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# THE VALUE OF GOOD DESIGN

In essence, good building design is an investment—in lifestyle, sustainability, financial performance, and community legacy. It transforms buildings from mere shelters into places of purpose, pride, and lasting value.

Design isn't something you can test drive. Once your home is built, that's it—you won't get to go back and see what another designer might have done. That's why choosing the right designer from the start is critical.

Poor design can cost you in ways that aren't always obvious at first for example: awkward layouts, missed sunlight, wasted space, higher energy bills, or missed material palettes. But the real cost is in how you feel in the space. Good design, on the other hand, improves your life in quiet, powerful ways. It's not just about floor plans and flow—it's about how it feels to live there.

It's coming home and feeling a sense of calm the moment you step inside.

It's pulling into your driveway and stopping for a second—just to admire your home, with pride and excitement. It's natural light spilling into your living room in winter, and cool breezes flowing through in summer. It's the joy of a space that works intuitively, that reflects who you are, and that grows with you. A well-designed home lifts your mood, supports your lifestyle, and becomes something you love—not just something you own.





# Why Invest in DeBu Studios?

Because you're not just hiring a designer—you're partnering with a builder-minded designer who sees the whole picture.

Hi, I'm Joel—the sole designer behind DeBu Studios. I bring more than a decade of hands-on experience in residential construction to the design table, which means every line I draw is grounded in buildability, practicality, and real-world know-how.

When you work with DeBu Studios, you're getting more than concepts and floor plans. I manage the entire process—from 3D visualisations and council approvals to construction details and on-site builder meetings—ensuring your project is consistent, cohesive, and carefully considered from start to finish

## **In return, I invest in your vision.**

Your home is likely one of the biggest personal projects you'll ever take on—and I treat it that way. I invest time to understand how you live, what excites you, and what your space needs to support you now and into the future. I design with purpose, not just to meet brief, but to elevate it—turning your ideas into something better than you imagined, and entirely your own.

I take pride in the details, care about the outcome, and stay committed until your vision is fully realised—not just on paper, but in the built form. This is more than a job to me—it's a craft, and one I'm proud to share with you.



BDAA Accredited low rise #6549



# PROCESS

## 1. Initial Inquiry

Once we receive your initial inquiry via phone or email, you'll receive a follow-up email with my portfolio and design questionnaire to help me understand your goals and project needs.

## 2. Review & Site Information

After reviewing the materials, we encourage you to complete the questionnaire and schedule a site meeting, as well as providing any supporting documents—such as a mood board, inspiration images, or relevant site information—to help me get a clearer picture of your vision.

## 3. Preliminary Site Research

I'll conduct initial research into your property to identify planning controls, overlays, and site-specific restrictions. Once your completed questionnaire and any supporting information is received, I'll prepare a detailed fee proposal tailored to your project.

## 4. Acceptance of Fee Proposal

If you're happy to proceed, you can formally accept the fee proposal. At this point, we'll schedule a site meeting where I can take measurements (if required) and begin the next steps.

## 5. Site Surveys & Design Brief

We will coordinate any necessary surveys, such as feature surveys, flood certificates, or bushfire reports. At the same time, we'll begin shaping the design brief using your questionnaire responses, mood board, and key priorities.

## 6. Concept Design Development

Using your brief, budget, and site conditions, I'll develop a tailored Concept Design. From this early stage, I'll also prepare a budget estimate based on typical build costs to help guide decision-making. You'll receive a set of floor plans and a 3D digital model shared via web link, allowing you to explore the design interactively and provide feedback.

## 7. Budget Alignment & Design Refinement

We strongly recommend engaging a builder early in the process to help align the design with your actual construction budget. To support this collaboration, DeBu Studios offers unlimited design revisions throughout the design phase, ensuring your ideas are refined and resolved with both creativity and practicality in mind.





# PROJECT HUTTON

This project involved designing a bold, modern, and timeless new home with a large basement. I joined the project after a previous design had been completed by another architect. Rather than modifying the existing plans, I encouraged a fresh start that better captured the client’s vision.

