



1. Rear deck nearly ready for use.
2. Natural light from the clerestory windows floods the living area.
3. Simple and functional kitchen, with large drawers for storage.
4. The first coat of oil being rolled on – the timber begins to shine.
5. Shelving behind sliding robe doors will keep the office tidy.
6. Late afternoon light – natural art in the passage gallery.
7. The rear deck catches morning sunshine and summer breezes, meaning it will be well used.



All done bar the shouting

BY LYNDA WILSON

Well, we finally did it – finished, that is! Nearly eleven months to the day – not too bad considering. Of course, there are still a few things that need doing (aren't there always...) but it is essentially there, awaiting the final occupancy inspection.

Complete kitchen

Once the *Caesarstone* benchtops, appliances and rangehood were installed, the open plan space really came to life. There were a few hiccups, with an incorrect kitchen panel and too long benchtop, but these were quickly and efficiently fixed.

A glass splashback behind the cooktop was installed by DecoGlaze, while the leftover bathroom pebbles tiles were used for the benchtop splashback. These were left with a natural edge in places, to look like the pebbles were spilling out.

Archs and skirts

Paul Tobin had agreed to do the internal carpentry a long while back, so it was great to eventually have him on site. Paul is a craftsman carpenter (see 'A deck to behold' on p.28) so this job was slightly 'ordinary' for him. However, I did want a few unusual features, like arts and crafts style architraves and square joints on decking – I have a 'thing' about mitre joints. More importantly I wanted a neat and very professional finish, which I knew Paul would produce.

Architraves are only 42mm, as I wanted to minimise the bulky look.

Skirtings are 90mm, at the lower end of the scale but still functional enough. Both have small radius pencil rounds.

Unfortunately, I had not mentioned the architrave size to the plasterer and he had not asked. As a result, he worked to the more 'normal' 65–90mm sizing, resulting in a few gaps and fixings that needed filling and covering. Remember to tell your plasterer exactly what size architraves you will be using.

Oily floors

We were finally ready for the floor finishing. After a lot of technical discussion with Rob at Livos, Steve Huen of Jacobean Timber Floors felt ready to tackle his first oiled finish. The floors were looking fantastic, just laid and not finished, so I was confident that it would turn out even better than I expected.

Before they started sanding back the timber, I remembered to transfer the markings made on the floor to the walls for things like power points, studs and joists, which would need to be located at a later point.

Very little cupping had occurred since the timber was laid, so sanding was a pretty straightforward task. The first pass was done diagonally, followed by progressively finer grades with the lie of the floor (see 'Sanding your own floors' p.46). Then it was time to crack open the oil tin.

Steve cursed and fought and sweated over the first layer, but once he had

the hang of it he was pleased with how it worked. I sensed he was still a little apprehensive about my reaction to the finish, being used to clients wanting shiny bullet-coated floors. When I said, 'It looks fantastic, just like an old warehouse floor,' he hesitantly remarked, 'So you like it then?' Yes I do! The combination of select grade timber, with all the gum veins and deep notches filled with black putty, and the organic soft oil finish have immediately given the house a lived in feel, removing that 'brand new shiny edge.'

One tip though – clean messed oil immediately! It is inevitable that oil (as with other coatings) will get onto skirtings and even walls. All the painting had already been done, so they were VERY careful, but nevertheless a few splashes did occur. And it dries



Frameless shower screens in the ensuite give the illusion of a much bigger space.



Clockwise from bottom left: Timber floors and recycled ironbark posts add a sense of 'age,' kitchen pebble splashback with arts and crafts inspired architrave; solar panels going up; main bathroom; dining area alongside kitchen.

like glue – no amount of scrubbing will remove it, light sanding and paint patching are the only solution. I even struggled to get some off the Caesarstone benchtop waterfall end, although the hard shiny surface meant a good scrub did eventually remove it.

Powered up

It seemed a heck of a long time coming, but power to the house was finally switched on. The first night saw me switching lights on and off just for the fun of it!

Testing revealed a problem with the power point circuit, which was eventually tracked down to a screw from the kitchen installation that had penetrated a power wire. I spent a few days playing around with the layout of switches on some of the multiple switch plates and asked David to change a few around that didn't seem logical for my use. These are the types of things you only pick up once you start using the system.

Finally I could open the power-driven clerestory windows. In the two months these have been functioning, the power units have proved indispensable: there is no hesitation in opening and closing them to suit the weather conditions, whereas manual operation by pole of five windows would have meant I would have mostly left them closed this time



of year. With only a little opening, the breeze that is pulled through the house is obvious, while closing them down reduces outside noise noticeably.

