

The Room-by-Room Renovation Checklist

Plan the job before the job — what to decide, measure, book and budget for each room, written for Australian homes.

Before you touch anything (every project)

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| ☐ Write the goal in one sentence — resale, rental or forever home | ☐ Get three itemised quotes for anything over \$2,000 |
| ☐ Set the total budget, then hold back a 15–20% contingency | ☐ Verify trade licences (licensed work: plumbing, gas, most electrical) |
| ☐ Check if council approval or a private certifier is needed | ☐ Ask every trade for their insurance certificate |
| ☐ Strata? Get written approval before quoting | ☐ Agree progress payments in writing — never large sums up front |
| ☐ Confirm what's structural vs cosmetic with a builder | ☐ Book skip bins and check where they can legally sit |
| ☐ Pre-1990 home? Test for asbestos before demolition | ☐ Photograph everything before work starts |

Order matters: trades run structural → rough-in (plumbing/electrical) → plastering → waterproofing → tiling → cabinetry → painting → fit-off. Booking them in the wrong order is the most expensive beginner mistake.

Kitchen

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| ☐ Measure the work triangle: sink–stove–fridge, 4–7 m total | ☐ Plan power: appliances, island points, USB, rangehood circuit |
| ☐ Decide: keep the layout (cheap) or move plumbing/gas (not cheap) | ☐ Rangehood ducted outside, not recirculating, if you can |
| ☐ Benchtop: laminate, stone, engineered stone or timber — get samples | ☐ Splashback: tile, glass or stone up-stand — decide before benchtop templating |
| ☐ Confirm cabinet internals (drawers beat shelves for base cabinets) | ☐ Check appliance dimensions against cabinetry drawings, twice |
| ☐ Allow 600 mm minimum landing space either side of the cooktop | ☐ Tap and sink chosen before the benchtop is cut |
| | ☐ Lighting in layers: task (under-cabinet), ambient, pendant over island |
| | ☐ Kickboards, end panels and bulkheads included in the quote? |

Bathroom

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| ☐ Waterproofing done by a licensed installer, certificate kept | ☐ Exhaust fan ducted outside, sized to the room |
| ☐ Floor falls to the waste — confirm before tiling, not after | ☐ Heated towel rail / underfloor heating cabling at rough-in |
| ☐ Decide: bath, shower, or both (resale usually wants one bath in the house) | ☐ Mirror cabinet vs mirror — storage is scarce, choose the cabinet |
| ☐ Niche or shelf in the shower — plan it at framing stage | ☐ Floor waste required in laundries and most bathrooms |
| ☐ In-wall cistern and floating vanity need wall framing early | ☐ Order tapware, tiles and toilet early — 4–8 week lead times are common |
| ☐ Tile sizes chosen with layout drawn — where do the cuts land? | ☐ Glass shower screens measured after tiling, fitted at fit-off |

Bedroom

- ☐ Built-in robe: measure ceiling height and skirting before quoting
- ☐ Power points both sides of the bed, plus reading light switching
- ☐ Window furnishings: block-out for sleep, sheer for day
- ☐ Carpet vs timber/hybrid — check acoustic rules if strata
- ☐ Ceiling fan wiring while the electrician is already there
- ☐ Paint in low-sheen; ceilings flat white unless you have a reason

Living room

- ☐ Measure furniture against a floor plan before buying anything
- ☐ TV point, antenna and power where the TV will actually go
- ☐ Rug sized so at least the front legs of sofas sit on it
- ☐ Dimmers on main circuits — cheapest mood upgrade there is
- ☐ Check floor levels if replacing coverings between rooms
- ☐ North-facing glass: consider awnings or tinting before summer

Laundry

- ☐ Tap pair + waste for the machine, floor waste for the room
- ☐ 45 L+ tub if you ever soak anything
- ☐ Bench over the machines = instant folding station
- ☐ Dryer: vented needs a duct, heat pump doesn't — decide early
- ☐ Hanging rail over the tub earns its keep every week

Outdoor

- ☐ Decks/pergolas: check council height and boundary rules first
- ☐ Deck boards: hardwood, treated pine or composite — price all three
- ☐ Drainage before landscaping — water goes somewhere, choose where
- ☐ Outdoor power and lighting trenched before turf goes down
- ☐ Gas or wood fire pit: check local restrictions and clearances
- ☐ Plant for your climate zone, not the catalogue photo

Whole-home jobs worth bundling

- ☐ Switchboard upgrade if it still has ceramic fuses
- ☐ Insulation top-up while ceilings are open
- ☐ Draught-proofing doors and windows — cheapest comfort win
- ☐ Smoke alarms to current state rules (interconnected in QLD)
- ☐ Fresh paint throughout beats almost any single-room spend
- ☐ Solar quote while the electrician is engaged anyway

Rule of thumb: if a job needs scaffolding, a skip, or a licensed trade you're already paying for — bundle every other task that needs the same thing into the same week.

Budget worksheet

Fill in the Quoted column from itemised quotes, track Actual as you go. The contingency line is not optional — something behind a wall always costs money.

Item	Quoted (\$)	Actual (\$)	Notes
Plans, approvals & certification			
Demolition & waste (skips, tipping)			
Structural work / framing			
Plumbing (rough-in + fit-off)			
Electrical (rough-in + fit-off)			
Plastering & waterproofing			
Tiling (materials + labour)			
Cabinetry & benchtops			
Appliances & fixtures			
Flooring			
Painting			
Windows & doors			
Landscaping / outdoor			
Furniture & styling			
Subtotal			
Contingency (15–20% of subtotal)			
Total			

THREE QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU SIGN ANYTHING

1. Is every line itemised, or is it one lump sum? Lump sums hide variations.
2. Who supplies what? "Supply and install" vs "install only" is thousands of dollars of difference.
3. What's the payment schedule tied to? Progress payments should follow completed stages, not the calendar.