

PROJECT N°

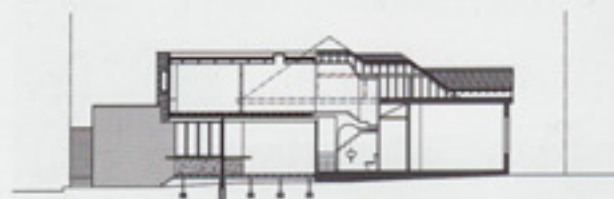
# 02

## Union Street HOUSE by Clare Cousins Architects

• MELBOURNE, VIC •

A bold new form at the rear of this Edwardian home hovers above an indoor/outdoor living area that caters to the clients' love for entertaining.

Words by [Katelin Butler](#)  
Photography by [Shannon McGrath](#)



Section 1:400

0 5m



01 The new deck forms a transitional zone between indoors and outdoors and provides a great space in which the family can entertain.

Much of the original Edwardian house has been retained. At the front of the house, the main bedroom has a new ensuite that is clad completely in black tiles (at the client's request), with a tall, thin skylight reaching up through the lofty ceiling of the original home. The use of black within such tight spaces appears to disguise how small the room really is, a strategy often employed by Clare and her team. In fact, an even smaller powder room has been squeezed under the staircase and this is also finished in dark colours. With the addition of a first floor, the children's bedroom on the ground floor has been made into a second, more formal living area. Edwardian detailing is still clearly expressed throughout the front, but this part of the house now boasts a fresh coat of paint and refinished timber flooring.

Since there were no sight line issues, the introduction of the second storey was relatively straightforward. The new level contains two children's bedrooms, a bathroom and a storage/play area. The storage room sits above the old part of the house, so is raised up again from the rest of the other rooms on this level. Again this demonstrates the puzzle-like nature of this project – trying to fit in as much storage/usable space for the family as possible.

The resulting bold exterior form of the rear extension is clad in dark concrete roof tiles, with a folding form clearly articulated. Clare mentions that the idea for using roof tiles vertically came from attending a seminar about affordable housing in 2007, which looked at ways of minimizing costs without sacrificing design. These tiles also refer back to the original terracotta tiles at the front of the house. A window wraps around the corner of one of the children's bedrooms and faces towards the street, as opposed to neighbouring properties. This adds another layer of articulation to the exterior of the upper level.

The dark volume of the upper level appears to hover above the entertaining area below. At the eastern end, the upper volume rests on a long, thin orthogonal form in silvertop ash. This contains a pantry and a laundry, and its positioning reflects the siting of an original lean-to. Formally, it balances the suggested weight of the upper level.

Clare and her team have created a home that sensitively reflects a particular family's daily rituals and lifestyle, responding to both needs and wants. With all parts of the puzzle fitting neatly into place, there is definitely no need for this family to move any time soon. ☐

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#### Architect

**Clare Cousins Architects**  
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#### Practice profile

A small practice that focuses on residential design, and which also works on mixed-use developments and exhibition design.

#### Project team

Clare Cousins, Michael McManus, Sarah Lake, Deborah Rowe

#### Builder

CBD Contracting

#### Consultants

**Engineer:** Andrew Daley

#### Products

**Roofing:** Bluescope Lysaght Zinalume TrimDek cladding; Boral Terracotta Shingle tiles in 'Eclipse'

**External walls:** Off-form concrete, Boral concrete roof tiles, granite finish; Radial Timber silvertop ash; **Internal walls:** Plasterboard, painted Dulux 'Berkshire White'

**Windows:** Capral

powdercoated aluminium

**Doors:** Designer Doorware chrome door hardware

**Flooring:** Tasmanian oak with limed finish

**Lighting:** Masson for Light Beama external lights; Nova interior downlights from Inlite; Sandra Lindner Selene pendant from Anibou

**Kitchen:** Rulso Concrete Benchtops benchtop; stainless steel and black 2-pac joinery; Bertazzoni oven; Teknobil sink mixer from Reece; Liebherr fridge

**Laundry:** Villeroy and Boch laundry trough; black laminate laundry joinery; Classic Ceramics white gloss tiles to splashback and benchtop

