heart and soul of the modern home.

"We are here to give people the homes they want to live in. Sometimes it just takes a little expert advice to make their dream and wish come to life. We attend to the design and the results change people's lives."

On top of this, Kent and his team set out to ensure clients enjoy their projects without adding stress to already busy lives.

"We build terrific homes for our clients and we want them to enjoy every part of the process."

Ric and Sue and their three children had lived in their Ivanhoe East home for 10 years before renovating and were clear about what they needed, but not how to get



BUILDING BETTER LIVES

there. Their house had been heavily modified in the 1970s by its architect-owner and needed light, a large open-plan kitchen and family dining and living area, more separate living areas and extra bedrooms – all on a sloping block with magnificent leafy views to the city.

The couple say that Kent and his team delivered far more than they had thought possible.

"Craig and his team have given us the spaces and house that we wanted. They immediately understood what was required to turn this into a great family home," Ric says. "We initially tried an architect but found he was designing what he wanted. So we were pleasantly surprised to find Craig and his people really listened to us about what we wanted to achieve and thought creatively about giving us value."

A year after moving back into their home the couple remain full of praise for their builder and the way he and his team took them through the project.

"Craig and our site manager Graeme were exceptional – we'd meet every Friday and discuss ideas and progress over coffee and a doughnut. They always listened to us."

After being completed gutted, the Kent Homes design and build transformed the home into a stylish, contemporary four- to five-bedroom home ticking off all features on the family's wish list. The new design pulled light through from the home's northern street frontage to the dramatic central glass stairwell and into the rear family living zone.

A ground-level study has en suite access to the bathroom and was easily converted to a bedroom for a grandparent recovering from surgery. There's a spacious separate front living room with built-in shelving, a window alcove and glass doors to the family living.

The kitchen, family meals and living room weaves across the rear of the ground floor, its design providing connection but also separation between kitchen and living. A wall of bright-red glass splashback sets off the kitchen and complements the drama of magnificent

"CRAIG AND HIS PEOPLE REALLY LISTENED TO US"



Meeting the challenge:

Kent Homes "delivered for the family, inside and out". (SUPPLIED)

views with expansive glazing. A substantial island bench is clearly the hub for family life, with inspiration provided on a large glass writing board on the wall.

Upstairs are four spacious bedrooms, a bathroom, and an innovative en suite for Ric and Sue with an above-bath skylight and walk-in wardrobe on one end of the main bedroom and bifold doors to a terrace and the views at the other end. On a lower-ground level there's a rumpus room, bathroom and "man-cave" for Ric.

For an Eltham family challenged by an irregular and restricted building envelope, thanks to mature gum trees, Kent Homes met the family's requirements for space as well as complying with exacting council regulations on materials, colour palette and design and staying within a strict budget.

It's a contemporary version of the classic three-bedroom-and-study Eltham home, built using sustainable materials in earthy tones sympathetic to the area with the right design and features for contemporary life.

Owners Emma and Geoff say they had an idea of the second home they wanted and their experience with Kent Homes was "just fantastic".

"It was hassle-free for us. When we had a query we dealt with Craig, the owner of the business, directly, not a salesperson. This was a very different experience to our first home build with a project builder where we had to fit in with what they did, rather than what we wanted," Emma says. "Our project supervisor often came to us with ideas along the way to make worthwhile changes to give us extra value. They gave us a lot more storage space than we had thought of and now I don't know how we would have lived without it.

"After two years living in the house there's nothing we would change or do differently."

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