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# ***YOUR HOME RENOVATOR'S GUIDE***

## **SOCIAL AND MARKET RESEARCH**

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Prepared by

*The Centre for Design and  
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Futures*

For

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Heritage and the Arts

and

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MARKET RESEARCH  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

FINAL REPORT

For DEWHA and DTEI

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## Executive Summary

The purpose of this research was to test the appeal and usefulness of *Your Home Renovator's Guide* with users to determine what, if any, changes should be made before the next print run. The research was conducted through detailed interviews and focus groups with a small randomly selected sample of renovators. Following is a summary of the research findings and recommendations

### Findings

#### *The renovation process – renovator experiences and drivers*

Most participants found the renovation process difficult and stressful, and said that advice on how the process works and how to budget would be extremely useful.

The major drivers for renovating were amenity and lifestyle related (eg. more space, better useability and comfort, etc). Improved resale value was also a driver for some participants.

When asked, all participants said they wanted to 'do the right thing' by the environment, however environmental concerns did not drive the decision to renovate and there was an observed gap between environmental awareness and action.

Despite this, there was a strong 'feel good' factor associated with being environmentally friendly, which may be used to support or rationalise any environmentally friendly actions not in conflict with the key drivers.

In achieving the stated goals of the renovation (based on key drivers), upfront cost was the most important factor in decision-making and was often the reason why intent to be environmentally friendly was not followed through.

There was general recognition of the value of energy and water saving measures that reduce bills, but these were most likely to be taken up if the upfront cost was low (the 'low hanging fruit' such as water efficient fixtures or compact fluorescent lighting).

Even renovators who identified as environmentally aware had limited knowledge of the range of options available to them to reduce their environmental impact.

#### *Information – where renovators go for information, what they want to know*

Renovators overwhelmingly sought advice by word of mouth and through family and friends. This included advice on where to go to find out more, what products to use, and how to find designers, builders and tradespeople.

Renovators highly valued face-to-face contact and the ability to ask questions, and rated hardware store staff and tradespeople as important sources of information.

The internet was also mentioned as a useful source of information, with some limitations such as the inability to provide customised advice or detailed costs. Other sources of information renovators used included home ideas centres and magazines.

The most commonly sought information was on costs and products, and there was a preference for independent information over information sponsored by a brand.

Many renovators said there was an abundance of information available (mostly by brand), and the difficulty was in navigating and making sense of it.

#### *Specific user comments on the Your Home Renovator's Guide:*

Feedback on the guide was overwhelmingly positive, in terms of both its content and communication style. In each focus group, there was a participant who didn't bring their copy of the guide along for fear it would be taken away. All participants thought the guide would have been useful for them during the renovation process.

Participants found the level of information was about right – informative without being overly technical, concise with weblinks so readers can find out more on the aspects that interest them.

The independent nature of the guide, as a government publication rather than a commercial venture, was seen as a positive.

Participants liked the way the guide promoted environmental actions without being 'forceful'.

The 'information design' of the guide was highly rated, with the most positive comments focusing on the tips, checklists, websites for further information and personalised case studies. Most participants also thought the briefing templates were useful.

## Recommendations

### *Changes to print and electronic versions of the guide*

We recommend that no changes be made to the guide at this stage, and that further testing with a larger sample of renovators be undertaken once the guide has been in circulation for a further 6-12 months. By this time, we expect to have received more of the reply-paid surveys that were included in the back of the Renovator's Guide. We recommend the testing be conducted on the suite of *Green Loans* guides as a whole, and in the context of the home assessment and loans application process.

### *Guide promotion and distribution*

Prime distribution opportunities include the popular 'hubs' where renovators go to seek 'word of mouth' information – primarily hardware stores, home information centres and retailers of bathroom goods, white goods and other large appliances. Because 'word of mouth' information from social networks is highly valued, distributing the guide through community groups is also recommended.

Some hardware stores already run training sessions of various aspects of renovation, so there is an opportunity to integrate the guide with these activities. Similarly, training sessions using the guide could be run through appropriate community groups. A targeted training program for hardware store staff may also have high impact, given that advice from hardware store staff is highly valued.

To encourage uptake, it may be advisable to allow organisations (eg. hardware chains) to endorse the guide through co-branding (eg. company logo on cover, company information in back sleeve) whilst retaining the independence of the guide's content).

The internet is an important information source that is used by consumers as a complement to word of mouth information. To maximise its profile, the *Your Home* website could be advertised on popular commercial renovator sites eg. hardware stores, building information centres.

Other high impact opportunities for advertising include popular renovator print media – 'home / lifestyle' sections of newspapers (including regional and local newspapers), and renovator /DIY magazines. Radio and TV programs specifically geared towards renovation also provide targeted advertising opportunities.

*Negotiations with stakeholders*

As part of the research, discussions were initiated with industry organisations representing designers/ architects, builders and landscape contractors about co-branding the Renovator's Guide briefing templates and promoting them to members. Initial indications of support were received by the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA), the Building Designer's Association of Victoria (BDAV), The Master Builder's Association of Victoria (MBAV), the Housing Industry Association (HIA) and Sustainable Gardening Australia (SGA). Appendix A contains a record of these exploratory discussions.





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## Introduction

The purpose of this research is to test the usefulness and appeal of the *Your Home Renovator's Guide* from a user perspective. A small and diverse sample of the target audience has been engaged, through structured interviews and focus groups, to determine how the guide is perceived and used, and how it could be improved.

### Background research

Following is a summary of findings from two previous related studies conducted by the authors. The first is *The Practice of Going Green* (2007), a Victorian study of renovators who identify as environmentally aware. The second is *Perceptions of Sustainable Housing* (2006), a Queensland study of home-buyers and their attitudes to sustainable housing. Key findings relevant to this study include:

- ⇒ Improved environmental performance is unlikely to be an explicit driver behind the decision to renovate or buy a home. Key drivers are amenity-related (eg. more space, more comfortable lifestyle). Improved resale value can also be a driver for some, but tends to be secondary to amenity. Renovators do not tend to see an explicit link between better environmental performance and improved resale value.
- ⇒ In the context of achieving the desired outcomes (the above drivers), upfront cost is the key factor in decision-making and often the reason why the intent to be environmentally friendly is not followed through, or only partially followed through.
- ⇒ Ongoing cost savings from lower energy and water use, while generally recognised as a benefit by consumers, are not a key factor in decision-making about home purchase or renovation.
- ⇒ When asked, most renovators and homebuyers say they want to 'do the right thing' by the environment, but there is an observed gap between attitude and action.
- ⇒ Environmentally friendly actions are most likely to be implemented when there is a perceived positive link to key drivers (ie. saving money upfront or improving comfort), and least likely to be implemented where they are seen to be in conflict with key drivers. For those who identify as environmentally aware, outcomes are still moderated by expectations of comfort and wellbeing.
- ⇒ Those with a high degree of hands on involvement with their renovation appeared to have a greater level of satisfaction in the outcomes

## Approach

### The interviews

The aim of the interviews was to seek detailed insights and feedback from a small but diverse sample of Australian renovators who had identified themselves as having some interest in creating an environmentally friendly renovation. Seven participants were selected from across five different states and territories. They were chosen from a randomly selected sample, with criteria applied to ensure:

- ⇒ Representation of urban, suburban and regional locations
- ⇒ Gender balance

- ⇒ Variety in household structure and income
- ⇒ Variety in renovation scope and the stage of the process renovators were at

The focus of the research was qualitative, aimed at delving into the experiences and perceptions of renovators. Participants were asked about:

- ⇒ The scope of their renovation
- ⇒ Their motivations for deciding to renovate, and for the various choices made
- ⇒ How they are going about the renovation process, and what stage they're at
- ⇒ What they most wanted to know and where they went to find information
- ⇒ Good information sources, information gaps
- ⇒ Lessons they've learnt from the process
- ⇒ What made it easy and what made it hard to implement 'green' features

## The focus groups

Two focus groups were held to obtain detailed feedback on the guide. Whilst the main role of the interviews was to examine renovator perceptions, drivers and information needs, the purpose of the focus group was to engage renovators in a discussion about the guide and its relevance to them. Each group was facilitated by David More of *Optimal Experience*, who is an expert in focus group facilitation and usability testing of publications. Each group involved a diverse sample of around 6 renovators. One group was held in Melbourne, the other in Adelaide.

