

SATURDAY

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# home

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**STYLE  
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WHAT WE CAN  
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MARION HALL BEST  
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## With an open door policy

Enjoy the best of both worlds with stylish but family friendly spaces **10**

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**At home** Behaving badly pays off for Lawrence Mooney **20**







Recycled brick gives the new house a sense of permanence while picking up on the soft pink colour scheme in the living room.

# A million miles from care

Some clever planning results in a rural idyll surprisingly close to the city, writes **Robyn Willis**



Farmhouse-style gates set the style for a grand semi-rural property beyond.

**K**ate and Dax McBurney know their way around a building site. Not only is Dax a builder, but they had built a previous home from scratch and have done a few major renovations in the past.

So when they bought acreage to build a house for their family of five at Duffys Forest in Sydney's north, they already had a good idea of how they wanted it to look.

Rather than engaging an architect, the couple worked with a draftsman to draw up plans for the two-storey, four-bedroom home with guest room, four bathrooms, two powder rooms and a wraparound veranda.

In addition, the site would be home to a mini golf course and a generous swimming pool with cabana.

With so much work to be done, they quickly realised they would need more help.

### Love my way

Kate says she was attracted to the work of interior designer Karen Akers because "she never does the same thing twice".

"We wanted an interior designer who would listen to us and design the house according to our needs, not someone who would come in and want to do it her way," says Kate. Because Karen was consulted from the earliest building stages, she helped specify materials, as well as the colour scheme and, later, furnishings.

"My role began before the first brick was laid," Karen says. "I chose all the architectural features, the floorboards, cornices, fittings and fixtures. Half my projects I am involved in right from the start."

The couple wanted to create a home with a contemporary country feel, with a soft pastel palette and dark floorboards that could withstand the rough and tumble of family life.

## PROJECT

**Owners**  
Kate and Dax McBurney and their three children

**Designer**  
Designed by Karen Akers  
karenakers.com.au

**The problem**  
Plans for a large home that needed more detail

**The site**  
Acreage at Duffys Forest

**Design solution**  
A country contemporary style home with Hamptons inspiration

**How long did it take**  
12 months



The generous kitchen has Shaker-style timber panelling and Caesarstone benchtops.

Although it is associated with coastal living, Karen took inspiration from Hamptons style, which emphasises painted timber panelling, natural materials and a soft palette.

Kate and Dax wanted the house to look like it belonged in its semi-rural setting so Karen was careful to specify recycled brick for key parts of the house, including the entrance, the veranda posts and the chimney in the main living room.

"I also changed the front to put in the gabling," says Karen. "We added those features to make it feel like it's a rural property. That style would be out of character in, say, Vaucluse but it suited this site."

### White magic

While at first glance the house looks all white, Karen says it's a subtle progression of soft greens and blues. Getting the tones right is the secret to design success.

"It depends on how much light comes into the rooms but if it is a bright white and there is a lot of natural light, it will feel very vivid," Karen says. "You need to take the edge off it and blues and greens work well with our environment and our light."

While the pale palette creates a sense of luxury, Karen says materials have been chosen to be hard-wearing, from the dark timber floorboards to the easy care Caesarstone benchtops in the kitchen.

The exception is the main bedroom suite, where Karen persuaded Kate and Dax to indulge a little in the ensuite.

"It was their dream bathroom" Karen says. "They look out over the bush and we added



some curtains for a more sophisticated look. It's only used by the parents so you can afford something more luxurious in that space." Kate says this is very much a family home. "The house is better than what we had hoped for," she says. "We didn't want to leave the last house but now I would never look back. It works for us and the kids are outside all the time now." Pictures Thomas Dalhoff

## THE SOURCE

**Cabinetmaker** Sublime Custom Cabinetry, [sublimcustomcabinetry.com.au](http://sublimcustomcabinetry.com.au) **Wall colour** Unforgettable low sheen from Dulux, [dulux.com.au](http://dulux.com.au) **Interior wall lights** Emac & Lawton, [emac-lawton.com.au](http://emac-lawton.com.au)



A ceramic drum makes a stylish table in the bathroom.



The ensuite has full-length curtains that reveal a bush view.