Key priorities included maximising ocean views, harnessing northern light, and creating a memorable entry experience. Elements such as a koi pond, layered landscaping, and lush gardens were incorporated to establish a strong indoor-outdoor connection and a welcoming sense of arrival.

## Testimonial

“Joel designed exactly what we wanted even if I didn’t know that. Challenged us on another design and glad we did. Committed and communicated well. Joel does some great work.”

Trever (Owner)

Design - Debu studios  
Builder - Escarpment Building  
Interior Design - Racheal Mikolas  
Approval - Development Application





















# PROJECT DOBBIE

The brief was to design a home for a retiring couple that would feel both relaxed and connected to its surroundings. A key request was to create a strong engagement with the street—something that’s often lost in more private suburban homes. The owners envisioned a place where they could sit outside in the northern sunlight after a morning surf, enjoying the warmth while casually connecting with passing neighbours. The home needed to be future-ready, with a master bedroom on the ground floor for long-term accessibility, as well as additional rooms to accommodate their children and grandchildren when they visit. Above all, the main goal was to bring in as much natural light as possible—particularly into the living areas—by carefully considering orientation, ceiling heights, and the placement of windows and openings.

## Testimonial

“I have built several significant houses from Kieraville, Balgownie in the rain forest to a few on the beach at East Corrimal. I engaged Joel through referral and have found him to be one of the smartest, young innovative and pleasant architects to deal with. An astute young man who also checks on the building company to ensure best practice outcomes.”

Tye (owner)

Design - Debu studios

Builder - H+S Building

Approval - Complying development

















## PROJECT PENDLEBURY

The brief was to redesign the façade of the existing dwelling to create a more modern coastal cottage aesthetic that would better engage with the street. The home was originally positioned with a significant street setback, and as a result, the large front yard had been underutilized, with all the living areas hidden at the rear. Given that the front yard is larger than the backyard, the design focused on reconnecting the home with the street frontage.

As part of the brief, the owner requested extending towards the street to include a home office that could also function as an additional bedroom, further activating the front of the property and making practical use of the generous setback.

Design - Debu studios

Builder - Owner Builder

Approval - Complying development













## PROJECT SHARKYS

This project was a new, attached dual occupancy perched on the cliff's edge with sweeping views over the ocean. The design incorporates basement car parking and a striking curved façade that responds to the coastal environment with a sense of fluidity and movement.

At the time of design, dual occupancies typically followed more rigid, angular forms—making this one of the earlier examples to embrace curved architecture in a contemporary multi-dwelling setting. The smooth curves soften the massing, enhance street appeal, and reflect the natural forms of the ocean and coastline beyond.

The result is a bold, modern, and forward-thinking design that remains timeless—defined by its sculptural presence and strong connection to its dramatic site.

Design - Debu studios

Builder - Greenstone Homes

Approval - Complying development

























## PROJECT CHENHALLS

This project was a first-floor addition to a character-filled timber cottage on a prominent corner block. The design took cues from the existing ground floor window bays, using them to inform the geometry and rhythm of the upper level—creating a strong visual connection between old and new.

The material palette introduced modern finishes while retaining the original cottage cladding below, striking a careful balance between contemporary and traditional elements. This layering of old and new materials created a home that feels both fresh and familiar.

The result is a completely unique cottage-style home that stands confidently on its corner site—striking from every angle, yet grounded in the charm and scale of the original dwelling.

Building Design - Debu Studios  
Builder - Concept Construction  
Approval - Development Application

AWARDS - WINNER BDAA 2023 National design awards  
Best Renovation under \$500k

















## PROJECT ARTHOUSE

This project was a sensitive design intervention for a heritage-listed Art Deco dwelling. The original home featured smooth white curves, decorative brickwork, and refined render details—elements that gave it a distinct character and timeless elegance.

