



Full-time occupation: Stephen Tolle and Cherie Barber, working on their Balmain home, quit their jobs two years ago to renovate houses

Home owners learn self-reliance

DO IT YOURSELF

By real estate writer
BRONWYN ALLEN

AN estimated 50 per cent of renovation work undertaken in Australia is done by do-it-yourself renovators, according to the Housing Industry Association (HIA).

"It seems to be the trendy thing to do," HIA chief economist Simon Tennent said.

Cherie Barber, 32, and Stephen Tolle, 30, enjoy renovating so much they quit their jobs two years ago to renovate full-time.

In 2000, the couple spent four months renovating their first, derelict property and walked away with a \$300,000 profit.

But experts warn do-it-yourself renovating can be dangerous, particularly if home owners don't check with their council or get good design advice before starting work.

An Archicentre report found 20 per cent of Australian homes have had illegal work done.

"All too often, people don't think they need professional design advice from an architect," Archicentre NSW/ACT manager David Lawrence said.

"Often people either ignore or are unaware of the building code and council regulations."

Illegal renovations could affect the sale of a property because a buyer's solicitor would demand proof that renovations had been council-

approved, he said. Australia's renovating craze has been spurred on by television programs such as Room For Improvement, Location, Location and The Block.

HIA figures show 67,300 Australian households undertook major renovations last year. A further 14,500 households renovated in the March 2003 quarter.

A report by Archicentre found Sydney was the most expensive place to renovate, with costs at least 15 per cent higher than in Melbourne and Canberra, and 25 per cent higher than in Adelaide.

Leon Andrews and Fiona Jackson are looking forward to renovating their recently bought first home in Rozelle, in Sydney's inner west.



Excited: Fiona Jackson and Leon Andrews

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VERTICAL DRAPES