The Melbourne participants were chosen from a randomly selected sample of renovators who had said they considered the environment of 'high importance' when conducting their home renovation. The Adelaide participants were chosen from a randomly selected sample of renovators who had said the environment was of 'some importance' to their renovation.

First, participants were led into a brief discussion about the renovation process, exploring the same questions posed during the interviews, however this time in a group context. This took about 30 minutes, and the subsequent hour was focused specifically on the *Your Home Renovator's Guide*.

Approximately half of each group had been previously given the guide to read, and the other half was presented with the guide during the focus group session. Those who had previously read the guide were asked to explain it to those who hadn't, and those who hadn't were encouraged to ask questions. As well capturing group discussion around the guide, this enabled us to gain feedback based on first impressions as well as more considered reading.

## Interview findings

### Scope of renovation

**The scope of the renovations participants were undertaking varied from minor interior refurbishments to substantial extensions.** Popular aspects of renovation for these participants included living room extensions, adding an extra bedroom, new or reconfigured bathrooms and kitchens, and external decks and landscaping. Two participants interviewed were including 'outdoor kitchens' as part of their renovations.

*Implications for the Renovator's Guide:*

Need to ensure all the 'popular' aspects of renovation are adequately covered – check against the survey responses (to forms sent out with the guide). One future option could be to create complementary, more detailed guides on key aspects such as bathrooms, kitchens, outdoor living spaces. These could be distributed at key decision-making points for the relevant topic (eg. bathroom products retailers, kitchen appliance retailers, or outdoor furniture/garden stores)

## Experiences of the renovation process

**Many participants found the process difficult, stressful and full of unexpected costs**, which reinforces the importance of providing guidance about the renovation process itself, including budgeting:

*I felt like I'd bitten off a bit more than I can chew*

*Oh, I just found it a hassle. It was stressful and as much as you try to keep it to budget, it never happens*

More than half of the participants stressed the importance of good planning and clear communication with builders and tradespeople:

*I can't really afford to start something and say 'this is just not going to work, I have to start again'.. I just can't do it financially. Plan, plan, plan..*

Several participants mentioned that they developed 'wish lists' for their renovation:

*..We, as well as the architect, put together some of our own ideas and wrote lists of our own criteria in terms of what we wanted for the house*

Positive comments made about the process included the satisfaction of being involved in a creative process, finding cost-saving DIY opportunities, and positive working relationships with builders

*The thing we're most looking forward to is just having an area that we've been involved in creating*

*Implications for the Renovator's Guide:*

Guidance on the renovation process is important, in particular on how to budget and plan ahead.

## Motivations for renovating

**Enhancing amenity or 'lifestyle' stood out as the main driver for decisions to renovate.** This was expressed in several ways, as the need for more space for growing families, changes to improve the usability and comfort of the home, and (to a lesser extent) changes to improve the look and style of the home. Six of the seven participants listed these factors as their main driver for renovating.

One participant was in a wheelchair and included universal access and low maintenance as key amenity-related drivers. Another participant was primarily interested in improving natural light levels inside his home. At least half talked about the need to make changes to accommodate growing families. One participant talked about the importance of making cosmetic changes to 'personalise' space:

*I wouldn't leave those colours in a pink fit, I really don't like living in them*

**Improved investment value/ resale potential was also an important driver for some.** For one of the participants, improving resale potential was the primary driver for renovation:

*My main motivation is to facilitate a sale.. to add some value to the place and just make it more appealing to sell quicker*

For some others, it was a significant secondary driver. There was evidence that improved resale value can be both a barrier to, and driver for, better environmental outcomes. The barriers relate to unsustainable market trends towards large, artificially cooled and heated homes. One participant reflected on market expectations for homes to include a guest room, office, multi media room and several bathrooms, and how this could impact on her renovation choices. On the positive side, there was some awareness of the impact of toughening environmental standards on resale value:

*So in five or six years time whether I sell what I'm in now or rent it out, I've got to meet those standards. So I might as well do it now instead of do all that work again and then find I've still got to fix it up*

One participant, whilst not viewing investment value as a driver, used it as a rationalisation for deciding whether to go ahead with the desired renovation:

*It's quite a lot of money and do we really want to put a significant amount of money into an existing house, would we be better off using that in some other way?*

**Environmental concerns did not drive the decision to renovate, but the renovation process was seen by many as an opportunity to 'do the right thing' by the environment.** None of the participants explicitly mentioned environmental concerns as a driver for renovation (unprompted). When asked later in the interview how important it was for their renovation to be environmentally friendly, all participants agreed it was important to them. This is explored further in the following section, and indicates that whilst the desire to be environmentally friendly is not a key driver for renovation, it may still affect choices at some level.

#### *Implications for the Renovator's Guide:*

Positively link 'green' actions to key drivers wherever possible, such as improved comfort, easier lifestyle and added resale value. Reinforcing environmental benefits may not drive decisions but will make most people feel good. This can be used to help support or rationalise decisions.

## **Factors that affect choice**

**Upfront cost was the key factor affecting choices made during the renovation process.** Upfront cost was the biggest factor that enabled or constrained decisions during the process. This reinforced some environmentally friendly measures perceived as cost-saving, such as use of salvaged items, and proved a disincentive for others perceived as expensive, such as solar hot water. When asked what made it hard to be environmentally friendly, one participant put it this way:

*Dough up front, yep. Dough up front and then just the hassle of it all. Like getting your quotes, working out what's involved.*

**There was general recognition of the value of measures that reduce ongoing costs, but these measures were more likely to be taken up if the upfront investment was also low,** for example water efficient fixtures or compact fluorescent lights. Ongoing cost savings were seen as an important driver when participants were asked about 'green' renovation, though less prominent in the more general context of renovation. There was a strong perceived link between being environmentally friendly and having lower bills, with lower bills seen by many as the more immediate incentive:

*If you want people to save don't go on about 'environmental this' and 'greenhouse that'. People will listen to you for a while and after a while they'll get tired of it. In the end they will say 'this is dull and boring, I've heard it already'. But you tell me how I can save \$10, \$20, \$50 a month.. then I listen with my ears wide open.*

**The perceived extra time and 'hassle' can create a disincentive to pursue some of the more complex or innovative green measures.** Almost all the participants said they'd found the process difficult and relied heavily on the recommendations of their builder or tradesperson. One participant said if he could make the choice again, he wouldn't have renovated. Of the process of claiming a rebate for his rainwater system, he said:

*I didn't realise it was going to be involved and take as long*

**All participants wanted to do the right thing by the environment but there was a gap between attitude and action.** Environmental concerns were in most cases mentioned only when prompted by the interviewer. However, once asked the question "how important is it to have an environmentally friendly renovation?" all participants said this was a priority. The following section explores environmental interest and action further, including the apparent gap between attitude and action.