The greatest excitement was on the day that the solar system was connected. 24 x 185 watt panels provide a 4.4kW system on the garage roof at an angle of 33 degrees. This is the optimum angle for winter sunshine in our area, when the shorter days mean it is imperative to maximise the power generation. The system has been delivering around 23kW on most days. With an expected average of 17.4kW per day over the year, against our average usage of around 8kW, we are more than covering our own power needs.

Finishing touches

Wardrobes were installed in all three bedrooms, recessed shaving cabinets in the two bathrooms, a frameless shower screen in the ensuite, as well as laundry cupboards. It didn't take me long to start filling them...

The spaces above two of the bedroom robes have also been constructed to allow storage, with partially hidden doors. These will not be easily accessible but will be good for seldom-used items like suitcases and spare doonas.

I love the look (and ease of cleaning) of frameless shower screens, but am not so sure about the sturdiness. The external upper corner of each screen has a fair bit of play when touched, never mind if knocked, so I am considering installing a support bar between the two edges.

Decking

In total there is about 55m² of decking. This is being finished with mixed red timbers from the same source as the flooring timbers.

Paul is doing most of the decking, with a little help from us (structure, stairs, oiling etc.). To start with, he

suggested we place a vertical section of waterproofing along the sections where the decking meets the house, to prevent any water ingress. Being a suspended floor, in most cases this was relatively easy to do. Some joists also had to be moved out to create a physical break between the house and deck structures. Next, the joists were waterproofed with a layer of JoiStrip (www.joistrip.com), a rubber extruded flashing.

A loose, rough layout of decking boards was done before Paul started fixing them down. Each board end that butted up against another was given a thick coat of oil to help seal the end grain. Holes were marked, countersunk holes were pre-drilled and then 316 marine grade stainless steel 40mm 10 gauge square drive decking screws were used to fix the boards down. I helped Paul by pre-drilling holes for about 5 hours on one day – and the next day I found muscles in my rear end that had not seen action for years!

All the decks have a drop of around 1.2m to ground level, which means we need balustrading. For the front deck and walkway this makes sense, as this will also create a privacy barrier. However, on the back deck we wanted to maintain an open feel, with easy access to the garden. With a little thinking we have found a way around it for all but one side of the deck.

If the drop can be reduced to 800mm then a barrier is not required. To be considered 'ground level,' a flat area must be at least 1m wide. So we have built a raised bed 600mm high around two sides of the deck, meaning no balustrading is required. The third side is too close to the boundary for this solution, so large timber posts and stainless steel wire will be used.

Quiet at last

As for the shouting... there has been remarkably little of that. I guess it was a combination of good luck, good contacts and good management (well, no one else is going to give me a pat on the back!), but the project has run pretty well with only one major blow up (the sewer installation, see TOB 162 and TOB 163). Sure, there have been a few minor niggles, but nothing that wasn't able to be sorted out relatively easily.

One thing I have learned though, is to check EVERYTHING myself: don't assume everything is level and plumb and



in the right spot; or that the insulation has been run all the way down past the last weatherboard; or that the windows are watertight, etc. It is always best to THOROUGHLY check each stage of construction before the next tradesmen move in – it is not fair to expect the plasterer to correct walls out of plumb, or for the painter to patch up fixings missed by the plasterer, or for the carpenter to have to notch architraves to fit around proud window reveals. The problems only get bigger as the project progresses.

So with this, I can say goodbye – at least to the continued 'Building diary' update, that is. If you have missed any of the exciting instalments, they can be viewed on my building blog:

<http://theownerbuilder.wordpress.com>

If you have just started your own project and would like to contribute a 'Building diary,' we would love to hear from you. ■

*'You've all done very well...'
said young Mr Grace...*

Major costs breakdown

Garage/loft	\$95,000
Design/paperwork	\$17,000
Site/construction	\$14,000
Solar	\$17,000
House	
Structure	99,000
Plumbing	5400
Electrical	21,000
Insulation	9000
Kitchen	30,000
Painting	4500
Plastering	10,000
Flooring	16,000
Tiling	8000
Lighting	5000
Decking	6000
Windows & doors	41,000
Bathroom	6500
Hot water	4500
Solar	17,000
Water tanks	7500
Sewer	10,000
Trim finishing	9000
Wardrobes	7000
Laundry	3000

Breakdown includes labour, materials and appliances.

Solution to crossword (page 68)

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Anagram Solution: FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE