

wide open **SPACES**

Celebrating outdoor living in subtropical hinterland style, this home — inside and out — is a moving feast

■ WORDS / Lynn Malone ■ PHOTOGRAPHY / Clive Buxton

Fitted with retractable awnings, the covered verandas and a dining pavilion are usable year-round





French doors seamlessly adjoin the indoor and outdoor living areas to exponentially extend the living space

Living and working in Asian metropolises for more than 15 years, former Sydney-sider Deborah Morgan made a point to view real estate for sale in each village, international city, or country she visited purely for leisure. At the time, little did Deborah realise the property she ultimately purchased to call home would be back in Australia.

While visiting family in the New South Wales Byron Bay hinterland for Christmas in 2001, Deborah decided to look at properties. “Verandahs” was first on her open-for-inspection agenda. “What sold me was the impeccably manicured grounds, with its mature trees, orchids and plants; these can take decades to achieve. Before the sunset, sales contracts were signed and sealed. Verandahs was mine as its next custodian,” tells Deborah. Ten years on, finishing her Asian tour of duty in mid-2011, Deborah returned to Australia, taking up full-time residence at Verandahs and embarked upon her next career in property development, management and acquisitions.

Situated on 10 acres in the community of Coorabell, Verandahs was built on a crest, with vistas across the valley to the sea. The residential enclave was planned and built in the early 1990s by regionally acclaimed craftsman and building designer, Ron Johnson. The main house consisted of three bedrooms, one bathroom, a spacious gallery-styled foyer, as well as an open-plan living, dining and kitchen areas. Highlights included three-metre high ceilings with decorative cornices, Australian hardwood floors throughout and expansive Queensland-style wrap-around verandahs.

A lattice-clad, enclosed carport adjoined the main house and studio by covered walkways. The studio, used by its former owners as a cottage industry manufacturing facility,



Verandahs owner, Deborah Morgan, collected accessories and furnishings during her 15 years living in Asia

“My objectives were to create a relaxed and unpretentious home, yet to showcase the art, invaluable antiques and furnishings that I have collected over time” — Deborah

was a voluminous warehouse-like space with concrete floors, minimal internal walls, and vaulted ceilings then surrounded by generously proportioned covered patios.

With sound and established fundamentals, the main house and studio were prime for Deborah to personalise and develop her business plan. “My vision was all about comfort

and capitalising on the beautiful setting that Verandahs was gifted with. For years, I was intrigued by the notion of Caribbean design, where the outdoor living areas are equally as important as indoor living. My objectives were to create a relaxed and unpretentious home, yet to showcase the art, invaluable antiques and furnishings that I have collected over time.”



Vaulted ceilings in the studio make a feature of the structural ceiling beams



LEFT The Verandahs house and guest studio were designed to maximise prevailing breezes and natural light

ABOVE Indigo blue and white fabric prints are a striking combination to offset traditional interiors

between Deborah and Damien minimised the challenges of managing construction from another country. "Initially, Damien and I had a daily telephone meeting that was backed up by a tight project plan, to which we both adhered," Deborah elaborated.

In 2007, stage two and the studio construction works commenced. The new studio layout included two bedrooms; one large bathroom with double vanities and indoor/outdoor showers; and an open-plan living area with vaulted ceilings, which made a feature of the exposed structural ceiling beams. An addition of a wood-burning fireplace made for a warm and comfortable environment during the winter months, and French doors seamlessly connecting the patios ensured the interiors were cooled during summer months through cross-ventilation. "Having the studio as a fully contained two-bedroom guest cottage is a big plus when family and friends stay overnight or for extended periods," Deborah admits.

