

FEATURE HOME

ALBANY



Modern pavers and retaining walls encircle the house.

Country roads

By Anne Burns

LOUISE SNEDDON is skilled at PR. Sure, it's her business, but she also put all her talents to the test when this self-confessed Shore Girl managed to persuade her then husband-to-be Michael to abandon his easy Remuera apartment living for a place in the country. At the time Louise was living in a villa (her parents' former home) on 4 hectares in Albany with two horses, three dogs and two cats.

"I couldn't go city-side, I grew up here, I work here, I play here — when I came back from London I immediately came back out to the country. I couldn't do suburbia with houses everywhere," she says with a laugh.

"But everywhere you looked there was work to do — the fences, the villa, the gorse. So the compromise for us was this house."

And a skilful compromise it was. It gave Louise her sense of country — no lines in the road, neighbours you could



count on, plenty of room to walk the dogs — and Michael got the promised no-maintenance and lock-up-and-leave ease of a modern home. The bonus was the stunning water views, as the property looks north and west over the upper harbour to Whenuapai and Herald Island, and a house designed by its architecturally trained-owner Chris Bassett on sustainable lines. The couple loved the property, and fell in love with



Clean lines and open-plan living make 143 Attwood Rd ideal for entertaining.

the community. They were married in a neighbour's huge garden, their wedding photos were at the jetty at the bottom of the street, and they celebrate their anniversary in the same spot each January.

The pair relish the sense of neighbourhood for fundraising, socialising, car-pooling kids, walking the dog or working to improve the local bush, and their downtime away from the city.

The clean, modern lines of the seven-year-old, two-level house (a double garage with laundry is on the bottom floor) was perfect for their hardworking life and jet-setting play.

Then, two years ago, when an unexpected miracle in the form of baby Emilie Anne arrived, the house's areas could be adapted for the expanding family — the office became her bedroom, the decks and outdoor areas

were already dog-proofed and were now toddler-proof, too.

When crowds of friends gather (40 or 50 people, sometimes), the kids are safely corralled into a family room, divided off by sliding walls, so the big parties can continue.

The cook's kitchen invites a crowd to gather around the island bench, while the dining room and living room open to the outdoors.

The space functions equally well as a retreat for the couple every evening when they leave the city behind, luxuriating in front of the fireplace and a corner window that gets the last of the stunning sunsets.

At first Michael didn't quite get the no-maintenance he'd hoped for, as the couple spent a year or two working their way around the garden landscaping.

Tropical plants, crisp hedges, modern pavers and retaining walls now encircle the house; the backyard is a sunny, sheltered spot for reading, while a gently sloping bush-clad bank was slated for a sculpture walk — and no more work.

The deck at the front of the house overlooks the road and the stunning views — the couple summon neighbours for a drink by a wave and a shout.

But Louise has spun her PR magic again, as she and Michael are now ready to make the move further into their Paremoremo country ("just over the hill is as far away as we'll go") for a bit more land for a pony for Emilie Anne, some chickens, perhaps.

The neighbourhood will still be theirs, but the house will have some lucky new owners.