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APRIL 15 2017

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# Why downsizing can help redefine your style

Downsizing from the family home offers not only a chance to declutter, but to redefine how you live.

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BECAUSE I have a reputation in my family as the bossy "style police", certain tasks fall my way – not all of them glamorous. In a recent pact with my mother while visiting her in Northern Ireland, I agreed to help clear out all the years of accumulated detritus underneath the various basins in the family house.

In the UK during the '70s, there was a fashion for hand basins and their attendant vanities in bedrooms as well as bathrooms, so we had six to tackle, cluttered with everything from trios of Lily of the Valley soaps to ancient, rusting tins of talcum powder.



STYLING TIP: For downsizers, "a contemporary look is symbolic of this lifestyle change," says this room's interior designer, Alex Hopkins. "It literally offers a change of scenery." Photo: Sharyn Cairns

We fell into distinct roles: I took a harsh line on clearing, and my mother mounted a not-often-convincing defence.

We filled two black bin bags.

The exercise made me think about the human knack for accumulation and the difficulties of downsizing. A family house, over decades of occupation, becomes a vessel for all we have been, and parting with the most mundane of things can be painful. But once the nest is empty, there can be a sense of liberation in shedding the responsibilities of house and garden upkeep for a modern apartment.

Retired Sydney couple Diane and Peter Frawley did just that, with the rationale of moving while they were able. "Of course, leaving the garden and our lovely old 1880s house was tinged with sadness," Diane says, "but we felt we needed a lifestyle change more appropriate to our needs."

After eight years of apartment living in a place which incorporates generous outdoor space, the Frawleys enjoy the sense of community their building offers. They were able to accommodate most of their existing furniture in a style Diane describes as "eclectic", and refuse, at their stage of life, to acquire more stuff.

By contrast, Studio Tate, a Melbourne interior design company, reimagined the apartment shown opposite for downsizing clients who let go of their existing furniture and embraced a full revamp, with a vintage Hollywood vibe.

"[The couple] were looking for a refreshed, opulent look, and a space that could cater for entertaining kids and grandkids," says principal designer Alex Hopkins. Behind the sophisticated interior design were myriad decisions engineered to increase storage, create rooms with flexible uses, and maximise the functional dining space on the terrace.

Outdoor space is very valuable, Hopkins notes: "A balcony that can entertain is often very attractive, as it offers the owners a 'mini backyard' experience where they can still have a barbecue and be surrounded by greenery."