

Rejuvenating Renos on a budget.

By Danielle King – June 2012

Green Moves Australia (www.greenmoves.com.au)

Many of us who renovate have so much to juggle it's easy to lose sight of some of the opportunities available that can make a home operate more efficiently. So here are my top 10 tips for renovating on a budget, what you can easily include in the process and what free advice is available.



1. Define the scope and the budget for your project. How many times have we started on one thing and the project has blown out to include other 'stuff' not initially included. This should keep you in focus of what you need to work within.
2. If you need to buy things, look at the 2nd hand builder's yards, op shops, online stores and auctions and garage sales. You can often pick up a good bargain.
3. If you're opening up any external walls, take the opportunity to install good insulation at the same time. For little extra effort and cost you can make a significant difference to keeping your home more comfortable. While you're at it draft proof around those external doors, windows and construction gaps. You'll be amazed how much heat you lose through all those little 'gaps'
4. Refreshing walls and skirtings with a non-toxic paint always adds a lift to a room, using a no or low VOC (Volatile Organic Compound) paint means no smell and no health issues for you and your family.
5. While on the subject of walls, update your pictures, swap some paintings or photos around and add in some indoor plants.
6. Window coverings can do a lot to help a house, especially as windows are the weak point for heating and cooling. So for the inside consider close fitting heavy backed roman blinds, thermal insulation blinds or curtains with pelmets. These can significantly reduce heat loss through windows during winter.
7. To help control summer heat, simply shade the windows from the outside. There are many options including deciduous trees, external blinds, pergolas and eaves.
8. Now for the lighting, this can be a complex subject and is very dependent on the individual home. Where you can maximise natural light and if upgrading lighting, Light Emitting Diodes (LED) are by far the most efficient. Ensure they have the Australian Standards label on them. Alternatively use lamps!
9. What about the furnishings? You can save money in by rejuvenating instead of replacing. That grubby sofa may have a great sound base but just be a bit tired, you could have it cleaned, put throw rugs over it, update the cushions or have it recovered. Even swap it out to another room and swap another one in!
10. Finally, move the layout of the room around, it's amazing how different it feels.

Remember that budgets and time expectations often overrun so build in at least a 20% contingency and expect it to take double the time you want it to, that way you won't be too disappointed, but what a bonus to finish early!

Finding the right trades' person can also be tricky. Get good referrals where you can and look for 'eco electricians', 'green plumbers' and 'green painters'. Ensure the tradie is registered with their relevant trade (eg: the electrician is qualified and licenced). Most of all ensure you have a good relationship with the main trades person as this is the link between a good, or what could be a very bad, experience.

Finally I mentioned FREE advice. At the Sustainability Feature of the MBA Expo mid July we have 7 experts available for questions on building design, thermal performance, energy management, building, solar, healthy interior design and sustainability consultants, all offering free advice and guidance to anyone who asks over the expo. We look forward to seeing you there – and bring your plans!