

➤ This house by Mitsuori Architects extends the floor into the attic space using skylights to draw in light. Photo: Michael Kai



➤ This attic conversion by Jab Studio uses every corner of the space to its best advantage.



➤ Skylights from Velux can help create a light-filled attic space that's also energy efficient.

Design



Lofty ambitions

Demand for all kinds of attic conversions are going through the roof, writes **Erina Starkey**

Moving up is proving a more desirable option than moving out for an increasing number of space-challenged homeowners.

"The demand for attic conversions has increased significantly in recent years, particularly in suburbs where land is tight and the value of properties are high," says Liz Stewart, a marketing consultant with The Attic Group. "Inner Sydney suburbs such as Woollahra, Paddington, Bondi, Newtown, Marrickville, Chippendale and Manly are hot spots for this type of transformation."

Homes most suited to attic conversions include Californian bungalows, Victorian terraces and Federation-style homes because of their pitched roofs, as well as top floor apartment dwellers with ownership of the roof. Often, it can be a real surprise how much space is up there, says Liz.

"It is not uncommon for a home to have 30 per cent of its total floor area in the roof space — which can equate to around 20sq m to 60sq m," she says.

While the most popular conversion is for an extra bedroom, attics are also increasingly being used as a retreat for parents or stay-at-

home children, as well as a home office, playground, bathroom or studio.

And while an attic conversion can be costly work (think \$40,000 up to \$250,000 says Liz) it's still a cheaper option than purchasing a bigger house or extending outwards.

"This type of renovation is extremely cost effective," says Liz. "As well as affording you and your family more space, it's also a great way to invest in your property and secure a better price should you ever choose to sell."

Property experts suggest a well-executed attic conversion can add up to 20 per cent to your home's total value.

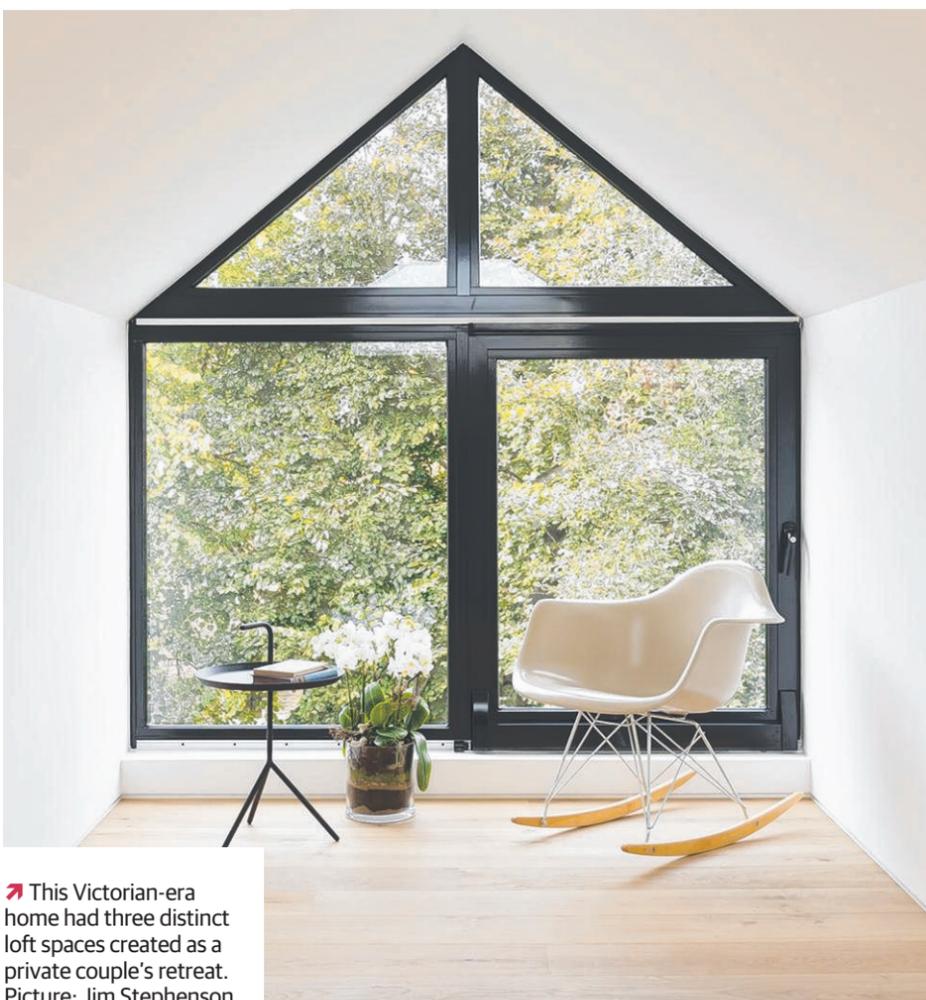
And unlike adding an extra storey or extension, the process is relatively pain free.

"It's less intrusive than a traditional renovation as clients can remain in their homes while the attic room is being built," says Liz.

"If you have enough height in your roof, the whole thing can be built with minimal disruption."

