The DIY Guide to

RENOVATING YOUR HOME

Learn to stay within budget and avoid critical risks.

SOLUTION FOR CONSTRUCTION

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Contents

Building and Renovating Project Mangagement

"The benefit of working from a checklist is clarity," says property entrepreneur Michael Tiemens from property consultants - Peak Property Group in Melbourne. "It provides complete transparency about what needs to happen and when. It can then assist you in rolling out the process and managing your tasks and trades people in the right order. This creates overall efficiency and project flow."

Design and planning

Keep it simple and be as final about your decisions as you can be before you start. Changes to designs and materials during the process adds delays and costs that can really destroy your budget.

Decide if you are going to do it yourself or hire a project manager or builder

Employ a project manager/ civil engineer as this will keep the work flowing and they will employ a licensed builder that will turn up and do a good job. You will also receive a seven-year warranty for the work completed.

If you decide to go it on your own you need to arrange the required trades in the correct order, and make sure their work is done to Australian standards. I would recommend that you ask for a copy of their licences and insurances so you are covered if anything goes wrong."

Understanding the thermal performance of a home:

The thermal performance of your current home may not delivering to the expectations, commonly because of poor operation, poor sealing, failure to close or open windows, inadequate or faulty insulation, inadequate shading, and use of inappropriate glass. The energy consumption may be higher than expected due to old devices consuming too much power.

Consider improving the thermal performance of your home when planning a home renovation. Installation of smart metering or energy management systems is recommended. Replacement of old devices that consume too much power with energy efficient new devices should also be taken into consideration. A building sustainability assessor can advise on these matters.

Get council approval

You will need to check with your council to clarify the local regulations before you start renovations, says Bernadette Janson from The School of Renovating in Sydney. “Are you doing additions? Are you changing the use of any rooms? (for example, changing a bedroom to a bathroom.) Are you making structural changes? Are you planning a deck larger than 20 square metres and higher than one meter? Some areas require council approval for changes to the external appearance of the property, even changing paint colours,” she says.

What to buy

“Look at what needs to be purchased,” says Tiemens. “Many times the hot water systems, heating and/or cooling, roof tiles, weatherboards, wiring, plumbing can be costly items which can blow your budget. Don’t forget the cosmetic elements to the property, for example painting, floor coverings, tapware, kitchen, bathrooms, tiling, wardrobes, storage, landscaping and fencing”.

“Purchase all your fittings and fixtures before you start, this will reduce the chance of delays on the job site”.

Sequence of works

In general, work from the top to the bottom of a room. For example, start with the ceilings, then the walls and the floors. “If you are laying new floors, it is best to have the painting done first to avoid splashes or spills,” says

Dickins. As Janson points out, “it is best to co-ordinate the work by trade rather than room by room.”

Dickins suggests the following easy guide for the sequence of works for a kitchen renovation.

Design: Work out what you are doing, run it past the trades involved, such as the builder and electrician, and check requirements for special fittings, such as connecting the fridge to plumbing or tapware with filters.

Demo: Remove all the rubble so there is a safe, clear space to work. Pull up the flooring and remove all the cabinets.

Rough in: This is when new wall framing goes in, plus electricals, plumbing and gas are positioned.

Walls and ceilings: Plasterboard is installed, with new ceilings, if needed.

Doors and windows: All trims, skirtings and architraves should go in before the cabinets.

Cabinets: Install the carcasses, leaving the doors until later so there is access for the appliances, like the dishwasher.

Bench sink and taps: The bench is usually cut to fit the sink so have them installed together.

Paint and splashback: Finalise all the painting before tiling or installing the splashback and laying the floor.

Flooring: Lay the floor after the cabinets, but before the appliances.

Appliances and lighting: Call the plumber and electrician back to install these.

Cabinet doors: Hang the doors, position the drawers and add any open shelves.

