

The Weekend West

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Homes

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AND SPAS

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Connection the key

Three lots become one to create a masterpiece in scale management. P3

'POD' STUDIOS THE NEW FRONTIER P12



As this Peppermint Grove house is one room deep at any point, there is effective cross-ventilation. Pictures: Robert Frith

Harmony on a very grand scale

■ John Videnieks

On a big block of 1460sqm with an internal space of about 1000sqm, the challenge for architect Neil Cownie was to come to terms with scale.

"The site is originally three lots amalgamated into one," he said. "It has a big internal space, it is a big house. One of the things I tried to do was to keep it intimate. I think we achieved that, the house doesn't feel overwhelmingly big in any place. Every space feels connected."

One approach was to create harmony within the streetscape by creating a narrow frontage to the street, ensuring that the house did not swamp the narrow lot subdivision of which it is a part. The fusion of

internal spaces with the external was another method: 8m-long doors in one space in the centre of the home are fully automated and stack back at the press of a button, which creates a blurred indoor/outdoor space.

This is accentuated with the use of stone. Many of the building and garden walls are made of, or clad in, crafted granite gleaned from paddocks in the South West. One such wall is a feature inside the home. The others can be seen from the house and are complemented by more refined stone used internally in the facade of the kitchen benches.

"The flat face which can be achieved on these alluvial boulders is quite incredible. We chose materials which, over time, are just going to keep improving their look. Slate tiles

on the roof, copper on walls and door surrounds, and teak in the main door. The idea is to create, hopefully, a timeless appeal rather than an architectural 'piece'," Mr Cownie said.

The lower floor has the garage, basement, home entertainment room and guest accommodation.

Additional facilities for guests are separate from the house and so provide independent access without having to overlap with the main residence.

The "L" shape of the living

and sleeping areas is like a protective arm which shields the owners' outdoor space and provides privacy.

Also, as it is one room deep at any point, there is effective cross-ventilation and the northern and eastern light penetrates fully.

The levels of the block have been used strategically to place features such as the large swimming pool and the external terrace. The pool is part of the owner's lifestyle but it wasn't to dominate the outdoor space, so

it is at a lower level and the terrace, central to activities, is above it but with a glass roof to maintain the light. Under the glass are remote retractable and extendable sunshades.

In making the home a warm and family-friendly setting and a place where children can grow up and have special memories, Mr Cownie has added a magical attraction.

At the bottom of the garden he has included a "cave" which in his words is "A cubby house like a little fantasy land."

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