But before you clear out the storage boxes and evict the spiders, it's important to note that not all attic spaces are eligible for conversion.

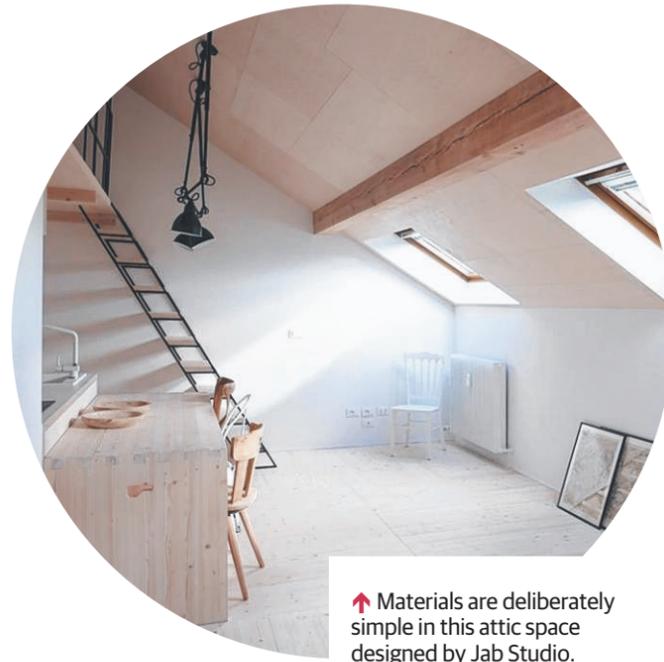
If you wish to create a habitable room, you will need council approval, with regulatory



➤ This Victorian-era home had three distinct loft spaces created as a private couple's retreat. Picture: Jim Stephenson



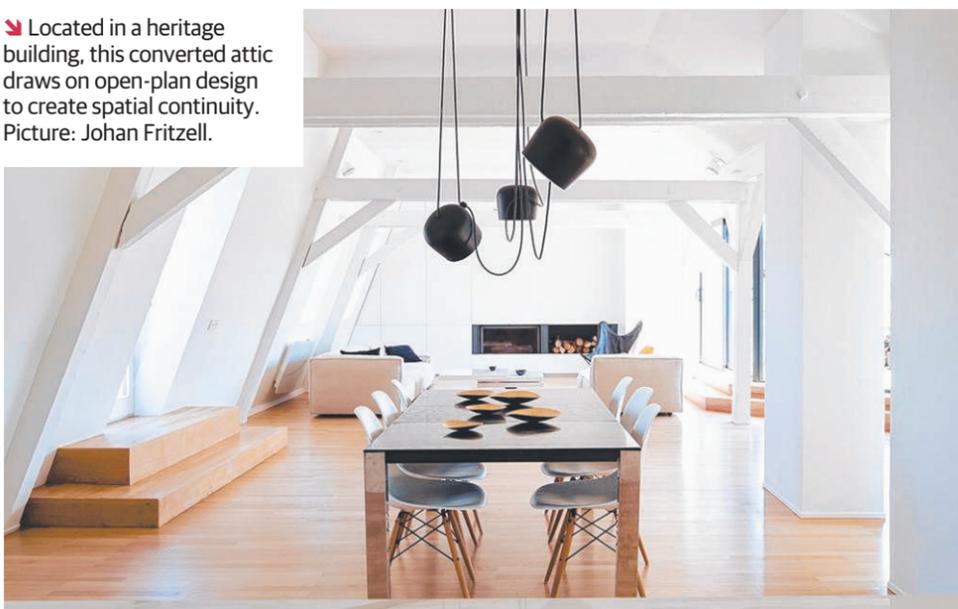
↪ Architect Andrew Waller created built-in bookcases to show off the beautiful sloping roof as well as an impressive book collection. Picture: Maree Homer



↑ Materials are deliberately simple in this attic space designed by Jab Studio.



↪ Located in a heritage building, this converted attic draws on open-plan design to create spatial continuity. Picture: Johan Fritzell.



requirements varying from council to council. Some of the most common reasons conversions are denied is due to heritage restrictions on the home's facade or a lack of suitable ceiling height.

"Be aware that at least 60 per cent of the attic space will have to be at least 2.2m high in order to meet habitation standards under the Building Code of Australia, and if you have a fixed staircase installed, you will need a head clearance of 2m all the way," says Liz.

The Building Code of Australia also requires habitable rooms to have access to natural light and ventilation, which can be achieved through

the installation of windows or skylights.

You will also need to have your attic assessed by a structural engineer to ensure the foundations can cope with the load.

"There are quite a few considerations that need to be taken into account so it helps to engage a professional early on," says Liz.

While the approvals process can take several months, once the green light has been given you could be relaxing in your new reading nook, studio or media room in as little as eight to 12 weeks.

More The Attic Group, atticgroup.com.au; Taubmans, taubmans.com.au; Andrew Waller, mrwaller.com



↑ Some attics have the potential to be extended beyond the roof line, as in this one (and above) by The Attic Group. The space is painted in Taubmans Knight Grey and Chasm.