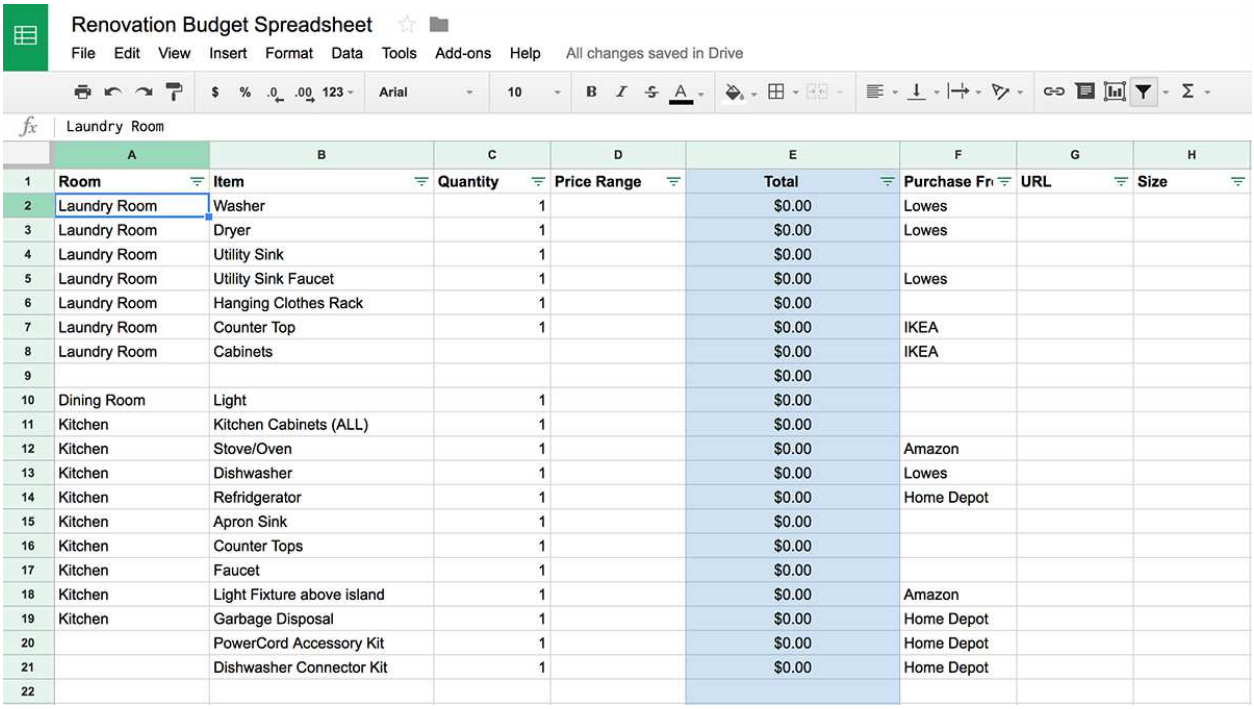
Finally remember that the renovation is likely to be more costly and messy than you imagined. Tiemens has some sound advice for getting to the end of your project. “No matter which style of renovation you are pursuing, the last 20 per cent will take you longest and cost the most so it is important to persist right the way through until the end without cutting corners and be diligent in following your budget and check list.”

DIY home renovations are not for the faint of heart, but with proper planning, they can be extremely rewarding. To save time, money, and stress when you’re ready to remodel, make sure to plan out these six factors BEFORE hammers start swinging. Create a renovation cost spreadsheet to get started. Home renovations are a lot of work! Here is an in-depth home renovation checklist to effectively organize your home renovation.

Home renovations of any size are a huge undertaking. The process is grueling, but the results of a remodel can be incredibly worth the work!

Whether you’re planning an entire DIY home renovation, or hiring contractors for the work - there is a lot to organize before getting started. Here are six factors to plan upfront to make your DIY home renovation as smooth as possible!