Starting with a new kitchen in the main house, stages three and four were completed in 2012. The original kitchen served its owners well; however, it was due for a complete overhaul — particularly given it was to be used as a cooking class venue. "The new Verandahs kitchen needs to suit the requirements of a professional chef,

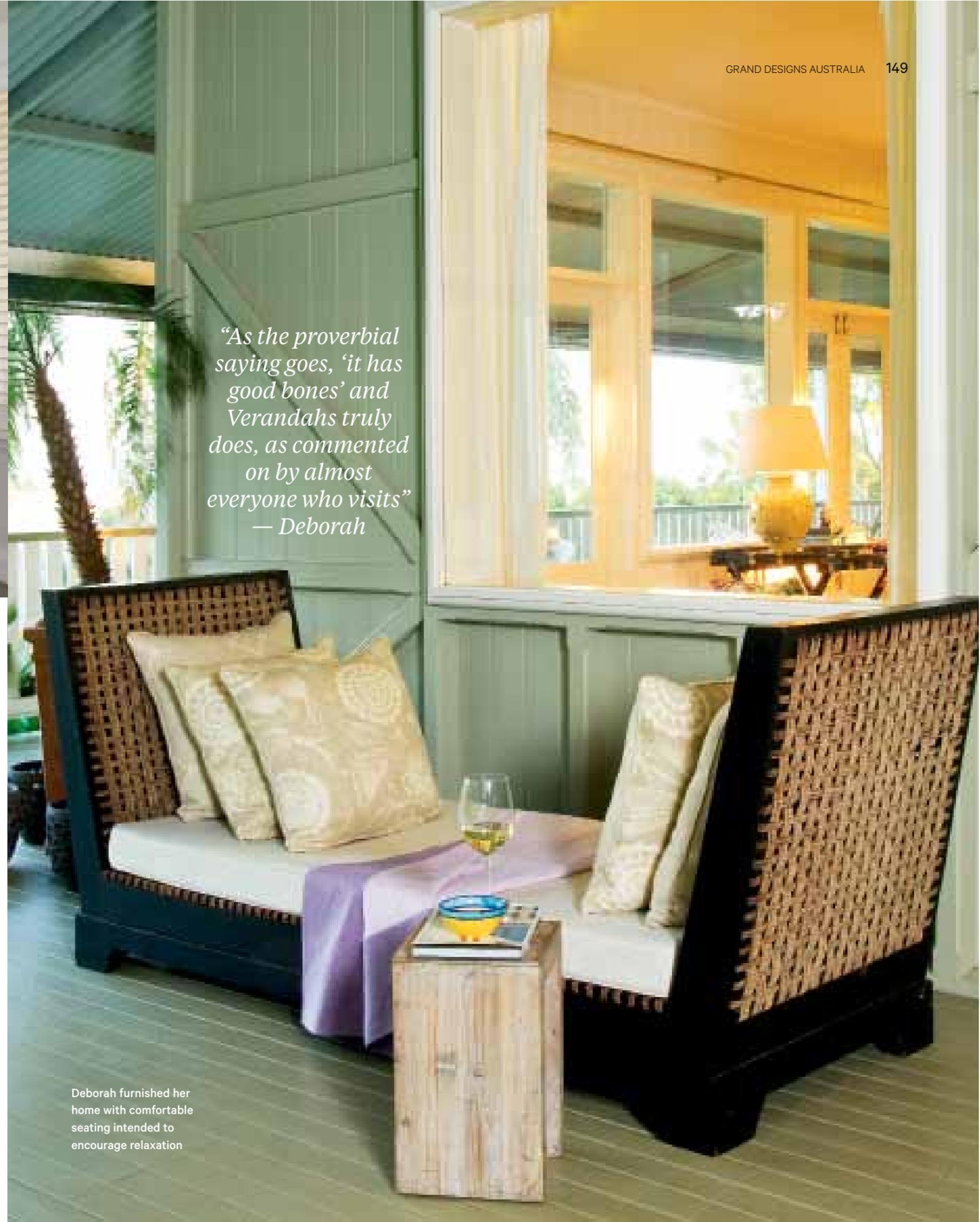


Deborah reflects. "As the proverbial saying goes, 'it has good bones' and Verandahs truly does, as commented on by almost everyone who visits."