**Bathroom:** Cibo vanity and Scala tapware from Reece; Classics Ceramics wall and floor tiles in 'Oriental Black'

**External elements:** Dressed silvertop ash decking

**Other:** Hydronic heating

**Floor area**  
304.7 m<sup>2</sup> site  
193 m<sup>2</sup> floor

**Time schedule**  
**Design, documentation:**  
12 months

**Construction:**  
12 months

04 Bifold doors and windows fold back to open the living spaces to the small backyard at the north of the site.

05 A new laundry sink is tucked into the narrow eastern wing on the ground floor.

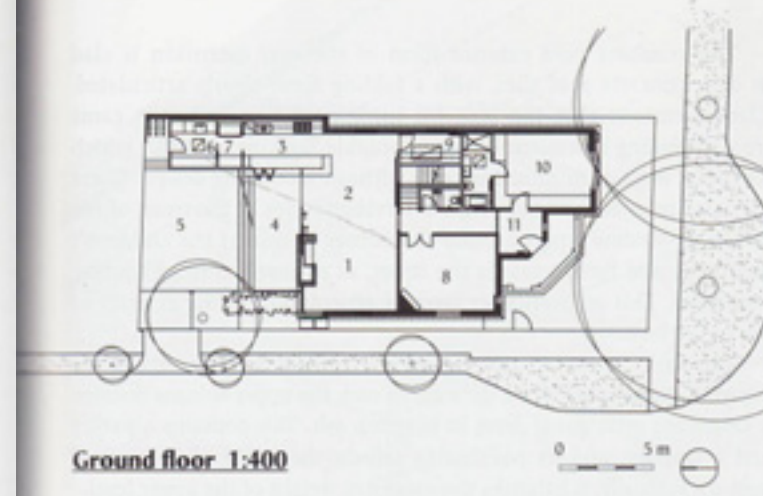
**A** house alteration and/or addition is usually about making a home more livable for an expanding family or growing children. This method of accommodating change is often preferable, as opposed to moving to a different house altogether – especially when the home is located close to schools and friends in an appealingly leafy Melbourne suburb. Although the site for the Union Street House is just over three hundred square metres, Clare Cousins Architects has squeezed as much functional space out of it as possible, working on the project as if it were a jigsaw puzzle.

Clare has empathetically choreographed connections between key spaces to reflect the family's pattern of daily life. The clients work in the hospitality industry and an important component of the brief was to create an entertaining area. The footprint of the lower level has been reduced to accommodate a northern outdoor deck that steps down into a small rectangle of grass. Although the family usually parks its cars on the street, council regulations require off-street parking, and this grassed area can be used as such when required.

The solid concrete kitchen bench sits at the threshold between inside and outside, with bifold windows completely opening up the kitchen to the outdoors. When these windows and the adjacent

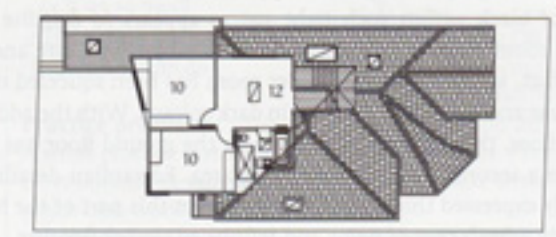
sliding doors are open the deck becomes part of the living area, protected by the large overhang of the first floor. Another important connection of spaces is that between the study and the kitchen. Instead of being hidden at the front of the house away from the living spaces, the galley study sits adjacent to the stairwell, directly in line with the kitchen. The study's proximity to the living spaces allows for engagement with the family's conversation, if so desired, but means it can also be shut off to provide an effective working environment. Each planning decision takes into account the way in which the family operates.

The openness of the kitchen end of the living area is contrasted with the cocooned lounging end. A solid off-form concrete wall contains slick, black joinery that houses the television. A single floor-to-ceiling picture window floods this end of the living area with daylight. The interior features a neutral palette of raw materials and textures – Tasmanian oak flooring, off-form concrete and white walls punctuated with black joinery and door hardware. The colours chosen imbue a sense of calmness, with views to a green wall at the rear of the small garden adding another layer to the earthy, relaxed ambience.



Ground floor 1:400

- |           |             |              |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| 1 Living  | 5 Courtyard | 9 Study      |
| 2 Dining  | 6 Laundry   | 10 Bedroom   |
| 3 Kitchen | 7 Pantry    | 11 Entry     |
| 4 Terrace | 8 Lounge    | 12 Play area |



First floor 1:400

02

- 02 A neutral palette of colours and materials gives a consistency to the old and new parts of the house.
- 03 A bold, folding form hovers above a new entertaining area at the rear of the existing Edwardian home.



03

