

## renovate it

with  
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## trade notes

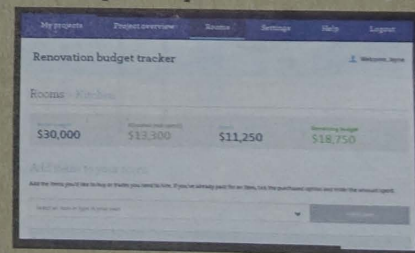
## BAG A BARGAIN ONLINE

Sourcing items for your renovation, rather than leaving it up to the builder, can be a good way to save some money, especially if you head to the internet. Online auction house GraysOnline has bargains for renovators, selling surplus, demo or reconditioned stock such as appliances and building materials. And, the Renovator Store (pictured below) has quality products at budget prices and free shipping, plus it has a money-back guarantee for change of mind. [graysonline.com](http://graysonline.com)  
[renovatorstore.com.au](http://renovatorstore.com.au)



## BUDGET TRACKER

For those managing renovation projects, keeping track of costs takes up a fair bit of effort. If you're a whiz with Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, that's great. If not, there are budget-tracking apps or online tools around. The AMP renovation budget tracker (pictured below) is good, and was used by *The Block* contestants this season. It lets you allocate a specific budget per room, listing expected costs for every relevant item and trade, and tracks costs as you go. [tracker.qandamp.com.au](http://tracker.qandamp.com.au)



## DIY SAVINGS

Rein in reno costs by doing the jobs yourself. Ask an Architect's Cameron Frazer says suitable tasks include painting and landscaping. Avoid anything requiring technical skills (such as carpentry) or with regulatory issues (such as electricity and plumbing). Check out the online useful guides and how-to videos of major hardware stores. Bunnings' website (pictured below) has more than 500 DIY videos and articles, including tool and material suggestions. [bunnings.com.au](http://bunnings.com.au)



GET THE FACTS:

## money matters

On TV shows like *Grand Designs*, every second renovation project threatens to go way over budget, yet somehow it all works out in the end. I'm not sure how all these people managed to convince their banks to hand over large sums of extra money, but I have no doubt it was a stressful process.

Ask an Architect ([askanarchitect.com.au](http://askanarchitect.com.au)) warns that clients changing their minds about the design during construction can add 20-25 per cent to the cost of the project, and urges people to be happy with their design before work begins.

Of course, it's not always the client's fault if unexpected costs arise. Ask an Architect's Cameron Frazer says budget woes can be caused by all kinds of issues. These include a builder not pricing the work properly, an architect or designer 'over-designing' the work, unknown site conditions (such as finding an underground water course), councils not issuing permits in time (which delays work), or major structural issues with the original house.

Here are Cameron's tips for keeping your budget under control:

- \* **DO SOME** initial planning work to understand what your budget can deliver for you (avoid a 'champagne' renovation on a 'beer budget').
- \* **USE A** quantity surveyor to give you an accurate estimate of the project build cost.
- \* **BE DEFINITE** about your budget at the beginning and be very clear about any changes to the budget as

the design develops – it's your money and your home. Ask your architect to explain the budget estimates and how they have been developed.

\* **DEVELOP A GOOD** relationship with your architect and builder. With a good relationship in place, you can ask some 'hard' questions around the budget to ensure it doesn't go over. An expert, such as your architect, can provide independent advice on steps to take to manage/restrain the budget if it looks like it is going over.

\* **A REPUTABLE** building contract, such as an Australian Building Industry Contract (ABIC), will include clauses that specifically cover how delays will be managed, which can help protect clients financially in the event of late completion.

\* **THE MORE DETAILED** the building documentation (drawings and written specifications) and the building contract, the less likely that unspecified costs can be claimed.

\* **TRY TO CHOOSE** and include as many of the items as possible before a builder prices the work. Some contracts allow for the inclusion of 'provisional sums', which cover the cost of an item where the precise cost is not known (for example: bathroom basin – allow \$750).

\* **THE RULE OF THUMB** for contingency in a budget is 10 per cent of the total cost, but it depends on a number of factors, including size of project, site and existing building conditions. Your architect or builder can provide advice on this. ■