Rather than mimic the existing style, the owners and I made a deliberate decision to create a bold contrast. While we echoed the original curved forms, we reinterpreted them using contemporary materials—most notably Colorbond Custom Orb metal cladding. Its ribbed texture and dark finish provided a striking counterpoint to the soft, light-toned heritage façade, allowing old and new to stand apart while still speaking the same design language.

A large void was introduced above the new living area, visually connecting the existing kitchen to the extension and drawing in light and air. This dramatic vertical space also frames direct views of Mount Keira, grounding the new addition in its Illawarra setting and giving the home a strong connection to its landscape.

The result is a thoughtful blend of heritage and modern design—one that respects the past while confidently embracing the present.

Building Design - Debu Studios

Builder - Eastbuilt

Approval - Development Application

AWARDS - WINNER BDAA 2024 National design awards

Best Renovation under \$500k

WINNER BDAA 2024 National design awards

Best use of Colorbond

IFAD 2024 WINNER Peoples choice - Renovation













## PROJECT BLACKSWAN

This project involved a compact addition along with a complete reconfiguration of the existing floor plan and façade. Located directly on the beach and near industrial coal storage facilities, the home needed to be robust, low-maintenance, and resilient to the harsh coastal environment.

In response, the material palette was intentionally dark—chosen to reduce the appearance of salt, sand, and airborne coal dust, and to simplify ongoing maintenance. To avoid the heaviness that can come with darker tones, texture and depth were introduced through a layered use of materials, subtle articulation, and custom window hoods that provide both shade and visual interest.

A key feature of the exterior is the use of charred timber cladding (Shou Sugi Ban), which not only complements the tonal palette but adds richness, tactility, and a sense of craftsmanship. The overall result is a coastal home that balances practical durability with striking, modern character—perfectly suited to its unique and challenging context.

Building Design - Debu Studios

Builder - HC Construction

Approval - Development Application

























## PROJECT TECOMA

The brief was to design a modern family home that responded to the generous scale of the site and its natural surroundings. To make the most of the expansive block, the pool was positioned centrally, forming the heart of a courtyard layout. This approach allows light to penetrate deep into the home, while also creating distinct zones for living, entertaining, and retreat—each with seamless access to the rear yard

The material palette was inspired by the site's mature gum trees, drawing on their natural tones and textures. Charcoal hues reference the bark and shadows beneath the canopy, while crisp whites and timber elements evoke the pale tones of the tree trunks and filtered light. The result is a grounded, timeless home that connects architecture with landscape and offers a calm, inviting environment for family life.

Building Design - Debu Studios

Builder - Align Building

Approval - Development Application

AWARDS - Finalist BDAA 2024 National design awards

New home under \$1m





















## PROJECT MASON

This project involved a rear addition featuring new living areas, a swimming pool, and a secondary dwelling. The existing cottage was full of charm, and it was important to retain its character. Rather than altering the original façade, the design focused on extending from the rear—respectfully blending old and new.

The existing floor plan was reconfigured to accommodate four bedrooms, while the new addition created light-filled, modern living spaces that open to the backyard and pool. The result is a home that enhances the cottage's original essence while providing the functionality of contemporary family living



Building Design - Debu Studios  
Builder - BM Total Building  
Approval - Development Application















## PROJECT THALASSA

This project involved a first-floor addition for a growing family of six who had outgrown their compact cottage. With a tight urban site and just 60m<sup>2</sup> available under the Gross Floor Area (GFA) controls, every square metre had to work hard.

The design focused on creating a sense of space and connection within a limited footprint. Strategic use of double-height voids and balconies allowed the home to feel open and expansive without exceeding floor area limits. The large central void not only draws natural light deep into the home but also creates a strong visual and acoustic link between levels—allowing the family to stay connected while still enjoying separate zones for retreat and activity.

This clever spatial layering ensures the home feels generous, functional, and responsive to the family's evolving needs—despite the constraints of the site.