The first construction stage commenced in February, 2002, with the extensions of the main house verandahs; building an outdoor dining pavilion adjacent to the indoor lounge area; and creating a bathroom pavilion to service the master bedroom as its ensuite. The new dining pavilion was positioned on the northeast corner to take

advantage of the morning sunlight and views to the sea, and was a logical extension to further enjoy sub-tropical outdoor living. Within the house, the existing bathroom was demolished then modernised with double vanities, a rain shower and travertine-tiled floors and walls.

The construction term ended up being approximately six months and was overseen by builder Damien Connellan, while Deborah returned to Asia. Regular communication



"As the proverbial saying goes, 'it has good bones' and Verandahs truly does, as commented on by almost everyone who visits"
— Deborah

Deborah furnished her home with comfortable seating intended to encourage relaxation



Owner, Deborah Morgan



A multifunctional utility kitchen is tucked away from the main kitchen



An open-plan kitchen and lounge area is subtly delineated by furniture placement

but not be daunting for everyday cooks, like me,” explains Deborah. Brett Adamson and his crew at WoodRabbit Kitchens & Designer Cabinets were up to the task, and completed the new kitchen on time and under budget.

Deborah’s brief to Sydney-based interior designer, Lynn Malone, was detailed yet succinct: “A large kitchen island for seating, cooking and functionality; easily maintained surfaces and finishes; storage and more storage; at least two ovens; a teppanyaki plate; and a coffee machine that makes good coffee. I got that and more,” says Deborah. Utilising the kitchen footprint and incorporating an infrequently used breakfast nook, the new kitchen ticked all of the “I want” boxes.

The pièce de résistance is the kitchen island — it has everything except the kitchen sink. “Everyone needs more than one cooktop” was Deborah’s rationale. In the case of Verandahs, there are four: a single wok-style gas, double gas, and double induction hobs, plus a teppanyaki plate installed on the kitchen island. “It may seem excessive, but I use each of the cooktops regularly. My preference is to select a cooktop configuration to suit my cooking style, rather than buying something generic ‘off the shelf,’” Deborah says.

A utility kitchen — tucked around the corner and behind the oven wall — serves as a walk-in pantry, with open cupboards for a cookbook library and display of collectibles. Joinery drawers throughout the kitchen are motorised and inset

with specialty organising systems. A hot/cold instantaneous water dispenser is mounted on the reconstituted-stone kitchen sink benchtop, making a kettle and bottled water redundant.

Inspired by the new kitchen, a raised garden bed to grow herbs and vegetables organically was the first phase of stage four. The edible garden, planted adjacent to the French door entry to the kitchen, was designed by Dayne Thompson, local kitchen garden designer and organic farmer. It was constructed by master carpenter Steve London, using recycled Australian hardwoods. “For the most part, everything went to plan. There was one hiccup when the garden bed excavations started and the crew hit hard clay. Work temporarily stopped and required the installation of extensive

