

HIDDEN POTENTIAL

When the homeowners first viewed this North Shore property together, one of them loved it – the other not so much

Text **Holly Jean Brooker** Photography **Kate Battersby**

We've all had one of those awkward first meetings. For Melissa (Mel) O'Shaughnessy, it took a good three or so viewings, and she still wasn't won over.

In 2018, Mel and husband Alex, decided to sell their newly renovated home in central Auckland to move nearer the beach on the North Shore so their family could enjoy more of the water sports and fishing they loved. Connecting with a local agent, Mel was taken through a home to consider.

"When he showed me though the house, I honestly thought it was a joke," she says. "I walked around the house in somewhat of a daze because it was just so ugly."

Alex was away at the time, but on his return he checked it out online and convinced Mel to return for a second look with him. As they walked through the property together, Mel says, "I knew as I walked around with Alex I'd just made biggest mistake of my life. Despite the awful kitchen, outdated interiors and crazy paper doors, Alex had found his dream home."

With its expansive double garage, a view to die for and generous footprint, there was no turning back for the O'Shaughnessy family. "The filleting sink outside was the icing on the cake for Alex. I would like to say that the third time I visited, I was a little more convinced, but I wasn't. Not even a little," says Mel.

A full house

With keys in hand, the family moved into the 1980s brick abode in January 2019. With dated timber accents and bright feature walls, they made a few minor adjustments, painting everything white, to help it feel a little more like them.

In August 2021, they were ready to begin the long-awaited renovation. With 22 years of marriage and five renovations behind them, the couple play to their strengths, with Mel admitting, "We're not

Meet & greet

Alex (film editor) and Melissa O’Shaughnessy (stay-at-home mum), Emma, 17, Jordan, 16, Nathan, 12, Bailey the Labrador retriever and Coco the shih tzu.



really DIY people. We would much rather leave it to the experts.” Nevertheless, with some solid experience up her sleeve, Mel took on the job of design, project management, styling and budgeting. Unfortunately, just one week into their renovation, Auckland went into Level 4 lockdown for five weeks. “It was a nightmare,” admits Mel. “When the builders came back on site (during level 3), we were still under heavy restrictions, so not only were we living in the house while renovating, but everyone was home, all day, every day. At one point, we were living mostly in the garage. We were scattered around the house downstairs, sleeping where we could.”

It was an intense seven months, but by February this year, the renovation was complete, with the result being a beautiful six-bedroom home that is now light, bright and open plan. It’s the perfect canvas for Mel to showcase her love of coastal Hamptons style, which can be seen on Instagram @homecreated_.

The main living area upstairs has quickly become the family’s favourite place to be, with incredible views of Stanmore Bay framed by almost every window. Here, the wall between the kitchen and lounge was removed to open up the living space and create more flow. Three of the four beams dominating the living

ARCH OF TRIUMPH The half arch was inspired by an image Mel saw on Instagram and provided an opportunity to extend the countertop for more bench space, as well as a scullery and room for the fridge. The kitchen cabinetry is by interior fit-out company IPS.



Mel's top tips

+ Get recommendations when choosing tradies.

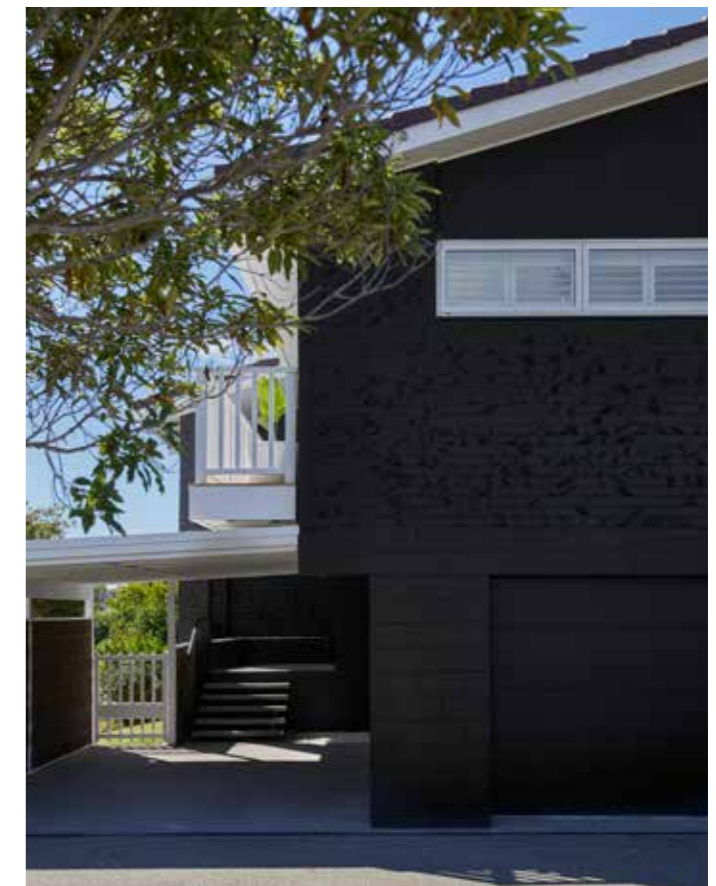
When you have good tradies they become like family, which makes the process so much easier.

