

# BEST OF LUCK

The Palm Co is known for capturing interior spaces with natural light, so when owner Nat and her husband Zach bought a dark sandstone cottage, it was game on

**MAIN LIVING** "This is our first home, so we set ourselves a strict budget, and had to find a balance between where to spend and where we could save," says Nat. "In this area, we did built-in storage and a bench seat near the TV, and it's turned into my son's playroom." Hudson sofa and Idaho coffee table, Papaya. Pendant by Muuto.

**KITCHEN** (opposite) "We put joinery into the space in the sandstone wall where the original opening to the back extension was. The built-in cupboard matches the American walnut veneer in the rest of the kitchen — we use it as a bar." Archer stools, Papaya.

## cheat sheet

**Who lives here** Nat Spadavecchia, a photographer and stylist, with her husband Zach, a joiner, and their infant son Leeroy, plus two shih tzu toy poodles, Apollo and Chino.

**Style of home** Luck Cottage is a two-bedroom 1920s-era sandstone home renovated with a new Japandi-meets-traditional look.

**Location** Helensburgh, 50 minutes south of Sydney, on the traditional land of the Dharawal people.

**🕒** The couple bought the house in December 2021 and finished renovating nine months later.

**HALL/MAIN LIVING** "I really wanted the arches in the hallway to be the first thing you see when you come in the front door, and then when you look down the hallway to the kitchen, to see another arch and the curved kitchen bench," says Nat. "The curved rangehood ties it all together." Walls, VJ panelling. Profile SK58 skirting boards, Intrim Mouldings. Paint colour, Dulux Natural White. Nordic Driftwood floorboards, Mint Floors & Shutters.