How to Plan a DIY Home Renovation + Budget Spreadsheet



Renovation Budget Spreadsheet

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help All changes saved in Drive

Laundry Room

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	Room	Item	Quantity	Price Range	Total	Purchase Fr	URL	Size
2	Laundry Room	Washer	1		$0.00	Lowes		
3	Laundry Room	Dryer	1		$0.00	Lowes		
4	Laundry Room	Utility Sink	1		$0.00			
5	Laundry Room	Utility Sink Faucet	1		$0.00	Lowes		
6	Laundry Room	Hanging Clothes Rack	1		$0.00			
7	Laundry Room	Counter Top	1		$0.00	IKEA		
8	Laundry Room	Cabinets			$0.00	IKEA		
9					$0.00			
10	Dining Room	Light	1		$0.00			
11	Kitchen	Kitchen Cabinets (ALL)	1		$0.00			
12	Kitchen	Stove/Oven	1		$0.00	Amazon		
13	Kitchen	Dishwasher	1		$0.00	Lowes		
14	Kitchen	Refridgerator	1		$0.00	Home Depot		
15	Kitchen	Apron Sink	1		$0.00			
16	Kitchen	Counter Tops	1		$0.00			
17	Kitchen	Faucet	1		$0.00			
18	Kitchen	Light Fixture above island	1		$0.00	Amazon		
19	Kitchen	Garbage Disposal	1		$0.00	Home Depot		
20		PowerCord Accessory Kit	1		$0.00	Home Depot		
21		Dishwasher Connector Kit	1		$0.00	Home Depot		
22								

Determine Your Scope of Work and Timeline

The very first thing you'll want to do is assess the scope of your remodel. What projects are you going to tackle? Is this a kitchen renovation or a complete house flip? Estimate the size of the renovation and then do a walkthrough of each space. As you walk, write down everything that needs to be done in each room from drywall repairs and painting to updating electrical wiring, fixtures, and lighting.

Start with your dream list — Everything you could possibly consider remodeling. It's much easier to start with that larger list and downsize than to plan for a smaller renovation and add more later. Even with a perfectly crafted dream renovation list, you're bound to find new things to add as time goes on.

After you know all of the areas you want to address in your home renovation, you can start to construct a rough timeline for each project. Now is a good time to think about which tasks must be done before others.

For example, if you're doing a complete renovation, you'll learn that A/C duct work gets done first, then plumbing, and last electrical, based on the size of the materials being fit behind the walls.

Now that you know what you want to do, it's time to figure out how much of the work you'll be doing yourself versus hiring out.

Should You Be Your Own Building Supervisor?

When you're doing a renovation, you'll need to consider whether you want a building supervisor to be there overseeing and managing everything or if you're able to fill that role yourself. This is where it gets tricky because hiring a general contractor is more expensive than doing it yourself.

One good way to evaluate this decision is to look at the size of the project and how much money you are investing into it. For a larger home renovation, you'll want the oversight of a building supervisor if one is still within the budget.

A building supervisor will be the one who finds the rest of the subcontractors (plumbers, electricians, A/C companies, painters, etc.), schedules them in order based on progress, and is also held responsible for keeping people on track for deadlines.

If you're highly organized and have a flexible schedule, being the "general contractor" yourself instead of hiring someone may be a good option. Building supervisor usually charge 10% extra to be the managing person so it can be an easy way to save a bit of money.

Even if you do the project with a building supervisor, you'll still be outsourcing work to other vendors or contractors that may not be from the same company as your building supervisor. Here are a few types of contractors you may need to research:

- **Tile installer**
- **Cabinet company**
- **Countertop fabricator (learn which countertops are best for you!)**
- **Electrician**
- **Plumber**

- **Painter**
- **Drywall installation or wall texturing**

Open a Bank Account for Your Home Renovation

Whether you have saved money for your renovation or you are getting a home equity loan or other types of financing, it is incredibly helpful to have a dedicated account for your renovation. This way you won't have to weed through personal transactions versus renovation transactions when you're trying to balance your budget.

Pro tip: Look into high-yield savings accounts to let your money grow during the process of planning and executing your diy home renovation!

Having a separate bank account is not an excuse to forgo keeping receipts, though! Many home renovation updates can be used as tax deductions. Be sure to speak to your accountant about which updates to your home may be a tax benefit as well.

Clean, Purge, and Demo

Home renovations are a lot of work! Here is an in depth home renovation checklist to effectively organize your home renovation.