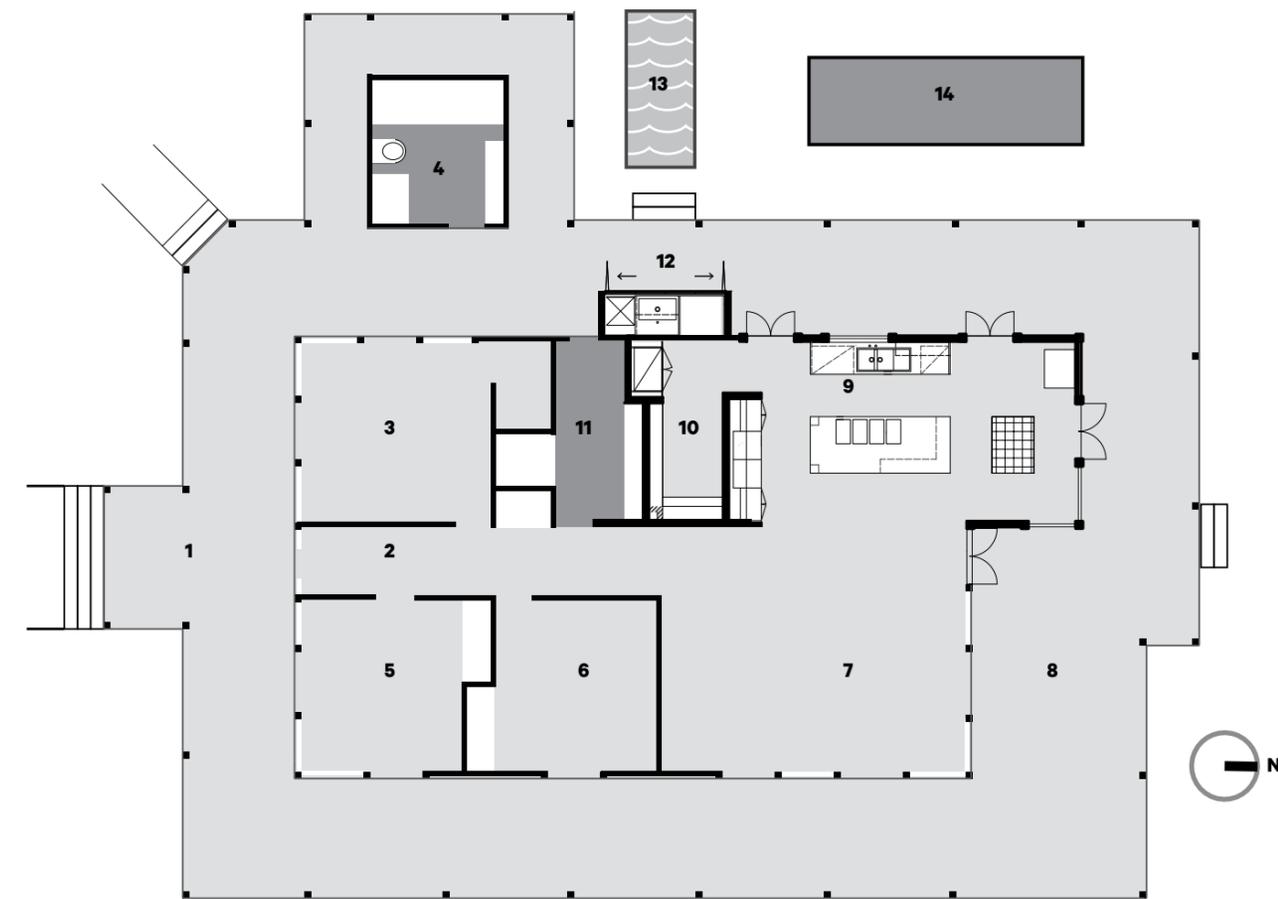
“The new Verandahs kitchen needs to suit the requirements of a professional chef, but not be daunting for everyday cooks like me” — Deborah

drainage pipework,” recalls Deborah. “The additional work resulted in several weeks delay, but one that was well worth while, now the gardens are flourishing and seem to grow by the minute.”

Asian salad greens, assorted herbs and edible flowers were the first crops, and were harvested in early November, 2012, just in time for a private cooking class and luncheon hosted by Queensland’s Golden Door Health

Retreat and its national executive chef, David Hunter. “Collaborating with David, we selected the seasonal vegetables and fresh herbs that he wanted to cook with on the day. Then Dayne literally planted the luncheon menu to suit,” confides Deborah.

Landscape lighting for the edible garden and select areas surrounding the main house was the second phase of stage four. Initial work comprised LED warm white strip-lights attached



EXISTING FLOOR PLAN

LEGEND

- 1 Entry
- 2 Foyer
- 3 Master Bedroom
- 4 Ensuite/Pavillion
- 5 Study
- 6 Guest Bedroom
- 7 Lounge Room
- 8 Outdoor Dining Pavillion
- 9 Kitchen
- 10 Pantry
- 11 Bathroom
- 12 Laundry
- 13 Fish Pond
- 14 Organic Edible Garden

“With the outdoor living areas and dedicated seating areas peppered around the landscaped grounds, there are a host of intimate places for solitude and relaxation” — Deborah

LEFT Positioned on a crest, Verandahs enjoys vistas across the farmlands and to the sea

ABOVE The Verandahs house main bedroom ensuite and its oversized soaking tub are set within a private pavillion

to the underside of each stair tread, which subtly illuminated the front entry stairway. Second, LED garden-spike light fixtures, complete with changeable light colours programmed to complement Verandahs’ signature pale lavender, were interspersed discretely within the landscape’s ground cover, creating a soft glow, without directly viewing the light source.

