Located in the stunning gold mining town of Bendigo 150km north west of Melbourne, this 1970s cream brick veneer home was purchased by academic Brendan and his partner Jaclyn around two years ago. They now have eight-month old Charlie as a welcome addition to their family. Close to the centre of town, one of the wonderful features of this property is its location beside One Tree Hill National Park, so they literally have the bush at their back-door.

Their primary reason for renovating was, according to Brendon “the spaces didn’t work, they were disjointed and there was no flow through the house and to the outside.” He describes it as “ad hoc 1970s brick veneer, with a series of disconnected spaces creating an architectural mish-mash.” Initially the couple had thought they could design it themselves with the help of a good builder, but quickly realised that they didn’t have the experience or product knowledge to do so effectively. After some research they engaged Dex and Simon, architects from Mara Studio, a Bendigo based practice with a strong ethos and commitment to sustainable design.
As a way of keeping costs down, Brendan had planned to do a lot of the smaller building jobs himself. It was impressive to hear that he undertook the ambitious task of reusing some of the original glazing from the house and building double glazed frames for some of the south facing windows.

Prior to the renovation Brendan says “it was a hot and cold house. No insulation, poor natural light and air circulation meant it wasn’t a nice space to be in.” The architect’s brief was to open up the house and create a light spacious kitchen area with a flow into the living spaces. They also added in triple bi-fold doors to give access to the outside deck and heat reducing blinds for the warmer summer months.
The couple's intention is to continue renovating the front part of the house in the near future. Given that the climate in Bendigo can be quite hot in summer and cold in winter, one of the first priorities will be to finish double glazing all of the original windows.

With the addition of ceiling fans throughout, high quality insulation to the roof, walls and under-floor and double-glazing they have achieved both a contemporary, easy living home with excellent sustainable credentials. They have also used reclaimed timbers for all the bench-tops and cabinets in the kitchen area and made a conscious choice to minimise all plastics and acrylics throughout the house as well as using high quality lead free paints. The house uses solar hot water and a 1.5kw solar power system.
When asked how they found the whole renovation process, Brendan and Jaclyn enjoyed working with the architects (and plan to continue working with them on the next stage) but feel they would benefit from a clearer project plan from the outset. Living in mayhem was obviously less than ideal and being realistic is also essential. They can also now see the value of working with professionals, and while they may be more expensive they bring value and expertise to the table.

Text: Melissa Rymer  
Photography: Dex Wong  
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Specifications

**Ceiling Insulation**  
R5.0 batts in the ceiling.

**Wall Insulation**  
Foil board insulation in the walls.

**Floor Insulation**  
R5.0 spray-on under-floor insulation.

**Windows and Doors**  
Double glazed, timber framed.

**Photovoltaics**  
1.5kW system, solar hot water.

**Airflow**  
Ceiling fans throughout.

**Recycled Materials**  
Reclaimed timber for bench-tops and cabinets.