Building Design - Debu Studios

Builder - Owner builder

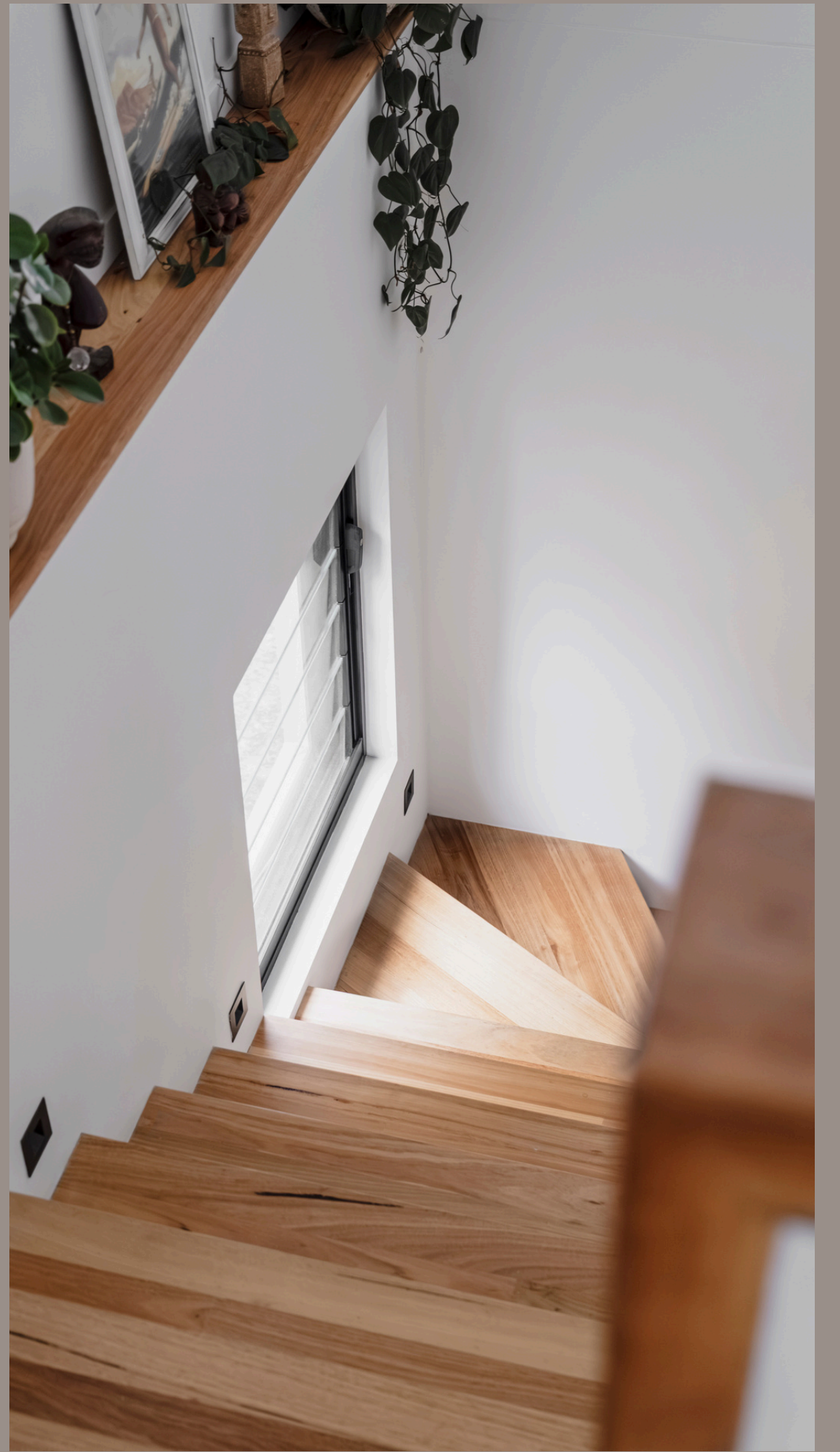
Approval - Development Application

















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