*Look, I think you want to do the right thing. There's no question about it..*

*Very important to be environmentally friendly, I like to thing we're helping the environment.*

*I think we almost feel it would be irresponsible to not rate those three things (environmental friendliness, health, savings on bills) quite highly*

*We are very much aware of some of the circumstances we're having at the moment.. ice cap melting.. I've never been hugely active about it, but I've been aware of it and I think that we would probably look forward to having a chance to make something which is more energy efficient*

#### *Implications for the Renovator's Guide:*

Emphasise 'green' actions that save money up front or are at least cost neutral, as well as opportunities to offset upfront costs (such as rebates). Information on reducing bills, though less of a driver, will also help people to rationalise actions that save energy and water.

Focus on reducing 'hassle' by providing readers with links to comprehensive but succinct information on green technologies.

Include information about positive environmental benefits (as previously stated, the 'feel good' factor).

## **Environmental awareness, interest and action**

**Participant knowledge of what constitutes an 'environmentally friendly' or 'sustainable' renovation was reasonable but still limited.** Most participants discussed actions related to water and energy, with a focus on 'low hanging fruit' such as water efficient fittings, compact fluorescent lighting and appliances with good star ratings. Some participants also mentioned recycling and reuse of materials, universal access, aspects of passive design such as shading and insulation, and aspects of 'healthy homes' such as indoor air quality.

There was little mention of some of the more 'advanced' technologies such as photovoltaic systems or water recycling systems, no mention of 'alternative' products like composting toilets, and no mention (beyond reuse / recycling) of the environmental impacts of building materials.

**Knowledge of how to prioritise actions was limited.** Once participants got beyond the 'low hanging fruit', there was a limited understanding of how to prioritise actions to achieve greatest environmental benefit for the least cost.

**There was often a gap between intent and outcomes.** For a group of renovators who identified as environmentally conscious, actions were limited and (as explained above) tended to focus on the 'low hanging fruit' and items required by regulation such as rainwater tanks. One participant who identified as having an environmentally friendly renovation had not done anything beyond measures required by regulation. There were some examples of perverse outcomes, whereby participants had (in many cases unconsciously) added to their environmental impact with the intent of improving amenity, for example by purchasing a second, large fridge with icemaker for the outdoor kitchen, adding two extra bathrooms so each bedroom would have an ensuite, or installing an air conditioner to combat the effects of climate change:

*We've bought an air conditioner, simply because we're afraid in this global warming thing that there may come times when it will be so bloody hot you would just have to have an airconditioner.*

Others used the improved performance of their home as justification to consume without feeling guilty or being restricted by regulation:

*The reason we got the rainwater tank is so we feel like we can top it (the pool) up, with water restrictions and things like that.*

#### *Implications for the Renovator's Guide:*

Ensure the breadth of possible 'sustainability' actions is covered, including those with primarily social benefits such as universal access.

Include information that helps readers to comprehend the relative impacts of different choices, and prioritise actions from the perspective of environmental benefit versus cost.

## **Information sources**

**Participants overwhelmingly sought information through word of mouth, from friends and family who'd been through the renovation process** – this includes information on renovation ideas, which designer, builder and tradespeople to use, and which products to use. Every single participant interviewed sourced builders and trades through friends, and the one participant who used an architect also sourced him through friends.

*First, it doesn't matter what I do, it's talk to friends and family..*

*A lot of the things I've done in renovation come from either friends or family.*

*I like to talk to people who've actually been through the process rather than relying on the advertising.*

**Personalised face-to-face contact was highly valued. Beyond friends and family, participants rated builders, tradespeople and hardware store staff highly** as sources of information. There was a high level of trust in the advice given by hardware store staff. There was also a definite preference for face-to-face contact, and the ability to ask questions, over 'passive' sources such as the internet and magazines.

*One thing I found really useful was talking to staff in places like Bunnings.. a couple of guys there had just finished doing their own places so they'd used the products*

*The trouble with the internet is.. it's not something you can actually communicate with. It's there and you read. I prefer to actually talk to people and as they explain things I can ask them questions*

**The internet was seen as a valuable secondary source of information, but with some limitations.** Participants found it useful for finding products, but personalised follow up was generally required to get specific cost information:

*The websites weren't very helpful with prices*

Other places people went for information included home shows, displays, magazines and TV renovation programs. Looking at other renovations in the local area was also mentioned as useful. There was a preference for seeing items in 'reality' rather than in photos, plans and drawings (with the latter two being particularly hard to visualise for some participants). For example, some participants mentioned the value of seeing kitchen and bathroom displays, or past similar work by their builder.

*Implications for the Renovator's Guide:*

Community groups, hardware stores and professionals (builders, tradespeople, designers) would be ideal distribution points for the guide, where they could supplement 'word of mouth' advice.

The internet version of the guide has potential, and should be cross linked to other key renovator's websites

## Information needs and gaps

**Renovators said that, whilst information was abundant, it wasn't always easy to find what they were looking for.** The key is creating a portal so that readers can easily find what they need without being overwhelmed. Several participants said that they had no problem accessing enough information, but needed help navigating and making sense of it all.

**The most commonly sought information was on costs and products.** Renovators were very interested rules of thumb for budgeting, including what to factor in and what 'hidden costs' to expect. Renovators were also very interested in specific product information and costs, and opportunities for saving money.

*The other great information to have.. would be a sort of percentage of how much things tend to go over budget*

*What I was going to be up for, and then getting an idea of the process involved.. and working out what I can do myself to save*

**Information on how to prioritise based on cost versus benefit was highly desired.** Renovators wanted advice on how to get the best outcomes for the least cost, and reassurance that they were focusing on the right actions.

*It would be very, very useful to have.. in order of priority in terms of effectiveness.. a list of things that can be done to conserve energy and water.. and perhaps where to go and get them, and a sort of idea as to how much they cost and how effective they are*

*Perhaps there's a bit less of a point of going absolutely hell for leather and doing everything if there are some things that aren't going to make a difference*

**Information on how the renovation process works, including regulatory requirements, was seen as useful.** Renovators wanted an overview of the steps in the process, and also to learn from the experiences of other renovators. Some also mentioned the need for information on regulations and approvals processes.



*Other people's experiences and what they find out the pros and cons are is really, really useful*

**Many participants wanted expert advice on technicalities/ practicalities**, such as DIY 'how to' information and advice on how to configure a rainwater system.

**Independent information was preferred over information advertising a brand, but participants were less aware of where to find it.** Several participants commented on the abundance of information available on specific brands and products. The relationship to a particular brand or product was seen by many as a disadvantage, however participants were not particularly aware of independent information sources.

#### *Implications for the Renovator's Guide:*

The guide could serve as a portal or 'one stop shop', taking readers through all the key considerations and providing links to a wide range of useful information sources. This may help to avoid 'information overload'.

Include information on the renovation *process*

Include advice on how to prioritise actions based on costs versus environmental and 'lifestyle' benefits, with an emphasis on the 'low hanging fruit' as the first step to consider.