The demolition phase is when the renovation really begins to take shape. Careful planning before you start swinging is a must! Be sure to talk to your contractor (if applicable) before beginning to be sure of what, if anything, should remain intact. Pay careful attention to protect floors, walls, light fixtures or any other parts of your renovation area that are not being replaced.

Take this opportunity to clean and purge the space. Do you have old pots and pans you throw into the back of the cabinet and never use? Are the curtains in your living room falling apart? Take the time now to get rid of those eye sores and headaches so that you can be sure you're able to fill your new space with only the items you love! If parting with old belongings sounds intimidating, read this: How to be Happier with Less.

CRITICAL RISK CONSIDERATIONS IN A DIY PROJECT

Budget Overrun:

They can arise from circumstances within or beyond your control:

- Preliminary cost overruns (e.g. Council fees, design, geotechnical report, engineering design and certification, surveyor fees)
- Site challenges (unforseen site difficulties)
- Weather
- Materials unavailability
- Not 'nailing' the details (e.g. Materials selection or indoor air-quality friendly finishes)
- Receiving/accepting poor advice (particularly from suppliers and inexperienced tradespeople) when urgent decisions need to be made.

Completion Timeline Overrun:

DIY building projects are often unable to fit within the project's timeline expectations due to:

- Council delays
- Lengthy design processes — particularly when many changes are made
- Delays finding an available builder
- Weather and builder related delays
- Tradespeople shortages
- Unavailability or delay in delivery of sustainable technologies that are outside the builder's normal supply chain.
- Negotiating reasonable, equitable compromises may be beyond your capabilities.

- Under-performance of the builder due to issues in design, construction or operation of plants.

Quality Breach:

DIY Projects are often vulnerable to breach of quality due to reasons within or beyond your control:

- Poor workmanship by inexperienced or unlicensed tradies
- Defective material supplied on site
- Use of cheap or quality material
- Non-Compliance with Australian Standards or Building Code of Practice due to material, workmanship or testing & commissioning issues

Safety Concerns:

DIY Projects have a lot of safety concerns exposing risk to incidents and accidents that arise due to:

- Inexperienced or unlicensed tradies
- Overexertion
- Slip, trip and falls
- Poor housekeeping
- Shortcuts
- Distractions
- Lack of implementation of safety norms involving a hierarchy of controls:
    - Elimination of the risk
    - Substitution of the risk
    - Engineering Controls
    - Administrative Controls
    - Personal Protective Equipment

DO'S AND DON'TS IN DIY HOME RENOVATIONS

"How can I sell my property faster?" If your house has been on the market for a number of months, and isn't getting offers, you're probably asking yourself that.

Selling property can be quite a challenge. The level of competition is high and your property isn't selling, it may not be ready for the market. Renovate and update your home wisely with these dos and don'ts.

Don't buy cheap materials

According to HGTV's Don't Sweat It host Steve Watson, "One of the biggest mistakes that people make when it comes to home renovation (is that) they try to be cheap when they buy materials. The bottom line is, you're going to get what you pay for." If you can tell it's 'cheap' so can a potential buyer. It is always a good idea to invest in quality materials where you have to.

Do buy quality appliances

Buying quality appliances that are used daily will always be a good investment. Make sure you learn about manufacturers, reviews, warranties, etc. Buyers are impressed by quality names in ovens, stovetops, rangehoods, hotwater systems, etc.

Don't paint the walls first

Painting should be the last thing you do. You don't want to paint the whole room first and then realise the colour doesn't match the plans.

Do opt for neutral colours

If you're planning to sell your property opt for a neutral colour palette. Neutral colours are easy on the eye, they tend to blend with furniture better than bold colours. You don't want someone to overlook your home because your pink walls don't go with their red sofa.

Do use mirrors

Space and light are always high on buyers lists, lure them with mirrors! Mirrors make your spaces look bigger and can make dark rooms seem lighter. It's not just the chattels that will stay in the house you need to consider, the way you dress a home for sale helps as well.

Don't overspend and forget about your budget

Make sure you set a budget and stick to it. Be realistic as to what your renovation budget should be, think critically about what you need, invest in quality where it's needed, and only buy what's actually necessary.

