

Grae Cottage

Pam Ryan

When working post DoE in Hong Kong, my husband Graeme and I realised we didn't need multiple bedrooms, separate dining room, rumpus room, 3 bathrooms etc etc. The end result was a mutual decision to retire to a smaller (and in my mind, modern and easy-to-maintain) unit in our hometown of Orange.

Well, Graeme and our daughter Annie sussed out an 'ideal' option – an old, dark, cold, standalone cottage! Yes, it was cute and central, but clearly my boxes were far from ticked. Still, two against one spelt only one outcome. We thus became the proud owners of a lovely, old, dark and cold home for our retirement. Go figure that.

Fast forward a few years and my project has become that very cottage. Now called 'Grae Cottage' to honour my late husband who bestowed it on me, it's become everything I might have imagined – warm, cosy, light and a wonderful blend of the old and the new. A fabulous architect (and ex-student of Orange HS by the way) beautifully interpreted my needs and wants. He and his architect wife developed a vision that retained the bluestone foundations and original front rooms, while adding a sweeping modern, light-filled extension.

In furnishing it, establishing gardens and welcoming family and friends, it has become my home and my place. While I can't share it with Grae, I can imagine his knowing grin – told you so!! And in the process, I've discovered new-found skills of gardening, painting, cooking – who'd have thought! (Naturally, when I say 'skills' I'm using the term loosely.)

Here's a video of [the evolution of Grae Cottage in Orange](#). Enjoy, as I am.

Contributor details

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Pam was Principal of Orange High School from 1992-2002, after which she spent eleven years as a Director – seven in NSW and four in international education in Hong Kong. Post schools, Pam completed her PhD research on leadership, spent two years with UTS as an Industry Professor (Learning and Education) and now works part-time in private consultancy. Pam has published four books on educational leadership and the fifth, published in partnership with the SPC, will be released in November 2020.