Information on generalised cost ranges for 'green' items would be a useful complement to the guide. Such information could potentially be developed (for example, as an extension to the Archicentre Cost Guide) and linked to the guide.

Link to credible independent information sources on costs and products (where available)

Emphasise the independence of the guide (no brand affiliations)

Consider locating the guide where people are already used to obtaining information (typically branded information), for example home ideas centres.

### **Specific comments on the guide**

The focus of these interviews was not on the guide itself, but on renovator perceptions and information needs. However, some of the interviewees were asked to look through the guide at the end of the interview and provide their first impressions. Following is a summary of their comments

On the cover:

*(Looking at cover) I wouldn't buy it. (Told it's free) Yes, I'd definitely pick it up and take it home*

On the tips and adjacent checklists:

*This is a good idea, so you can check your different things – it focuses you on things you don't really think about. You might have but you don't mentally absorb. But if you've got a checklist you can say 'yes' and tick. That's excellent.*

*I like the tips, I probably wouldn't read the paragraphs. These are very good, the tips. Because you know it's just 'save money, healthy and comfortable, enviro-friendly'.*

*I think that's a really neat sort of effective way of seeing at a glance.. the basic sort of checklist, working with designers, is a good section to have as well*

*I don't like the checkers (checklist items where users tick box)*

On content-related points that stood out to them:

*Here's a common mistake, more downlights than you need – see I didn't know about that lighting rule – 3 watts per square metre – this is really good.*

*I didn't know that – about the low VOC and organic paints. That's interesting to know. Oh good, it's got good websites.*

*That's a good idea, telling you how to get rebates and stuff, because you don't always know*

On the briefing templates:

*That would be useful.. they've got a copy of exactly what you want.. sometimes you might not have written it down and so you've got proof you did say that. It's not just there for their check thing, it's for us as well*

*They (tradespeople) tend to come with their own writing stuff and take notes.. so I think they might be a bit put off by it actually. I wouldn't use these.*

On the personalised case studies and quotation pull-outs:

*I like the testimonials and I like the speech marks – that's what I'm looking at because I talk to other people and it's like you're getting advice from someone else.*

*Implications for the Renovator's Guide:*

Feedback is generally positive, no immediate changes recommended. Further testing (using statistically significant sample) recommended once the guide has been in circulation for a further 6 -12 months.

## Focus group findings

Following is an analysis of the key focus group findings for both the Melbourne and Adelaide focus groups. Participants were extremely positive about the guide, with hardly any negative feedback given.

## Adelaide focus group notes

**Date** Thursday, 4-08-2008

**Location** Dept Transport, Energy and Infrastructure, L 8 11 Waymouth St, Adelaide SA Australia

**Participants** 6 total, 3 men, 3 women, all Caucasian.

**Category** Currently undertaking or have completed a home renovation

**Moderator** David More, Optimal Experience

**Note taker** Helaine Stanley, Centre for Design

Codes: **S** = Sonya, **K** = Karla, **Rb** = Rob, **M** = Murray, **Mi** = Mick, **R** = Rosanne

*Question 1: How many renovations have you performed?*

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most currently doing first renovation or part two of evolving project. Two have renovated previously.</li> </ul>	
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	

*Question 2: What is the extent of your renovation work?*

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 participants performing partial renovation ie. bathroom (1 bathroom now post completing kitchen some time ago, 1 just finished kitchen</li> <li>1 conversion of garage into self contained studio apartment for own use</li> <li>Most participants have renovated bathroom, kitchen, living areas</li> <li>1 verandah area onto back of house</li> <li>1 extensive addition, added large family room, laundry, new kitchen and bedroom.</li> </ul>	
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	
<p>Rb: bathroom "Been there twenty years and it needs an upgrade"</p> <p>K: Just finished kitchen "children flown the coop and want more space and just cleaner"</p> <p>S: was 2 bedroom, added large family, laundry, new kitchen and bedroom. Start in three weeks. "two teenage boys and it was only two bedrooms"</p> <p>M: finished verandah "need some space where you don't get burnt" "was getting nagged by the missus to do something to the house"</p> <p>Mi: Built an area on the back "not enough space for the grandkids now"</p> <p>R: 8 car garage conversion to studio apartment for "space for the kids to have sleepovers and keep them at home maybe. And who needs an 8 car garage- it was there when we bought it"</p>	

Question 3: How was your renovation performed?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Participant Experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most were managing the process themselves with only one engaging an architect.</li> </ul> <p>There was an issue with getting trades. Skill shortage was agreed by all to be a problem. "you ask for five quotes because you know only 2-3 will show up!"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rb – been shopping for tiles, spa and showerscreen working out whether to do it themselves. "It can save \$3,000 or so."</li> <li>• R – "won't subbie this one out as no one shows up!" Went to "Bathroom Concepts" for last reno - the kitchen and that was good because they wear the risk- if they go broke. Might do this one ourselves though because you can save 10%</li> <li>• M – got builder down the road to do it for us. He orders it all on the internet- he's a young guy- it's all easy.</li> </ul>
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	
<p>Flow of conversation ranged the pros and cons of doing it yourself (coordinating) and a shared unhappiness with the trades not showing up as well as frustration of council permits approval time.</p>	

Question 4: What were your reasons for undertaking a renovation?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Participant Experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most making more modern, upgrading</li> <li>• A couple noted the cost to move these days, stamp duty costs and being happy with the local area.</li> <li>• All shared the view that when you renovate your home rather than buying you get what you want and you know the quality and have some control.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R – to use a space that was being wasted- the garage.</li> <li>• R: "The space will be for the kids to use for sleepovers, you don't want ten year olds around your house, it's so invasive when they have friends over."</li> <li>• Mi – needed space for the grandkids.</li> <li>• Rb – bathroom needed an upgrade. Mentioned wife wanting a spa bath and trying to talk her out of it- potentially driven by quality level improvement.</li> <li>• M- suggested to the wife that they might put a verandah on and she pushed ahead with the idea straight away to get it done.</li> <li>• S – needed more "space" for growing boys- teenagers. "added value and capital growth"</li> <li>• K – kitchen upgrade post kids gone. "old house" More funds available also since kids moving out.</li> </ul>
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	
<p>R- "thought about not doing it because of all the grief but decided that stamp duty is too much so decided to stay"</p> <p>M- "new houses look no good- all the plastic fixtures. Then you've got agents fees, removals, stamp duty and stuff you don't like - we decided to just renovate"</p> <p>S- "you don't know what you're buying when you buy something else- it's a risk. At least with your own home you know what you're dealing with"</p>	

Question 5: Was one of the reasons to renovate, to modernise/update the house?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All agreed that modernisation was part of process</li> </ul>	
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	

Question 6&9: Did you think the environment in your decision making? Energy or water efficiency?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes/ Participant Experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most hadn't considered the environment in their decision making.</li> <li>There was some active discussion around saving water.</li> </ul>	
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The role of showrooms obviously plays a part in showing what is "acceptable" ie a showroom without a bath in the room means it must be ok to do.</li> </ul>	