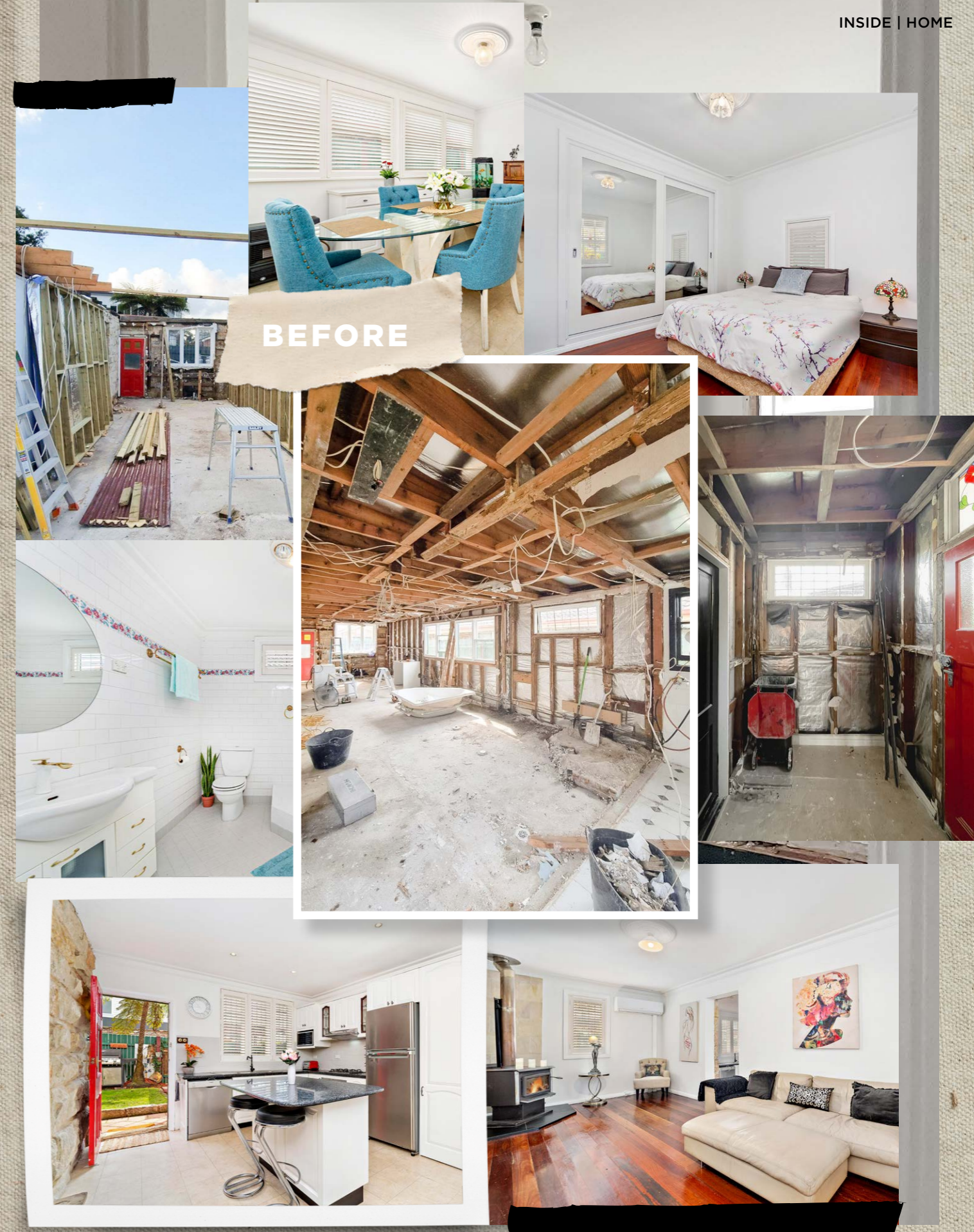


**R**enovations are rarely pulled off without speedbumps or messy pivots, but the complications surfaced for Nat and Zach Spadavecchia before a single sledgehammer collided with gyprock at Luck Cottage. The couple purchased the 1920s-era sandstone home in Helensburgh, south of Sydney, in December 2021, with a plan to make some cosmetic updates before settling into their family-rearing phase of life.

Nat, who is an interiors photographer and stylist with editorial and design clients across Australia, was drawn to the cottage's charming sandstone walls, decorative skirting boards and ceiling roses. "I shoot so many different house styles, but really love cosy family homes with character," she says, adding that their cottage also offered the wishlist item of a detached studio that she could convert into the headquarters for her photography business, The Palm Co. "We thought it had good bones and intended to do a quick renovation, but that wasn't the case." The first-home buyers planned to live at Luck Cottage while it was being refreshed by Zach, a joiner who runs Zephyr Joinery. However, as February 2022 rolled around, so did the relentless rain and flooding of that year.

"The back part of the home was an extension done around 12 years ago, and it turns out it was done really poorly," Nat retells. "It was termite-ridden and, during those weeks of rain, the ceiling flooded and collapsed." Adding to the reality-TV-worthy 'plotline', Nat was six months' pregnant when mould started to appear and the property was deemed uninhabitable.

The couple and their two "very needy" shih tzu toy poodles moved in with Nat's parents an hour away, while the back half

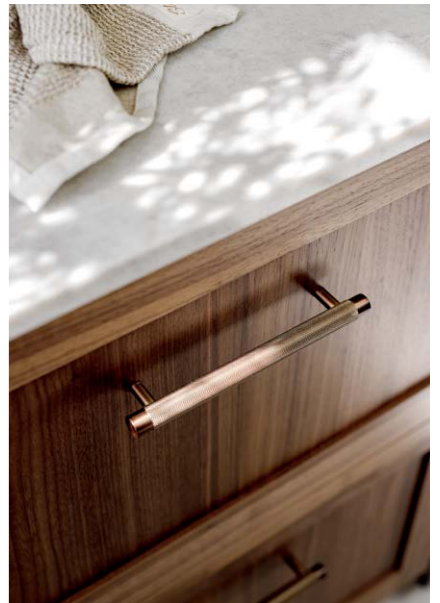


Nat and Zach were keen to update the design and flow of the home. Another imperative for the couple was adding skylights to harness as much daylight as possible. Practicality was also top of mind, so simple-to-maintain tiled flooring now flows from the open-plan kitchen and living space through to the expanded laundry. "It's a porcelain tile with a limestone look. Aesthetically, it is beautiful and much easier to maintain than real limestone," says Nat. Eventually, the work-in-progress deck off the kitchen will be a dining area. "We had a huge dining space at our last home and often found that we would eat outside anyway."