Don't try a DIY home renovation

If you don't have a background in renovation and your renovation is to assist in the sale of your home, it's probably not the time to figure out if you're good at it or not. Buyers will pay attention to detail, they will notice how well the renovation was done, and they will offer a price that matches their opinion. A professional is just that… professional. Hire someone with experience who knows what to do and how to do it well. It will save you in the long run.

DO: Backsplash

Tiling a backsplash is a great task for the beginner. Start with natural tiles, which are the easiest to cut using a wet saw and generally more forgiving than ceramic, porcelain or glass. The smoother and flatter your wall is before you start, the easier installation will go. Using mastic or pre-mixed

mortar is simplest and creates less mess. Be sure to use spacers, and take your time.

Tip: Turn off the breakers for electrical outlets so you don't get a shock when applying mastic or grout.

DO: Paint

If you have the DIY bug, this is the best place to start. Preparation is 95 percent of a successful job: First, you'll want to fill any holes or cracks with drywall compound, then sand the dried patches smooth and prime them. Caulk all trim and fill any small nail holes with paintable latex caulking, using a slightly damp sponge to smooth and clean the surface afterward. Finally, tape and protect anything you don't want covered in the paint, and you're ready to go.

Tip: When using a roller, roll toward the arm – you'll put less pressure on the trailing edge, which makes smoothing out lines much easier.

DO: Click flooring

Floating floors, whether they're laminate, cork or engineered hardwood, are a snap to install. Just follow the manufacturer's instructions on the box (they're usually very clear and easy). Be sure to leave a little space around the edges of the room – a floating floor that's installed too tightly can buckle over time.

Tip: Keep your joints at least six inches apart for a better look and stronger floor.

DON'T: Touch electrical.

Anyone can apply for an electrical permit, but if you're not an electrician, don't play with wires. Improper connections can heat up over time, causing a fire; you could also electrocute yourself or someone else. Bad idea!

DON'T: Work on the gas.

There's more to hooking up a gas appliance than just making sure the connection doesn't leak – it has to be properly vented to ensure your home doesn't fill up with deadly carbon monoxide. Leave any gas work to a licensed professional.

DON'T: Take down walls.

Removing walls and other structural supports should be left to a licensed builders. It requires a structural engineer to come out and have a look at the load bearing walls. You can't do it yourself as it needs an understanding of how loads are transferred and carried. Just because your neighbour did it doesn't mean it's okay!

THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

Every construction process is unique and depends on the scope and complexity of the project. But each time a sustainable house is built, the process follows typical steps, and the principles are similar for smaller scale projects like renovations.

The Renovations and additions and Buying a home off the plan articles include more information on the construction process specific to those situations.

Step 1: Choosing a builder

Before you get to the stage of choosing a builder, your research and design process will have yielded finished design documents to put out for tender by builders (see Preliminary research; The design process).

Two common ways to choose a builder are:

- Choose a preferred builder and invite them to prepare a quotation or 'tender' (and seek an alternative quotation to ensure competitive pricing)
- Call open or selective tenders from a range of builders and choose on the basis of price.

Each method delivers a builder and a quotation but one emphasises best price and the other, preferred builder. In either case, note in your tender documents that you are 'not obliged to accept the lowest or any tender'.

A designer generally helps choose builders to tender for a project, based on recommendations and past experience. Advertised open tenders deliver variable outcomes and often exclude smaller

specialist builders who do not have time to tender for multiple projects.

Your choice of builder is almost as critical as your choice of designer:

The principal role of a builder is to coordinate the building works as project manager. This role includes supervising and coordinating each trade; sourcing, quantifying and coordinating delivery of materials. And most importantly, quality-assuring the entire process.

Builders and tradespeople are understandably risk-averse and tend to manage risk by using tried and proven materials and practices. Sustainable outcomes often require the use of innovative materials and practices. To avoid problems later, ensure each builder is made aware of your commitment to a sustainable home when they are invited to tender.