Question 7: Where did you get your information and ideas from? Did you use an architect?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All agreed that talking to people was the best way to get info that you could trust.</li> <li>The independence of information came up to some extent as well as the getting "sold to" at events.</li> </ul> <p>L- low M- Medium H- High importance</p> <p>L Home Shows  M Home Ideas Centre  H Showrooms  L/M Display Homes  H Online  H Watching previous renovations  H Family and friends  L TV Shows  M Architect/designer  L Magazines  L Hardware/Supplier stores  L Trades/Suppliers</p>	<p>M- "display homes and ideas from what was built"</p> <p>Rb- "showroom, went to newsagencies to look at magazines- not much in there though and they're expensive. Online there was heaps to look at"</p> <p>Mi- "watched the neighbours, having a sticky beak and getting ideas from the local neighbourhood"</p> <p>R- "talking to people, family, friends- all the Backyard Blitz type shows.</p> <p>S- "we found our architect at the Home Show- he had a stand there"</p> <p>R- "the draftsman" and "I love the Home Magazine"</p> <p>Rb- "you find a photo and say- that's the colour of the tile I want!" "And the Home Ideas Centre- you don't get harassed- the Home Shows sell you things"</p> <p>M- "Bunnings, it all cheap- you get what you pay for! But they're ok for ideas. You go</p>

	<p>there to compare and Tradelink and Harvey Norman”</p> <p>R- “oh there’s the tradespeople too. They need a lot of training though- customer service, energy efficiency- everything! They’ve got a long way to go!”</p>
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	
<p>There was a correlation between the importance and the credibility of information sources ie the more credible- usually the more important in ranking.</p>	

Question 8: Given your experiences, would you do another renovation?

<b>Brief Summary/Key Points</b>	<b>Participant Experiences</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most agreed that it is the lesser of two evils. Renovating v’s moving/buying</li> </ul>	
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most weren’t excited about their renovation due to experiences with the process involved. More of a chore rather than an enjoyable experience from the tone of comments made throughout.</li> </ul>	

Question 10: (Directed at the participants who were given the guide prior to the focus group session) What do you think of the publication? Can you explain what it is to the participants who haven’t read it?

<b>Brief Summary/Key Points</b>	<b>Notable Quotes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All 3 participants (T,J,M) gave positive feedback on the Guide</li> <li>• Felt that the amount of information provided was perfect – not too technical</li> <li>• They noted that environmental considerations &amp; message were throughout the Guide, even though it isn’t explicitly mentioned. They liked the fact that it wasn’t a forceful message.</li> <li>• They liked that you could look for further information on websites</li> </ul>	<p>M- “everyone would find this interesting! It’s not just a book- it’s got a checklist that’s not too bad actually. Look at this- it’s great- the toilet where you wash your hands over it!”</p> <p>Rb- “I found it promotes energy efficiency and water saving in my renovation. I thought jeez I haven’t even thought of any of that! And you think- oh we’re going to have to start thinking of this. It’s good but I thought- geez you’d need these to help the tradies. Cause they’ll need it!”</p> <p>K- It tells you what to think about- energy.</p> <p>S- It’s going on the green side?</p> <p>M- “It’s usefull stuff! You’d look into this stuff- I mean where to put windows- you don’t know this stuff- it’s good. Where to put small windows and big windows.</p> <p>R- “first impression it’s good. Tells you stuff that you don’t know and that’s good!</p> <p>S- “like a renovator’s guide?” “ A very good</p>

	<p>renovator's Guide!</p> <p>R- "look- it tells you about downlights and cost – that's good!"</p> <p>Mi- "there's a house down the road- it hardly costs them nothin' they've built it so they can pay to run it with no wage because they're pretty old- they're not workin' anymore. I reckon that's great!"</p> <p>R- "there's no ads!! It's great! Not tryin' to sell ya" "oh yeah it's government- it's believable they're not trying to sell you stuff."</p> <p>S- "but does this tell me where I can get solar heating?"- "where do you actually go to buy something and which one do I choose?"</p>
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	
An enthusiastic response from the participants.	

Question 11: (Directed at the participants who were given the guide prior to the focus group session) Would this Guide have been useful to you in helping with the renovation processes?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A unanimous YES</li> <li>• All agreed they'd go to the further links and websites for more information.</li> </ul>	
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	

Question 11: What is your first impression of the guide?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liked the look and feel of the guide – its like a magazine</li> <li>• Liked the fact that it's not selling anything and seems to be unbiased, general</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants seemed to focus on the fact that it was a government publication and not a commercial venture. This helps with the publication's credibility and overall message</li> </ul>	

Question 12: Would you use the checklists/briefing sheets?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most said yes, they'd probably use the templates.</li> </ul>	<p>Rb- "oh definitely. I can't see tradesman knowing about this information though. Couldn't imagine them ever suggesting any of this so I think it will be good to make them think about this stuff"</p> <p>R- "If you gave this to a tradie- they'd run. I would use it and fill it all in but then not show it to the tradesman so I didn't scare them off. They might not give me the quote and it's hard enough finding them and getting them to do a quote for you."</p> <p>Rb- "If I was going to lodge it with a tradesman I'd want to know what rebates I'd get- they should tell me"</p>
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	

Question 13: What ideas can you give to broaden the reach of the Guide? Any ideas for improvements?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add rebate information (discussion about it changing all the time)</li> <li>• Preferred suppliers from govt.</li> <li>• One Guide for renovators and one for the trades.</li> <li>• A guide on how to run the house- a booklet.</li> <li>• An incentive to suppliers to train their staff in this stuff- in the bathroom shops and tradies.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>Rb- "you'd need more info on rebates. My son just went to buy a washing machine from Harvey Norman, the forms were all there, he got discount from the company and a rebate fro the govt. it was great and easy!"</p> <p>Rb- "if you got this from someone's display- you'd expect they'd be trained in it. They'd need to be to explain it properly. It's the future- they're going to have to know about it." "Maybe they'd need their own one".</p> <p>R- "increase the rebates and then we'll start talkin"</p>
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	

Question 14: What will you do with the Guide?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ALL – keep it on file as a reference</li> <li>• All agreed they'd hang on to the Guide and keep it in a folder or filing cabinet until they did another part of the renovation.</li> </ul>	<p>K- "I didn't bring it tonight 'cause I thought you might want it back! Mine's at home"</p>



<b>Comments and Observations</b>
Again, as with a Melbourne participant- a person who was sent the Guide did not bring it with them for fear "it might be taken away! And they needed it"

*Question 15: What do you think are the best & worst things about the Guide? Suggestions for improvements?*

<b>Brief Summary/Key Points</b>	<b>Notable Quotes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New information, no advertising</li> </ul>	
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	

*Question 16: Would you be interested in taking out a low-interest loan to spend on environmentally efficient technologies/products?*

<b>Brief Summary/Key Points</b>	<b>Notable Quotes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all agreed that sounded like a great idea and would be interested.</li> <li>• 5 interested</li> <li>• 1 not interested (then changed to being interested)</li> </ul>	S – "It gives you an incentive- why wouldn't you."
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	
Again, a source of confusion for general public. Items listed that would be considered- Solar hot water, solar power, tanks, energy efficient appliances, water saving taps, lighting, toilets.	

*General comment on Adelaide focus group:*

In both discussions, the group moved a long way in their understanding of the things you can do to make your home more efficient and seemed to be convinced through their engagement with the Guide that this was "smart and made sense". They perceived the guide as "not being pushed upon you but just offering good independent information". The Guide seemed to really differentiate itself from the other product/company specific information that is prevalent.