Deborah summaries what she loves most about her home by saying, “With the outdoor living areas and dedicated seating areas peppered around the landscaped grounds, there are a host of intimate places for solitude and relaxation. In contrast, there are areas where everyone joins together for a meal or lawn game — it’s a luxury to have choices and flexibility.”

Now, most of the upgrades are finished, Verandahs is available to lease as luxury holiday

accommodation; a premium wedding and corporate event venue and cooking class facility. Deborah is on the outlook for a second Byron Bay hinterlands property with unachieved potential to once again engage a team to work her magic. “My business plan is to acquire a stable of properties to fulfil the exponentially increasing demand for well-managed holiday accommodations and wedding venues,” says Deborah.

Verandahs continues as a work in progress. The next construction stages are a swimming pool pavillion with an outdoor kitchen and dining area, and then in the main house lounge room, a fireplace and television joinery wall, with illuminated display cabinets for Deborah’s antique shell collection. “I thrived on the fast-paced Asian corporate life; however, the time came for a change of direction and to undertake new challenges,” Deborah says. “Having returned to Verandahs more than a year ago now, I have devoted time, energy, resources and love to upgrading the property toward its potential grandeur. For it to be shared, enjoyed and loved by others — more than just me. That is truly a gift in itself.” ♡

PROJECT TEAM

- **BUILDING DESIGNER** Ron Johnson (02 6687 7487)
- **INTERIOR DESIGNER** Lynn Malone Design (02 9380 8519 or lynn@lynnmalone.com)

■ **STRUCTURE Builder** Damien Connellan (0412 009 023 or byronbaybuilder.com.au)

■ **Construction** London Construction (0409 472 001)

■ **FIXTURES AND FITTINGS Cabinetry** Blum (blum.com.au) **Benchtop** Stone Italiana (stoneitaliana.com.au) **Blinds** Creative Blinds & Awnings (02 6686 3311) **Lighting** Workshopped (workshopped.com.au) **Tapware** Billi (billi.com.au) and Abey Australia (abey.com.au)

■ **FURNITURE AND ACCESSORIES Appliances**

Smeg (smeg.com.au), Winning Appliances (winningappliances.com.au) and Bang & Olufsen (bang-olufsen.com) **Bathrobes** Printplus (0408 426 995) **Rug** Milton Cater Oriental Carpets (orientalcarpets.com.au) **Paint** Resene Paints (resene.com.au) **Linen** Frette (cavitco.com.au)

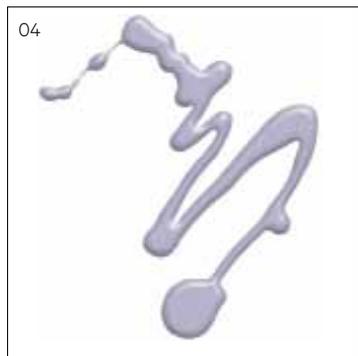
■ **SERVICES Electrical** Scott Morris Electrical (0411 743 965) **Landscaping** Dayne Thompson (0403 840 825) and Jock Price Landscape Service (0431 551 236)





GET THE LOOK

Verandahs' bohemian Byron Bay look can be achieved with these beautiful items



- 01** Coco pendant light from Coco Flip. workshopped.com.au
- 02** Cherubim by Sydney-based visual artist, Sally Higgins. salhiggins.co.uk
- 03** Coffee machine from Smeg. smeg.com.au
- 04** Paint in Poet from Resene Paints. resene.com.au
- 05** Boheme blue fabrics from Eco Chic. ecochic.com.au
- 06** 11th-century Chinese Buddha in carved black marble from Arida Gallery. facebook.com/AridaGallery
- 07** Caucasus tribal carpet from Milton Cater Oriental Carpets. orientalcarpets.com.au