“When I designed this house, I put together all the things I love. We wanted it to feel homely”  
 NAT SPADAVECCHIA, HOMEOWNER



**KITCHEN** (both pages) Adding a skylight was a game-changer in here, as was assigning the pantry to drawers. “With cupboards, things always get shoved to the back, but with drawers, you can see it all and easily pull it out,” says Nat. “And while we love the wine rack, we might have to reconsider it as Leeroy gets older!” Benchtops and splashback, Marmo Gris Leather from Talostone. Kintore pulls and Cascade tapware in Antique Brass from (respectively) Lo & Co and Faucet Strommen. Chateau Blanc Naturale floor tiles, Di Lorenzo. Mayfair wall light, Emac & Lawton. Smeg appliances, Bing Lee.

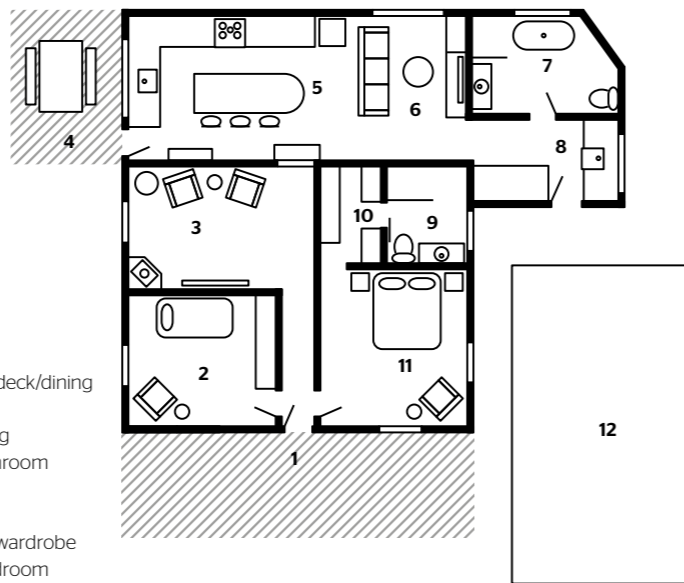


of the cottage was taken down to the slab. “I was pregnant and hormonal and kept thinking – what have we done? We’ve basically paid for a few sandstone walls!” Nat discloses. The couple’s child, Leeroy, arrived on June 6, preceding the return to their Helensburgh cottage by two months. “Zach worked on the house around the clock while also working on his other projects,” she says. “Having my parents there to help me with Leeroy was a godsend!”

In contrast to the stress and chaos associated with getting everything ready for family life, the Spadavecchias’ finished home is infused with a calm, soothing air. Losing the old kitchen, dining area and main bathroom to the floods allowed the couple to reallocate the space and rebuild according to their evolving needs. They downsized the main bathroom and replaced the dining area with a roomier living area, and the cupboard laundry was expanded into a highly functional work zone.

Nat and Zach also tweaked the layout of the century-old sections of the cottage, sacrificing a small bedroom to create a primary ensuite and walk-in wardrobe. The rerouted hallway now gives a clear view from the front door to the kitchen at the back, punctuated by the softly curved archways envisioned by





- 1 Entry
- 2 Bedroom
- 3 Snug
- 4 Outdoor deck/dining
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Main living
- 7 Main bathroom
- 8 Laundry
- 9 Ensuite
- 10 Walk-in wardrobe
- 11 Main bedroom
- 12 Studio

**SNUG** (this page) Fortunately for Nat and Zach, the fireplace was pre-existing. "But we really debated whether this should become a bedroom and if the fire would stay. Now, though, it's my favourite room," says Nat. Havana tumbled limestone fireplace tiles, Surface Gallery. Linen sofas, Papaya. Light, The Society Inc.