## Melbourne focus group notes

<b>Date</b>	Thursday, 31-07-2008
<b>Location</b>	JB Market Research Services, 159 Clarendon Street, South Melbourne
<b>Participants</b>	6 total, 3 men, 3 women, all Caucasian.
<b>Category</b>	Currently undertaking or have completed a home renovation
<b>Moderator</b>	David More
<b>Note taker</b>	Maggie Lee, Centre for Design

Codes: **S** = Simona, **R** = Rosemary, **T** = Trevor, **M** = Megan, **J** = John, **Ri** = Richard

*Question 1: How many renovations have you performed?*

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All currently doing first renovation</li> </ul>	
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	

*Question 2: What is the extent of your renovation work?*

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 participants performing extensive reno</li> <li>2 participants performing cosmetic reno with 1 intending to go onto extensive reno</li> <li>Most participants have completed reno to bathroom, kitchen, living areas</li> <li>All mentioned intent to do or having included landscaping or exterior additions like decking</li> <li>J – mentioned renovating the pool</li> <li>R – Bulk of renovation complete, now small stuff to do</li> <li>Ri – halfway through interior and is now doubling the back deck size (DIY)</li> </ul>	

Comments and Observations
<p>J :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retiree</li> <li>• Set aside 50-60K to spend on renovations over period of 4 years</li> <li>• Done bathrooms, kitchen, family room, revamped/replaced services, also outside decking &amp; pool</li> </ul> <p>Ri:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Done bathroom, kitchen, living room, landscaping, decking extension</li> </ul> <p>S:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Done living, kitchen, landscaping, bathroom, walls</li> </ul> <p>M:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cosmetic – kitchen, living room, next step rest of house and exterior</li> </ul>

*Question 3: How was your renovation performed?*

Brief Summary/Key Points	Participant Experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All enjoy the challenge and process of the renovation</li> <li>• There was a range of different experiences in where they sought assistance with the reno work. Family, friends, tradespeople were mentioned along with DIY.</li> <li>• Majority of people agreed that its better to engage professionals for services like electricity &amp; plumbing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S – was given a list of local contractors in area by the real estate agent when she bought the house. She also engages friends and family members who have expertise to give advice and provide help. She also finds getting professionals to do the work gives her peace of mind</li> <li>• M - finishing the renovation in stages as the money comes in. Although she comes from a family of builders, she &amp; partner prefer to engage contractors to do the work.</li> <li>• Ri - is doing most of the renovations himself. He gets advice from professionals by asking them in for a quote, getting them to talk about what they will do, and then doing the work himself. He also asks family for assistance.</li> <li>• Ri - "Anyone can do it"</li> </ul>
Comments and Observations	
<p>Flow of conversation ranged from the actual renovation process, engagement of professionals, the DIY aspect</p>	

*Question 4: What were your reasons for undertaking a renovation?*

Brief Summary/Key Points	Participant Experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 bought a renovator's delight</li> <li>• Reasons for undertaking a renovation varied, however most noted feeling of satisfaction from putting their own effort into the house and sentiment attached to the place.</li> <li>• Some liked the structure of the house, and preferred to develop that than buy another newer place that they liked less.</li> <li>• See corresponding box "participant experiences: for individual responses &amp; motivations"</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R - Reno's delight bought because they liked the layout and feel of the house. They didn't live in it until it was serviceable. They also wanted their feel and touch to the home</li> <li>• M – bought property from family friend because of sentiment to area &amp; house. She sees house as their home for the future.</li> <li>• J – its an upgrade to a longstanding family home</li> <li>• Ri – bought a dump that was structurally sound. He liked the structure and then knew what he wanted to do with the space.</li> <li>• S – renovated to improve the space, upgrade features etc. She said that she doesn't mind investing money in the renovation because, "You know you'll get the money back."</li> <li>• T – mentioned that he liked the renovation process, the feeling of putting himself in the house, however "It's still bricks and mortar"</li> </ul>
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noted some nodding, to quote "It's still bricks and mortar." This implies that despite the feeling of satisfaction of putting their mark on the house, it is still an investment which should provide a positive return</li> </ul>	

Question 5: Was one of the reasons to renovate, to modernise/update the house?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All agreed that modernisation was part of process</li> </ul>	
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	

Question 6&9: Did you think the environment in your decision making? Energy or water efficiency?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes/ Participant Experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Half of participants considered environment in their decision making, and in choosing products</li> <li>• Most mentioned active heating &amp; cooling, water &amp; electricity efficient products in considerations</li> <li>• Discussion that someone should provide information around cost/benefit analysis and payback periods in regards to enviro</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M – had rainwater tank first on her list of priorities. She mentioned environment as very important to her. Quotes include, "For me, it's not about saving money, it's about being part of the bigger picture." And "The gap (price between standard vs. environmentally friendly products) is closing as it comes to the fore of people's minds". She mentioned that</li> </ul>

<p>technology &amp; products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost/benefit information seen as a way of getting people to actually choose more environmentally friendly options</li> </ul>	<p>she considers the environment in her decision making “for my own conscience.” And it’s a statement of her identity to choose environmentally friendly products. Her partner isn’t so environmentally focussed, but has really come on board to it through the renovations process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M? - “It’s the little things that make a big difference”</li> <li>• M? - “It’s just thinking differently.”</li> <li>• S – bought a timer on the heater &amp; is currently trying to convince her partner that they don’t need an air-conditioner.</li> <li>• J – He said environment was about halfway down his list of priorities, but could see the long-term savings from some more efficient products. He considered different water heating systems, house heating systems &amp; paid extra for zoned central heating system.</li> <li>• T – bought a rainwater tank, installed the exterior downpipe himself &amp; pressure pump. Uses it to water his garden &amp; is very happy with it.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Comments and Observations</b></p>	
<p>Environmental considerations were questioned twice during focus group session. Comments from both discussions are incorporated in this table.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No mention of insulation, glazing, orientation</li> <li>• Ri – asked about greywater not being able to be used in a sprinkler system. Here is a potential barrier – where the council/laws prevent/change the way people are used to using a particular service.</li> </ul>	

*Question 7: Where did you get your information and ideas from? Did you use an architect?*

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice from media, family, friends, hardware stores featured prominently</li> <li>• Media sources: Magazines – Home Beautiful, Better Homes &amp; Gardens – mentioned taking out subscriptions to magazines</li> <li>• Print &amp; Television media a popular choice for information, internet also mentioned.</li> <li>• Going to display homes, home shows &amp; expos 2 participants mentioned engaging architect for structural advice</li> <li>• Using an architect to design a home is a desire. However, cost of architect a barrier.</li> </ul>	<p>“There is so much information out there!”</p>

<b>Comments and Observations</b>

Question 8: Given your experiences, would you do another renovation?

<b>Brief Summary/Key Points</b>	<b>Participant Experiences</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• J – wouldn't do it again</li> <li>• Ri- will renovate every time, would never buy a new home, maybe even make a career out of renovating</li> </ul>
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed feelings</li> </ul>	

Question 10: (Directed at the participants who were given the guide prior to the focus group session) What do you think of the publication? Can you explain what it is to the participants who haven't read it?

