



**RENOVATION:** DIY FIX-IT

# DIY DISASTERS FIXED

What can you do when your DIY efforts go pear-shaped?  
**Sharon Newey** has the solutions

**THERE ARE TWO** ways of going about the maintenance and renovations of your rental properties – like the hardware TV ad says, there are those who pay someone else to do it, and then there are those who do it themselves. Many landlords have another day job, so are quite happy to pay someone else to do repairs. But if you're one of those hands-on landlords that the hardware stores love, there are some common pitfalls to the DIY game. Here are five common DIY mistakes and what to do about them.

## **1. NOT ENOUGH TIME, MONEY OR SKILL**

Whatever the renovation or maintenance job, one of the most common mistakes is not allowing enough budget, or time, or both. An over-run of 10% for both is common but, if you're poorly prepared, the cost and time can be double what you expected. When preparing your budget, make sure you research the cost of materials and tool hireage, as well as your own time of course. Is it best to employ a

tradesperson to do the job instead?

If the time allowance blows out, you may be out of pocket with rental income, depending on the scale of the job and whether the property has needed to be vacant.

Over-estimating your own skill when you're DIYing is another foot-trip, ending up with either a bodgy job or one that you then have to employ a professional to fix.

It's tempting when you're doing the work yourself to cut corners – not sanding back the old paint well enough, or using inferior materials – but that only means you'll have to do it all again sooner than later. The same applies to taking care with your materials on the job – the old adage of measure twice, cut once is a good one.

## **2. WHOOPS, THAT'S NOT THE RIGHT COLOUR**

The one great thing about paint is that it's easy to change so if you've ended up with the colour that you now don't like, it takes very little effort to change. Your Resene



**THE  
RESENE  
EASY  
DECORATING  
GUIDE**

Do you have all the safety gear and equipment you need?



**IT'S TEMPTING  
WHEN YOU'RE  
DOING THE WORK  
YOURSELF TO CUT  
CORNERS**

ColorShop may even be able to retint the existing paint, depending on the new colour you want, which means you won't be up for new materials.

The same goes for using the correct type of paint. You need tougher paint for joinery and skirtings which are areas that take more knocks, especially in rental properties. Also semi-gloss, not flat, paint for walls so that they can be easily wiped clean. Flat is fine for ceilings as you're unlikely to have tenants dirtying that particular surface (you hope). Think about using the special paints that are available for kitchens and bathrooms that inhibit mould growth particularly handy if your tenants are unlikely to keep the property well aired.

Don't cut corners on the prep work for a paint job, or it won't last the distance. Clean thoroughly, sand, clean again, fill any holes or cracks, use the right undercoat, then the right number of top coats.

**3. BEING UNSAFE**

Nothing diminishes your return on your rental investment like a trip to the hospital emergency department and spending hours filling out ACC forms. One of the most obvious demarcations between professional tradespeople and DIYers is the use of safety gear. For some reason, DIYers don't think they need the ear-muffs, safety glasses, proper ladders and so on for the job.

Other precautions to remember are to ventilate rooms well when painting or varnishing, to keep power cords away from any cutting tools (sling it over your shoulder), and not to wear loose-fitting clothing around any power tools.

Use the right ladder for the job, and don't over-reach when you're up it. Wear

gloves when doing any demo work or handling materials like rough-sawn timber or masonry. Use a nail belt to save time and hassle but also so that tools aren't lying around ready to be stood on or tripped over.

Don't improvise. Investing in the proper tools can save you time and money in the long run. And if the job involved going near any sort of electrical work, don't even go there. Call in the professionals.

**4. THE PAPERWORK**

Before you pick up that sledgehammer, have you checked if you need council permission?

Many of us forge ahead under the illusion that what we are doing doesn't need local body consent, but the rules have changed quite a bit in recent years. You also need to check if you are actually allowed to do the work intended, especially if it involves plumbing or electrical work. There are tight controls on who can do what these days.

If you're doing the job in preparation for selling, builders' reports and council checks will highlight sub-standard or illegal work. You'll either be up for remedial work, so essentially doubling up on what you've already paid for, or have to take a much-reduced price for the property. Also, any insurance may be void if renovations are done illegally, especially if, for example, a fire starts in the electrics of an area you've been working on.

If you do need a permit, make sure you collect all compliance certificates and keep all paperwork so that the council's final code of compliance will go smoothly.

For tax purposes, make sure you keep all receipts and records so that these expenses can be offset against your rental income.

**5. FAILING TO FINISH**

We've all done it – starting a project with rip-roaring enthusiasm then run out of steam to finish it. And if it's a half-done project that's at a rental property and your tenants aren't complaining, then it's easy to ignore. You don't have to look at it every day. Half-done jobs often lead to escalating maintenance issues. For example, half-finishing a guttering repair just means water continues to get where it shouldn't and could start rotting the studwork in your walls.

If you start it, finish it. Then it's out of your hair and out of your head-space. If you can't face it, call the professionals to complete the job. ■