+ **The planning and budgeting stage is the most important part of the process.** Make sure you put everything in your budget, including a contingency (usually 20 percent of the overall budget).

+ **Make sure your quotes (verbal and written) include GST.** This can add up to be a huge expense if you haven't factored in GST (and/or things such as delivery costs).

+ **Design your home around what you love and how you plan to live in it.** If you're not a fan of current trends go with what works for you. This includes colour, style and the overall feel of the house.

+ **Try and tie the house together so it feels cohesive.** You can do this through patterns, materials and other textures. We did this by putting marble tiles on the bathroom floors to tie in with the kitchen bench. We also used the same tapware in both bathrooms, although we used brushed brass in the main bathroom and brushed nickel in the ensuite, and it really worked.



WHITE EVERY TIME On moving in, one of the first things the family did was repaint the walls with Resene Alabaster. In complete contrast, the house exterior was painted in a dark Dulux shade. The oak floor boards are from Allied Flooring, the sofas from Contempa, dining table from Citta, and the dining chairs from Ico Traders.



space were also removed, much to the couple's pleasure. However, they did have to settle with keeping one beam. "It would have cost an additional \$60,000 to remove this, and we decided this could be money used elsewhere," says Mel.

The dated kitchen was completely overhauled, wooden floors installed, carpet and wardrobes put in all the bedrooms, as well as new window joinery, blinds and timber shutters. The original deck was also replaced.

The main bathroom was enlarged significantly by removing the linen cupboard, hallway, toilet and separate bathroom. This has created a generous bathroom that works really well for the O'Shaughnessy family. Here, they chose vertical join groove panelling to reduce costs, paired with a gorgeous tile in the ensuite. It mimics the tongue-and-groove style and helps bring everything together.

With Alex and Mel's love of minimalism and white, they have created a calming coastal home that's free of chaos and clutter. The natural timber tones, marble and textures enhances the resort-like vibe.



BY EXTENSION The family bathroom was made significantly larger by removing the existing linen cupboard, hallway, separate toilet and bathroom. Vertical join panelling was used on the walls and the marble tiles used on the floor are from The Tile Room.

Surprising solutions

Naturally, with a large family, the kitchen draws everyone in like a magnet. Mel wanted to create an open-plan area, without a scullery, to optimise space. However, a pesky pole that couldn't be removed caused an issue here. Using creative thinking, she decided to hide it in a wall, which led to the addition of a scullery. "I didn't like the thought that it would make the kitchen look smaller," Mel admits. "I saw an image on Instagram with a half arch, which allowed the kitchen bench to run right through, and this was a great solution. It also matched the large arch I had already put from the lounge to the hallway and bedrooms. Funnily enough, we didn't need the pole in the end, but I'm so glad we did what we did. It's better than I hoped and just goes to show that problems can be a blessing in disguise."

The scullery served another purpose, says Mel. "I also didn't want the fridge where it could be seen and integrating it wasn't in the budget, so hiding it away in the scullery was another perfect solution."

Having the family at home during the renovation came with another pleasant surprise. "Our 16-year-old son helped out a little and he loved it so much that he left school to join the building company and become one of their apprentices. It's a great fit for him."

Future plans

Now that the full home renovation is complete, the couple are planning to move their efforts outside, by levelling out the outside section, undertaking extensive landscaping, and creating an alfresco area with built-in barbecue.

Mel reflects, "Our home is everything we could have hoped for and there's very little we would change. Apart from hopefully putting in a pool sometime, we won't be moving for quite some time." It just goes to show that things can change, and you shouldn't always make up your mind after an awkward first date. ●



"Design your home around what you love and how you want to live in it."

MEL O'SHAUGHNESSY



BEDROOMS All the blinds and shutters are from Carpet Court. The palm wallpaper in Nate's room is by Boho Art and Styling, the Hang Loose light by Electric Confetti, and the Devonport wire chair from Ico Traders.