<b>Brief Summary/Key Points</b>	<b>Notable Quotes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All 3 participants (T,J,M) gave positive feedback on the Guide</li> <li>• Felt that the amount of information provided was perfect – not too technical</li> <li>• They noted that environmental considerations &amp; message were throughout the Guide, even though it isn't explicitly mentioned. They liked the fact that it wasn't a forceful message.</li> <li>• They liked that you could look for further information on websites</li> </ul>	<p>"Terrific"</p> <p>"Interesting. It was like reading a magazine"</p> <p>"Very informative"</p> <p>"Gives ideas on what to think about, and what to consider"</p> <p>"It isn't about DIY, it says what you should consider."</p> <p>"Great ideas and tips"</p> <p>"Excellent section on heating &amp; cooling"</p> <p>"I wasn't sure if I should have brought my copy along with me to the session. I was afraid you might take it off me!"</p>
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	
An enthusiastic response from the participants.	

Question 11: (Directed at the participants who were given the guide prior to the focus group session) Would this Guide have been useful to you in helping with the renovation processes?

<b>Brief Summary/Key Points</b>	<b>Notable Quotes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A unanimous YES</li> <li>• J &amp; T hadn't looked at the suggested websites, but would check them later</li> <li>• M said it gave you good background</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• J - "Would have helped to sharpen my focus"</li> <li>• T – "A magnificent thing"</li> </ul>

information and explained technical jargon, which would help her when she talks to trades people.	
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	

Question 11: What is your first impression of the guide?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liked the look and feel of the guide – its like a magazine</li> <li>• The strips on the sides helped with prioritising needs</li> <li>• It's a good summary &amp; starting point</li> <li>• Ri – didn't like the windows on the picture on the cover</li> <li>• Liked the fact that it's not selling anything and seems to be unbiased, general</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "It's not technical.. well it probably is actually.. but it's easy to read"</li> </ul>
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants seemed to focus on the fact that it was a government publication and not a commercial venture. This helps with the publication's credibility and overall message</li> </ul>	

Question 12: Would you use the checklists/briefing sheets?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes &amp; No answers given.</li> <li>• One participant said would definitely use it as is</li> <li>• One participant said would use to provoke thought, but not fill it out</li> <li>• S – thought it might be useful to have follow on contacts – lists of suppliers &amp; other sources of information</li> </ul>	
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	

Question 13: What ideas can you give to broaden the reach of the Guide? Any ideas for improvements?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real estate agents? Pro – reach, Cons – associations with a sales agenda</li> <li>• Advertising in newspapers, magazines, maybe on TV with Better Homes &amp; Gardens.</li> <li>• You Tube a suggestion</li> <li>• Coupon idea?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple by-line in classifieds section of newspaper directing to internet link</li> </ul>	
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Didn't seem to be much weight on using a DVD with video format. Participants seemed to have more enthusiasm for print media &amp; television</li> </ul>	

Question 14: What will you do with the Guide?

<b>Brief Summary/Key Points</b>	<b>Notable Quotes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ALL – keep it on file as a reference</li> </ul>	
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	

Question 15: What do you think are the best & worst things about the Guide? Suggestions for improvements?

<b>Brief Summary/Key Points</b>	<b>Notable Quotes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple, functional, no advertising</li> <li>• Really comprehensive</li> <li>• An estimate of cost/benefits applicable to each state</li> <li>• A website where you can get information on rebates/government incentives on a state by state basis</li> </ul>	
<b>Comments and Observations</b>	

Question 16: Would you be interested in taking out a low-interest loan to spend on environmentally efficient technologies/products?

<b>Brief Summary/Key Points</b>	<b>Notable Quotes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Might help people consider products if they were already on the edge of buying them</li> <li>• Rainwater tanks – since you have to get a licenced plumber to install a tank in order to qualify for the rebate, it ends up costing more to get hooked up than you get back from the rebate.</li> <li>• A lot of people don't give the environment that much thought, so it might not make a difference.</li> <li>• How does the government know if you're spending it on a green initiative?</li> </ul>	<p>M – "I only learnt about green mortgages when I read the guide."</p>



Comments and Observations
<p>Discussion around difference between solar hot water and solar PV panels. This is generally a source of confusion for general public. Ri – demonstrated knowledge of 5-star housing standard and mandatory solar hot water systems being installed in new housing.</p> <p>Noted someone finding statistics on hot water power consumption as a proportion of overall energy use in a home as an incentive to investing in efficient products.</p>

## Conclusions

Based on the results of the user testing, we recommend that no changes be made to the *Your Home Renovator's Guide* at this point. The feedback was strongly positive, and although some possibilities for potential changes emerged, further testing with a larger sample is recommended first. This could occur in 6 to 12 months time, when the guide has been circulated to a wide audience.

This testing could encompass the suite of *Green Loans* materials (eg. the Renovators Guide, the Assessment Report, the Self-Assessment Booklet, etc) and be conducted in the context of a householder going through the home assessment and loans application process. This would help to identify how well the various materials align with each other, how well they work in-use to support decision-making, and whether there are any gaps in information provided.

A reply-paid survey has been included in the back sleeve of the guide, designed to contribute to the analysis of the Renovator's Guide.

*Following is a summary of what the guide already does well, based on feedback from the testing:*

- ✓ Provides guidance on navigating the renovation process and budgeting
- ✓ Links sustainability actions to the key drivers and factors uncovered in the research – amenity/ lifestyle, improved resale, low upfront cost, low bills and 'doing the right thing' by the environment.
- ✓ Provides advice on prioritising actions, and emphasises the high impact, low cost opportunities. (Note: This aspect could potentially be expanded in a future edition).
- ✓ Covers a broad range of sustainability actions that householders can undertake, to hopefully extend readers' knowledge of the possibilities.
- ✓ Works like an 'index' by providing an overview of the renovation process and all the key considerations, with links to credible information sources that provide further detail on each issue.
- ✓ Contains links to credible, independent and freely available information on costs and environmentally friendly products (Archicentre Cost Guide and Ecospecifier).
- ✓ Emphasises on the cover that the guide is independent

*Following is a summary of opportunities for future enhancements, subject to the outcomes of further testing:*

- ⇒ More emphasis on how to prioritise decisions, for example an ‘at a glance’ snapshot of where the biggest opportunities for improvement are.

Note: How best to do this requires further thought. The question: “What are the top 5 improvements I can make?” is not straightforward to answer, and depends on a number of variables such as climate, characteristics of the existing house, etc. It also involves comparison of impacts in one ‘indicator area’ such as greenhouse gas emissions with impacts in another, such as biodiversity or water use. Perhaps a task best left to the home assessor.

- ⇒ Possibly more detail on budgeting and the renovation process
- ⇒ Further testing could identify options for other titles in the *Your Home* series, for example a detailed guide on bathrooms or kitchens
- ⇒ Most renovators surveyed appeared not to use a designer (renovations were self-designed or designed by the builder), however said they liked the ‘working with your designer’ section. Possibly rename as ‘thinking through your design’ or similar (subject to further testing).