Find an accredited builder who follows sustainable practices:

Sourcing certified environmentally preferred materials at competitive rates and supervising tradespeople to ensure materials are correctly installed requires a builder who is prepared to 'go the extra step'. Choose a builder who is both trained in and committed to delivering sustainable outcomes. Familiarise yourself with environmental certification systems to inform your own decision or agreement.

Both Master Builders Australia (MBA) and the Housing Industry Association (HIA) train builders in sustainable practices. Choosing a builder with this training from their website listings is a good first step but does not guarantee delivery of best practice outcomes. References from satisfied clients are an effective quality assurance method. Both MBA and HIA run sustainability awards programs and the lists of past winners on their websites also provide a good indication of ability.

Carefully implement sustainability features as specified in the design source, and use recycled or reused materials access environmentally certified materials. Ensure they are ordered with adequate lead times, separate waste streams on site instruct, and even backcharge subcontractors who fail to use environmentally preferred practices. Also ensure that glues, resins, paints, and finishes are indoor air quality friendly, conserve on-site biodiversity, install and maintain sediment control barriers.

Several certification schemes can independently certify products and services as environmentally sustainable. Good Environmental Choice Australia (GECA) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that runs the internationally recognised Environmental Choice Australia Ecolabelling Program. Green Tick® is based on a life cycle assessment (LCA) of the effects of an operation down its supply chain.

Step 2: Tender documents and contracts

In projects being tendered by more than one builder, this step precedes

Preparing tender documents:

Tender documents must clearly identify any sustainability practices or materials certification requirements that are different from business as usual. Attach schedules to the tender documents that tenderers are required to sign.

Alleviating builder concerns about the unfamiliar aspects of sustainable practice can reduce the amount they allow for unknown contingencies.

Contingency sums:

Areas of unknown risk can be accommodated through contingency sums or allowances that can be called on to cover unexpected costs. They are often used to cover unexpected subsoil and foundation

related costs; increasingly they are being used to provide flexibility in choosing innovative sustainable technologies and practices.

Prime cost schedules:

Another way to overcome risk aversion on the part of the builder is to 'nominate' subcontractors to supply and install innovative technologies, and provide the builder with a 'schedule of allowances' (or 'prime cost schedule') to include in the tender.

Many designers choose and specify the exact make and model of important or high cost items such as windows and doors, solar hot water systems, smart metering and energy control systems, and on-site renewable energy generation. You or your designer can have these items quoted by preferred suppliers and nominated in the contract as prime cost schedule items to avoid substitution of inappropriate or substandard products by competitive tenderers.

Preferred subcontractors

You can also nominate preferred subcontractors if you know a local green plumber, electrician or painter who is reliable and professional. Many builders have preferred subcontractors so negotiate this option carefully.

Lump sum versus cost plus

Choose between 'fixed price/lump sum' or 'cost plus'. These decisions are usually made before calling tenders but revisions may be negotiated with the chosen builder before contracts are signed. Lump sum tenders and contracts are generally effective at capping the budget but can encourage cost cutting that can compromise sustainable outcomes.

In cost plus scenarios, the builder nominates a percentage addition to material costs for ordering and scheduling, and hourly rates for the builder and trades. These contracts require high levels of trust between owner and builder. While allowing the owner more control over expenditure decisions, they reduce builder responsibility for cost overruns. This can force cost cutting and loss of important sustainable features (e.g. photovoltaic arrays) as the budget is exhausted.

For tight budgets, fixed price contracts are generally preferable. If cost plus is used, quarantine budget allowances for sustainable features.

Contracts

Standard home building contracts are available from many sources including lending authorities and industry peak bodies. They form the basis of your legally binding agreement with your builder, and of any dispute resolution.

Choose a contract that strikes a reasonable balance between your needs and those of your builder. Clear dispute resolution provisions and nominated independent arbitrators are essential. Annex the builder's tender, council approved plans and specifications, certified engineering details and any schedules (prime cost, contingency sums or nominated suppliers/contractors) to the contract.

Tendering tips to ensure environmentally preferred outcomes:

- Drawings and specifications form part of the contract documentation. Ensure they clearly indicate sustainability requirements and include penalties for substitution of inferior materials and products.

