

## RENOVATING TO SELL: WHAT YOU SHOULD AND SHOULDN'T DO

Get your home valued so you can see just how much money you should be tipping in for renovations. If you spend money on a large extension, you might not recoup your outlay, so it's important not to overcapitalise. However, building an extension could appeal to buyers looking for more living space, so do your market research to see what type of properties are sought after in your area.

When you're renovating to sell, think about what a wide range of people might like, not just your own colour and style preferences. Consider adding a large sliding cavity door to a room so it can open out for extra living space, or be closed off to become another bedroom. It improves the versatility of the area.

Look at a smaller extension, like going up into your roof cavity and adding an attic or mezzanine level in a bedroom or living area if the ceiling height allows more living space.

Revamp and increase your outdoor living spaces by building a simple deck and adding bifolds. This creates a seamless indoor-outdoor connection and extra living space without the cost of adding four walls.

Improve what you already have, declutter, and add a lick of paint to your interior and exterior. Add feature wallpaper to a couple of rooms. Kitchens and bathrooms are the most expensive rooms per square metre in a house, so make sure yours is up to scratch.

The key is to renovate the areas that will return the most value. If a complete rebuild of your kitchen and bathroom will blow your budget, replace dated handles, tile paint bathroom wall tiles, and laminate paint benchtops for an inexpensive lift. If they are beyond repair, replace them. You can laminate paint kitchen benchtops in modern colours and replace the benchtops if needed.

Lana says when planning renovations, it's important to work through all potential options before you start extending. "The only way to increase living space without increasing your home's footprint is to steal it from somewhere else," she says. "You might be able to reconfigure your existing living spaces so there's no need to extend at all."

In older homes in particular, the laundry was often very large and positioned at the rear of the house — right where you want your living spaces to be in modern homes these days. "We often absorb the footprint of the laundry into a new kitchen and living zone and create an indoor-outdoor living space," says Lana. "Sometimes we incorporate the existing porch and create a deck and add some bifolds out the back, then move the laundry to another spot in the house."



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special feature big reno

**THREE BIRDS RENOVATIONS:** This boutique renovation company is run by three besties and busy mums who love to renovate and share their knowledge. We tracked down one of the fab three, Lana Taylor, for some hot tips on renovating.



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Lana says you can also pinch a little extra space from bedrooms in older traditional homes as they were often oversized. “You might take a little from one bedroom and a little from another, and before you know it you’ve got an extra metre of living area,” she says.

If you’re short on space, forgoing your spare bedroom is another way to gain valuable living room. “Most of the time, guest bedrooms are rarely used,” continues Lana. “You could pull down a wall and create extra living area so it’s part of your open plan, or create an amazing home office, not just have an empty room gathering dust.”

Lana says they’ll often do a mini extension of three metres — which is more than adequate to increase living space. “With that you can completely change the configuration, look and feel of the house, kitchen, living and dining with a beautiful alfresco spot off the living areas,” she says.

Renovating is a process that should not be rushed, advises Lana. “I have a golden rule: if you bought a property and plan to renovate, don’t do anything until you have lived in it for six months. Invest the time to plan and create scale drawings, which you can do yourself, before you start removing walls. Mark up the floor with tape to help visualise if the spaces will be large enough.”

Lana says it’s also important to get a builder on board to walk through the home and talk about your plans in the very early stages. “A builder and even a structural engineer can add enormous value in the planning stage,” she shares. “You might want to remove a wall, but the builder could say something like ‘this wall is holding up the house so you don’t want to do that!’ It will potentially help avoid unexpected costs.”

When renovating, it’s also key to look at your needs today and into the future. “Think five years ahead, particularly with kids involved,” says Lana. “They grow from young kids you want to keep an eye on, to teenagers who want their own space and privacy.”

Educating yourself is a good way to make informed choices and stay on budget. Three Birds Renovations has created the online Reno School — [therenoschool.com](http://therenoschool.com) — to guide people through the process. “It’s about upskilling people so they understand renovating and can have constructive conversations with architects and builders to get what they want out of the renovation,” says Lana.



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