



Zero Waste
Magnetic Island

Newsletter

AUGUST 2020

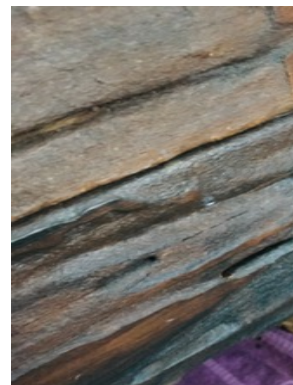
Imagine a world where new materials are *not* the preferred option, maybe not an option at all!

We'd have to rethink about where or how to access pre-used materials. This story should give you an eclectic mix of ideas to get you started. The story begins about eight years ago when Paul Groves, the home builder, full time marine scientist, decided to live the talk, and take on the challenge of building his house with pre-used materials. Paul is also part of our Zero Waste group on Magnetic island.

In mid-July 2020, I made an appointment to interview Paul for the MICDA Group Newsletter. My first question was, "Paul how did you come to start this huge project?" Surprisingly, Paul tells me it was a spa that he picked up at an auction. A funny start but it's an important point, as this spa is, in Paul's eyes, the *piece de resistance* in his home. I ask if we can begin there and check out the bathroom.

The spa is huge and for some reason it reminds me of my mother's Chevrolet. I mean to say, my eight brothers and sisters were piled in to the Chev., no seat-belts or anything. Just like mum's car, this spa is made for a family. It sits nicely in the bathroom which is probably larger than the average bedroom. Then as I look around, I ask him to tell me about the other qualities of the bathroom.

The feature wall is made from concrete molds. This was a very slow process he tells me, as he could only do two tiles a day. He then directs me to the '*his and hers sinks*' which are termite-eaten decking which he's varnished into another feature. I've never seen such beautiful shades and contours in wood like this. Finally, each sink is topped off with hand-colored concrete.



I'm a bit bewildered but excited to hear more we return to the living space to talk more.



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Paul tells me that he made his own design using *Google Sketch Up* but it had to work around the bathroom. Now I get that. I hadn't heard of *Google Sketch Up*, but I've heard that it is a clean 3D tool and quite user-friendly. The main setbacks are familiar to all of us, builders and cyclone coding requirements but other than that, the rest of what he did, were all his ideas.



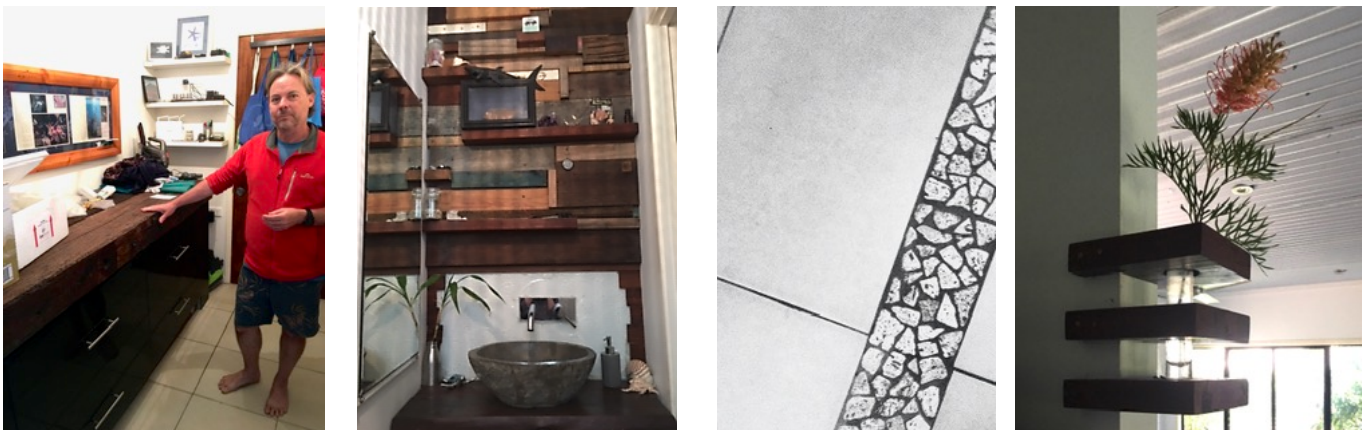
Sitting in the living room-come-dining room-come office, one design element that comes through is the use of glass doors so that no matter which way you look, the garden is the backdrop and the airflow is maximised.

I look up and see the ceiling is made of corrugated iron sheeting. He picks up straight away and says that it was a gift from some friends. Paul grins and tells me it was one less job he had to do, because he didn't have to paint it. Then as we move on, he tells me most of the stuff was given to him from friends who don't want it anymore. Once word got out that he was building using off-cuts or pre-used materials, things were just offered.

Appreciation for all things past is revealed as you walk around the corner to his storeroom. This rustic bench turns out to be part of the Picnic Bay jetty, post cyclone Yasi. It's now repurposed into a very solid bench with huge drawers.

I notice another door behind him like a cupboard and ask him what's in behind it. He gives me one of his chuckles and directs me into a small room with toilet at one end and sink and shelving made of wood off-cuts, at the other end.

These store all sorts of collected treasures and sit beautifully over a stone sink, exquisitely chosen from Bali and carefully brought home in his luggage. Who needs souvenirs when you can bring home a solid stone sink in your baggage? When I look down, I see some fancy mosaic included in the tiles. He looks at me and says, "Well you have to fill the gaps somehow. They are the off-cuts."



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Back in the hall I notice a feature set up high on the wall. I see a beautiful freshly cut grevillea, I think it is sitting in a glass cylinder which is drilled through three bits of wood. Ah of course, the link with the scientist! Yes, and a few more prized offcuts.

We go outside to the back veranda and pass the kitchen which is complete with secondhand oven, stove and benches.

Outside there is a very relaxing atmosphere: a feeling of serenity, as we look over a sparkling pool which drops off the slope and provides a seamless view through the glass panels and yet again more offcuts, but these ones a metre or more high and are very slick. Then there is the Jenga blocks which are very quirky and patterned with a checker board effect.

As we move down the stairs to the backyard, I feel like a kid again as there are so many nooks and crannies I can't wait to explore.



I make some comment on the paving and he then moves under the house to reveal a paving template. The pavers are made with a mix of cement, sand and concrete rubble. This paving forms the covering of the garden paths throughout the back yard. The garden is lush and large rocks create a natural impression like you are in the bush.



When I ask him how the hell did, he get these huge rocks in the backyard, he says, he didn't. I look twice and say, and half joking say, so you made them? Sure enough, he did. He fills a container with rubbish like Styrofoam, rags, bottles, old concrete footings, then renders them with cement and paints fake moss. Sometimes for a bit of novelty he'll expose some of the rubbish, like the picture above, you can see a part of a bottle exposed. I am particularly obsessed

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with rocks so considering the outcome combined with getting rid of your rubbish on a builder's site blows me away. This is my prize for innovation!

This is only half the story but word limits will have to save the rest for another day. As I thank and take leave I say to Paul, "Why is it that you have put so much, perhaps all of your spare time in such a project?"

He says, "Well I guess I want to live and practice the talk. I want to cut my own carbon footprint and I like being creative with my rubbish. You can even Google in YouTube what to do before you throw your rubbish out! Get the word out when you need something and before you know it, it's on your doorstep. Go to auctions and scavenge at the tip."

What can I say, but someone's rubbish is another's treasure. Thanks Paul Groves for sharing."

Story by Julie Woodlock, Zero Waste Magnetic Island member.