- Consider nominating important, high cost items such as windows in a prime cost schedule to avoid substitution by competitive tenderers.
- Clearly describe sustainable methods or materials that are not yet standard building practice and include advice on how to implement or source them. Include unambiguous instructions that prevent changes or substitution without approval by you or your designer.
- Ask tendering builders to check tender documents for sustainability compliance risks and note or allow for any contingencies in their tender.
- Ask builders to recommend alternative solutions that suit their trades and supply chains while delivering equal or improved environmental outcomes. Consider the use of contracts that link payment to the achievement of specified environmental outcomes (e.g. details of environmentally certified materials, window and glazing specifications, and reuse or recycling details).
- Develop a schedule of reusable materials (if you're renovating or demolishing an existing house) and negotiate their reuse with your builder.

Owner building:

Some consumers choose to manage their own projects as owner builders. Unless you are experienced in housing construction, are fully conversant with local building practices and supply chains, and have sound working relationships with local trades, this option is fraught with risk. Sustainable construction often requires tradespeople to adopt new practices and materials and this can be very difficult for an inexperienced owner builder to negotiate.

Step 3: Construction Supervision & Certification

Many opportunities to achieve best practice sustainable outcomes are lost during construction. This is often due to lack of understanding of environmentally sound principles and practices by builders and tradespeople, or ineffective certification.

Supervision:

Your builder is frequently called on to make decisions about materials and procedures that vary from those nominated in the plans and specifications due to trade preferences or unavailability of preferred materials. Builders refer these (often urgent) decisions to a supervisor for verification if one is nominated. If not, they may make expeditious but less sustainable choices.

Well-informed advice from experienced professionals can quality-assure decision making and ensure environmentally preferred choices.

Professional advice or project management by a committed, highly informed individual or company is critical to quality-assure the decision-making process and recommend environmentally preferred alternatives such as those discussed throughout Your Home.

Many designers offer a supervision service as part of their fee structure. Architects in some states are prevented from offering project management services. If you adopt this role as owner, consult competent advisers or consultants to verify your decisions.

Project management or supervision adds substantial professional indemnity risk to a designer's insurance profile so many designers prefer a less formal advisory role. You should sight a project management endorsement on a current professional indemnity policy, before formally appointing a supervisor or project manager.

Certification:

Inspection and certification of your project at critical stages is required by law to confirm that it is built in accordance with the approved plans, specifications, relevant Australian Standards, Building Code of Australia and council regulations; to ensure structural integrity, health, safety and amenity.

These inspections can identify and rectify problems or omissions before they are built in. Reported instances of inadequate certification of sustainability compliance in several jurisdictions indicate that this important aspect is sometimes overlooked. If you are concerned, seek immediate advice from your designer or building sustainability assessor.

Step 4: Commissioning and handover

Sometimes the best design and construction innovation can be wasted because the concepts aren't communicated to the owner at handover. Ask your designer and builder for an owner's manual. If you are a practitioner, give your client detailed instructions on how to operate and maintain the home at handover. If you sell your home make sure the new owners have a copy.

An owner's manual or operation guide covers:

- Summer and winter operation settings and day–night routines for.
- Operating and maintaining heating and cooling appliances
- Opening/closing curtains and windows
- Operating ventilation systems (cross and stack)
- Operating shading systems
- Operating roof space ventilator
- Cleaning of solar appliances
- Termite barriers and inspection schedule
- Operating guides for water harvesting and treatment systems
- Isolation valves for services (gas, electricity and water)
- Hot water system sacrificial anode replacement date

- Hot water system pressure relief valve checks
- Painting intervals
- Appropriate cleaning products for all surfaces and finishes
- Landscape maintenance requirements.
- Take care to avoid these pitfalls
- Common causes of disappointment or dispute emerge from choosing the wrong designer or builder, or both.

Let the Renovation Begin!

Now that you've planned, budgeted and contracted out at least part of the work, it's time to begin. Though there may be stressful times, enjoy the process that you'll be able to reminisce about from your newly renovated space!