*The following ideas for distribution of the guide emerged from the testing process:*

- ⇒ Promote and distribute the guide through hubs where renovators seek ‘word of mouth’ advice – for example through community organisations, hardware stores, home information centres and retailers of bathroom goods and white goods/ appliances.
- ⇒ Integrate the guide with existing activities run by the above renovator ‘hubs’. For example, some community groups and hardware stores run training sessions on renovation/ DIY. The guide could be used to structure such training, and as a take-home resource for participants.
- ⇒ Consider working with large hardware chains to develop a staff training program based on the content in the Renovator’s Guide, given that advice from hardware store staff tends to be highly valued by renovators.
- ⇒ Consider allowing hardware chains, home ideas centres and other relevant renovation-related enterprises to co-brand the guide, (eg. endorsement/ logo on cover, advertising material in back sleeve) whilst retaining the independent content of the guide.
- ⇒ Advertise the online version of the guide (at [www.yourhome.gov.au](http://www.yourhome.gov.au)) on popular commercial renovation websites (hardware stores, etc). Emphasise the guide’s independence in the advertising.
- ⇒ Advertise the guide in major renovator/ DIY newspaper lift-outs and magazines, and potentially during renovation/ DIY-related television and radio shows.

*The following exploratory discussions were held on co-branding and promotion of the Briefing Templates by industry organisations:*

As part of the research, discussions were initiated with industry organisations representing designers/ architects, builders and landscape contractors about co-branding the Renovator’s Guide briefing templates and promoting them to members. Initial indications of support were received by the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA), the Building Designer’s Association of Victoria (BDAV), The Master Builder’s Association of Victoria (MBAV), the Housing Industry Association (HIA) and Sustainable Gardening Australia (SGA). Appendix A contains a record of these exploratory discussions and identifies contacts for further discussion.

## **Appendix A**

### **Notes from exploratory discussions with industry organisations about briefing templates**

## Your Home Renovator's Guide Social and Market Research-

### Briefing Templates Industry Discussions

Discussions were held with the industry groups listed below to gauge interest in the potential co-branding of the Your Home Renovator's Guide briefing templates. The potential for the industry groups to adopt the templates as their preferred briefing documents and to promote them to members was discussed. The briefing templates would assist the builder / designer / garden or outdoor contractor to collect all the relevant information required to quote and deliver the requested work on the home.

### Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) & Archicentre

Contact: Scott Willey  
Manager Sustainability  
Scott Willey  
Level 2, 41 Exhibition Street MELBOURNE VIC 3000  
Phone (03) 8620 3877

*March 2008:*

Telephone discussions were conducted between Helaine Stanley (RMIT) and Scott Willey to gauge interest in the AIA being involved in the development of a briefing template for Architects to use in early discussions with their clients. Scott was interested in continuing discussions and mentioned the process that would be involved could be quite lengthy, as the document would require approval through their board.

*April 2008:*

Discussion held with AIA and Archicentre to explain the YHRG briefing templates would be produced and could be altered after working together to refine them. Co-branding could potentially be worked in to the next version of the Guide and Templates.

*December 2008:*

The following email was sent by Scott Willey to Helaine Stanley:

*Further to our conversation yesterday, I will be happy to give input into the future development of the Your Home Renovator's Guide briefing templates in their future revisions. I will also investigate what would be possible for use of our branding as well.*

*Kind regards,*

SCOTT WILLEY

**Building Designers Association (BDAA/BDA)**

Contact: Giselle Grynbaum  
Executive Officer  
PO Box 174, Carlton South VIC 3053  
Level 4, 332 Albert Street, East Melbourne VIC 3002  
Phone (03) 9416 0227  
fax (03) 9416 0115  
web [www.bdav.org.au](http://www.bdav.org.au)

The Building Designers Association of Victoria (BDAA) was approached initially due to their progressive work on sustainability.

*April/May 2008:*

A telephone discussion was held between Helaine Stanley (RMIT) and Giselle Grynbaum. BDAA is very interested in working together to refine the Briefing Templates for the BDAA's design professionals to use in their discussions with clients. BDAA is potentially interested in co-branding the templates. Discussions have not yet been held with the national Building Designer's Association.

*November 2008:*

The following email was sent by Giselle:

*Hi Helaine, The BDAA would be pleased to participate in reviewing your templates, and be attributed accordingly.*

*Our Vice-President, Tim Adams, would be pleased to be involved in this...Tim also serves on our Committee of Management, and is our "Sustainability" guru, fielding many issues regularly on sustainability and energy efficiency, so his input I am confident will be of assistance to your project. He can be contacted at [f2design@telstra.com](mailto:f2design@telstra.com) or by phone on (03) 96621534. But do please keep our office in the loop on this project too.*

*The BDAA is not a member of the BDAA, and has not been a member since 2000, so we cannot help you with contacts at other State BDAs, but you may care to contact Russell Brandon, who has the dual hat of CEO of BDAQ and acting CEO for the BDAA....he may be able to put you in touch with other state contacts. His contact details are email: [admin@bdaq.com.au](mailto:admin@bdaq.com.au) or phone (07) 3889 9119.*

*Regards, Giselle*

**Master Builders Association (MBA)**

Contact: Phillip Alviano  
Sustainable Building Advisor  
32 Albert Street East Melbourne VIC 3002  
Phone (03) 9411 4500

Initial discussions were held between Helaine Stanley (RMIT) and Phillip Alviano of the Master Builder's Association of Victoria (MBAV) due to a past working relationship with ISF. Discussions are also required with the national body, and a contact has now been suggested.

*April/May 2008:*

Discussion held with Phil Alviano regarding the MBA being involved in the refining of the YHRG Briefing Templates. Phil suggested the templates looked so useful that they may be able to replace the checklists currently used by their builders to incorporate sustainable elements. The MBAV is potentially interested in co-branding the templates.

November 2008

The following email was sent by Phil:

*Hi Helaine, Just confirming that we would be happy to be involved in the redevelopment of the Your Home Renovators guide Briefing templates.*

*If you want to try our National Office contact; Neil Gow - Training Manager:  
Neil.Gow@masterbuilders.com.au Phone: 02 6202 8888 The Master Builders is a state based association. It may be easier to make contact to other state bodies through myself via the training manager here in Victoria. Philip Alviano*

### **Housing Industry Association (HIA)**

Contact: Janine Nechwatal  
General Manager GreenSmart  
Housing Industry Association  
GPO Box 1614 Melbourne 3001  
ph: 03 9280-8202  
fax: 03 9654 8168  
mob: 0404 033 857

Several telephone discussions were held between Helaine Stanley (RMIT) and Janine, and one meeting at the HIA offices in Melbourne to discuss and seek approval from the HIA CEO. Below is an email response from the ongoing discussions over the last six months.

November 2008:

*Hi Helaine, As discussed HIA would be interested in providing brand support on the Builder and Designer brief. I would also like to see an inclusion of the [www.greensmart.com.au](http://www.greensmart.com.au) website in the renovators guide which contains relevant consumer content. I would be interested in posing the renovators guide to some of our builders working in the area of GreenSmart for their feedback at an appropriate time. Please contact me when you wish me to send the logos through. Regards, Janine Nechwatal*

### **Sustainable Gardening Australia (SGA)**

Contact: Mary Trigger  
Chief Executive Officer  
Sustainable Gardening Australia  
6 Manningham Road  
Bulleen. VIC 3105  
Tel:(03) 9850 8165  
Mobile: 0414 641 337  
Fax:(03) 9852 1097

Email:mary@sgaonline.org.au

Web:www.sgaonline.org.au

Discussions over six months have been held to seek SGA input and potential co-branding. The following response has been received.

*November 2008:*

*Hi Helaine, SGA would be interested in working with the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts to help refine the Your Home Briefing Templates and would be interested in co-branding the templates.*

*Kind regards, Mary*