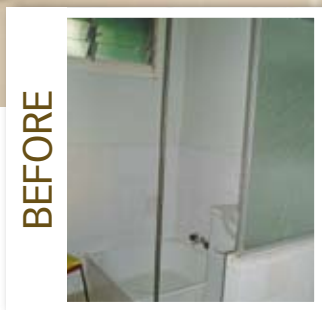


A New *Lease* On Life



More than 25 years in the design industry hasn't dimmed Vanessa Robinson's passion for creating magnificent interiors. On the contrary, the principal of Design & Procure is today more pedantic than ever about finding that ideal item to complete her design vision, even if it requires travel interstate or overseas. Here Vanessa showcases one of her most recent projects and provides some useful tips for any DIY reno project.

This home in a lovely street in Parramatta Park was tired but had potential – good bones, good location and a floor plan I could work with. It's only a 455 sqm property so it was important to make it work on every level. The living areas were too small for people of today so we knocked out walls and extended the floor from the living area into the old garage to create a big kitchen/ living area. We also added a small back deck for the barbecue and outdoor dining.

We replaced the kitchen, which is still small but functional. The whole house was re-wired, re-plastered and re-painted and we laid new carpets and added an

ensuite to the main bedroom. We also installed mirrored doors to the robes in the master, which reflected light from the windows to create the illusion of space.

The main bathroom is small so we brought the outside in by creating big windows overlooking a lovely outdoor garden. There's a lot of ventilation and light now and it looks much bigger.

Out the front we added a carport and laid a new driveway, complemented by landscaping that's elegant yet easily maintained. **CL**

Vanessa's Renovation Tips

- Start with a good floor plan. Many older homes aren't conducive to open living so check what you can and can't do to maximise the space.
- Retain any features that can be re-serviced to save money.
- Enhance any features. Play down or seek solutions to problems.
- Add your own touches to it to make it unique – give it a personal touch so it's not predictable.
- Don't spend a fortune – achieve balance aesthetically and with your budget. Spend money where you need to and complement this with less expensive items.
- If it's an investment, consider the end user and what they will need to be happy to live there, otherwise it's an insult to the buyer.
- Keep it neutral. Bright colours might look trendy at the time but they will date the property quickly.
- Good ventilation is critical.
- Do it properly – use qualified tradespeople so it won't have to be done again.
- Finish the outside as nicely as you have done the inside of the home.
- When building or renovating you must be eco-aware, even with simple things like using low voltage lights.