



# ALL TOGETHER NOW

Having multiple owners didn't hinder a rewarding new bach build

*Words* MONIQUE BALVERT-O'CONNOR  
*Photographs* JANE USSHER

**THIS PAGE** Justine Waters with sons Nicholas and Adam, heading to the beach only a 30-second walk from the family-owned bach at Pauanui. **OPPOSITE** The view of the bach from the beachside reserve, with the bedroom pavilion to the left, main living to the right and the courtyard connecting the two zones; the shuttered slider conceals part of the master bedroom window but can be slid across to close off the courtyard; the A-frame roofline was chosen for its timelessness; the garage is in the background.





**THESE PAGES** The boys in the kitchen, one of the few painted spaces in the house; the white double doors hide the pantry, which also has a stainless steel bench allowing for plenty of food preparation space and keeps the microwave and toaster out of sight.

**I**t took the Pauanui population a while to adjust to the Waters family taking up residence on the beachfront.

The site had been vacant for so long (about 35 years) that locals assumed it was public land – part of the abutting reserve and a handy shortcut to the beach. It was familiar territory to dogs too, as became obvious when the family was preparing to build.

In those days, the family holidayed on site in tents and a caravan. Jeanette Waters recalls waking one morning thinking a grandchild had joined her in bed. Reaching out she instead discovered something furry – an unknown Labrador, obviously feeling quite at home.





Fast forward three years or so and the neighbourhood dogs and their owners take a new route to the beach. Their old walking track is now home to an architecturally designed bach that caters for three generations of the Waters family.

The bach is owned by Jeanette and Peter Waters and their children and spouses: Justine Waters and Rohan Thompson, and Chris Waters and Melissa Wardlaw. Completing the picture are Justine and Rohan's sons, Adam, 13, and Nicholas, 12, and Chris and Melissa's daughter Noa, 12, and son Finn, nine.

While the bach is new, holidaying in Pauanui is not and neither is sharing property with family. Jeanette and Peter had owned a section with Peter's

brother at the Coromandel holiday spot back in the early 1970s so Justine had holidays there in a caravan during her childhood.

"My brother's job then was to windsurf over to Tairua to get fresh bread rolls for lunch. We used to hope he didn't fall off on the way back."

Years after that original section was sold, Justine and Rohan visited Pauanui for a holiday and were charmed. "We were keen to buy something," says Justine, so they conspired with her parents and brother. "We realised with three of us we could get something really close to the beach."

Justine's now delighted her sons can holiday as she did at the same spot. They meet friends, make



**ABOVE** Skylights enhance the outdoor feel the family was keen to achieve; the surf club is in the background on the right. **RIGHT** (from top) Nicholas and Justine enjoy the comfort of the lounge; the TV is tucked away behind plywood doors alongside the bookcase; the built-in furniture serves as a day bed. Three generations of happy bach-owners: Peter and Jeanette Waters with daughter Justine and grandsons Adam and Nicholas – son Chris and his family live overseas.





**THIS PAGE** The glass-walled breezeway connects the bach's two pavilions; the courtyard is to the right.  
**OPPOSITE** The view from the garage area, through the courtyard; with all the doors opened there's a true sense of outdoor living.

driftwood huts, practise surfing, visit the skateboard park... "They come home when they're ravenous and then head out again. I love all that."

With the various activities to enjoy, the bach has great pulling power. Based in the US, Chris, Melissa and their children visit when they can, which is sometimes in winter. For the others, it's an easy two-hour commute from Auckland.

The house was designed with bach living in mind. "We wanted it to feel like a bach and it does," says Justine. "It is so relaxing and nothing is fussy. Sandy feet are most welcome."

Ensuring the family got what they collectively wanted became a task for Johnston Architects of Christchurch to tackle.

"Mum saw Regan Johnston's work online and he was the first architect we all liked. He came up for a couple of hours, looked at the site, drew a plan and literally that's what we went with – no changes. We are picky but it was perfect," says Justine.

Her dad Peter then set about making a balsa-wood model of the bach to assist with visualisation. The real thing was built by Grant Leen of Pauanui Builders.

The bach is H shaped, with one wing dedicated to bedrooms and bathrooms, and the other to open-plan living. The connecting section comprises a louvred roof courtyard and a glass-walled breezeway.

Doors at either end of this linking space can be opened wide, as can the northern and southern glazed walls of the main living pavilion. "So, with all those open, you literally feel you are outside, no matter where you are in the living area or courtyard," says Justine.

A spacious deck borders the reserve (and provides storage space underneath for water toys). "It's not a private place but we couldn't care less. It's great for watching people heading off to the beach. It's really social and that is lovely."

Justine was the family spokesperson, liaising with all involved in the build. Her instructions followed family meetings so it was a harmonious democratic process. If there was anything they couldn't decide on, they simply said to their architect: "Tell us what to do."

The brief Justine delivered to Regan Johnston was indeed brief. The family needed a bach to cater for 10 (including a bunk room), they wanted a home that celebrated the outdoors, included an open fireplace and was timeless.

Three bedrooms ensure there's room for all the family's adults with the younger ones in the garage where Peter built some bunk beds.

The main bedroom looks out on to the reserve, while the one at the other end of the pavilion has hill





Q&A

**Something special to do with visitors:** Take them for a walk along the Pauanui to Hikuai trail – 6.4km so far and over 1000 native trees planted. *(Jeanette)*

**The best buiding decision:** Choosing Regan Johnston; his ability to interpret what we wanted – sheer genius. *(Jeanette)*

Using Grant Leen as the builder. We waited a year for him and that proved a great decision as his workmanship was outstanding. *(Peter)*

**Best money spent:** We feel we chose the best plywood on the market, from Plytech, and have been very happy. *(Peter)*

**Best seat in the house:** Reading on the couch in front of the fire after running along the trail. *(Melissa)*

**Plants that grow well here:** Grasses grow well, and bromeliads are happy in a salt-laden atmosphere. *(Peter)*

*Jeanette and Peter Waters, Melissa Wardlaw*



**THIS PAGE** The master bedroom; the bedlinen from EziBuy was exactly what they were after, Justine says; all light shades throughout the house are from Lightplan in Parnell, Auckland. **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left) One of the home's eight skylights adds natural light to the bathroom. Peter built bunk beds in the garage so the grandkids can hang out here with cousins and friends; there's also a toilet and handbasin in this area. A corner of the master bedroom; the louvres on the slider doors can be tilted to adjust privacy, sunlight and air flow. Plywood rules in this home; one lot of these hallway doors hides the laundry; the bedroom doors are painted white.



views. There was no need, the family decided, for ensembles – an outdoor shower was a greater priority – although the house has two bathrooms inside and ablation facilities in the garage.

Dressing the bach was simple. The family's plan was to let their architect decide everything, including the style of the kitchen, although Justine and Jeanette are keen cooks so made a few tweaks. Interior designer Donna Jones of The Design Option was called on for colour decisions and the bulk of the furniture is from Justine and Rohan's previous home.

Peter, who recently celebrated his 80th birthday, mans the gardens – a perfect job for the bromeliad specialist. Jeanette plants tomatoes for summer but has otherwise helped plant trees along the new Pauanui to Hikuai trail.

Justine speaks on behalf of the family in saying their holiday home is much loved. "It's kind of too good to be true." ■