**MAIN LIVING** (opposite) Nat and Zach chose another hard-wearing sofa from Papaya.





**MAIN BATHROOM** (this page and opposite bottom) “We used Di Lorenzo tiles in the wet areas, Iver for the door hardware and TradCo for the Federation light switches,” explains Nat, adding that “rippled glass is great because it hides the messy look of products in the shower”. Bath, Renovation Kingdom. Handles, The Society Inc. Artwork, a vintage piece from Nat’s grandmother.

**LAUNDRY** (opposite left) “The cost of the plumbing was quite high because we put in plumbing for the expanded laundry [before, it was just a cupboard] and new ensuite – but it was worthwhile,” says Nat. Joinery, Taubmans Breakaway and Dulux White Duck Quarter. LG WashTower, Bing Lee. Artwork by Ally Siejka.

**BEDROOM** (opposite right) “I would have loved to open up the ceiling in here as well,” says Nat, “but we couldn’t deal with the time constraints. Though it does feel cosier having the lower ceiling for a nursery.” Zali teak cot, Sacred Bundle. Chair, Papaya. Art, Warranbrooke.

LESSONS LEARNT

“Make it work”

NAT SPADAVECCHIA, OWNER

“I would have loved floor-to-ceiling windows at the back of the home, but we had ordered replacement window and door frames before we knew we had to pull that part of the home down completely.”



Nat, who handpicked all the finishes and fittings. “I wanted to keep the look quite true to the original house while giving it a modern touch,” the creative multi-hyphenate explains. “We mixed the warm, natural minimalism of Japandi with elements of a traditional cottage look and it turned into its own style.” The harmonious blend of the two aesthetics is owed to Nat’s attention to detail, right down to the curtain rods and light switches, which offer a counterpoint to the clean-lined modern furniture and decor. “Functionality, durability and longevity in style were the three necessities when sourcing my interiors. And yes, I did also think about what would shoot well!” she laughs.

In the inviting kitchen, with its rich walnut joinery and brushed-brass highlights, the sandstone wall serves as a stunning reminder that the couple have worked hard to give historical Luck Cottage a new lease on life. Nat, Zach, Leeroy and their two pooches live with the past while building their own future. “Of course, there were moments in the beginning when I wanted to sell the house and move on,” says Nat, “but I am so glad that we pushed through.”

The Palm Co is at [thepalmco.com.au](http://thepalmco.com.au) and [@the.palm.co](https://www.instagram.com/the.palm.co)

GREAT FINDS



1 Smeg 'Victoria' 900mm dual-fuel freestanding cooker, \$5940, Harvey Norman. 2 Dawson oversized armchair in Wheat, \$2990, Papaya. 3 Muuto 'Grain' pendant light in Nature, \$345, Living Edge. 4 Mix Oatmeal cashmere wool throw, \$233, L&M Home. 5 Alessi 'Plisse' electric kettle in White, \$279.90, Designstuff. 6 Smeg '50s Style Retro' 510L right-hinge bottom-mount fridge in White, \$4090, Harvey Norman. 7 Havana Renaissance limestone tiles, \$148 per sq m, Surface Gallery. 8 Leather Honed engineered stone in Marmo Gris, POA, Talostone. 9 Kintore pull in Bronze, \$69, Lo & Co. 10 Eggshell acrylic paint in Old Stone Wall, \$144.40 per 4L, Porter's Paints. 11 Cassa Design fluted V-groove 1700mm bath in Matt White, \$2350, The Blue Space. 12 Black Ubud wooden stool, \$99.95, Temple & Webster. 13 Savannah rug in Natural (200cm x 300cm), \$2610, Armadillo. 14 Heavy linen cushion cover, \$89.90, Città. 15 Zali teak cot, \$1649, Sacred Bundle. 16 Cinnamon Sky framed artwork, \$370, Allys Siejka. 17 Iittala 'Sarpaneva' cast-iron casserole dish, \$530, Top 3 by Design.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: KATE LINCOLN



**MAIN BEDROOM** "Revealing the pitch of the roof has made it feel grander," says Nat. "And the pendant lights [not shown] from Imprint House are all app-operated for ease." Linen, Cultiver, Chair and stool, Papaya. Rug, Armadillo. Jilliby sheer curtains in Ice (throughout), DIY Blinds. Art photography by Kara Rosenlund.