

How much will it cost?

Next time you inspect a 'renovator's delight', work out what it's really going to cost you. **Michaela Ryan** provides a rough guide.

YOU'VE FOUND A prospective house to buy. An unpolished gem. It just needs a flick up. A coat of paint. New tiles in the bathroom. But before you get carried away, do some initial sums to work out whether your unpolished gem has the potential to become a financial headache.

With the help of the *Archicentre Cost Guide* (August 2006), we've prepared a list of indicative price ranges for some common repairs and improvements.

"There's no substitute for going out and getting three prices (quotes) from reputable tradespeople," says David Hallett, Archicentre's state manager for Victoria. "That will tell you far more accurately what the going rate is than any guide."

He also points out that prices vary depending on the state you live in. Within the price ranges listed here, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide prices tend to be the cheapest. Melbourne tends to be middle of the range. Sydney, Hobart and Canberra are often positioned at the higher end of the range. However, no matter where you live, you'll always be able to find examples of prices at both the upper and lower ends.

Hallett points out that activity in the local market also affects prices. For example, although Perth as a general rule has prices at the lower end of the scale, at the moment that isn't the case.

"They're going through a building boom at the moment. Builders are in short supply. Prices are high," Hallett says.

The price ranges in this article are based on suburban city prices. Archicentre says country building prices typically cost between 5 and 15 per cent more, depending on factors such as remoteness and population size.

All listed price ranges are inclusive of labour and materials. However, the first table should give you an idea of labour costs alone. ■

Trade labour rates (per hour)

Brick layer	\$35-\$51	"These prices assume continuous work over some days. Smaller jobs' rates can cost up to 50 per cent more," according to Archicentre.
Carpenter	\$35-\$50	
Plumber and gas fitter	\$42-\$54	
Plasterer	\$35-\$51	
Painter	\$34-\$51	
Electrician	\$41-\$51	
Drainer	\$41-\$53	

Fencing

Perimeter paling (based on Victorian type)	1600-1900 mm	\$50-\$87 per m	Hallett says brick or stone walls are among the most expensive. Picket or post and wire fences are one rung down, in terms of cost. To save on the cost of fencing, he suggests using landscaping features, such as planting a hedge.
Front - picket	Various types	\$40-\$135 per m	
Gates	Single	\$400-\$600	
	Double	\$1,100-\$1,650	

Concreting and paving

New concrete path	Per sqm	\$43-\$56	Hallett says if you want a new driveway the cheapest option is to put some aggregate down - some gravel or screening. "It's going to need to be topped up from time to time but it's a lot cheaper than putting down a slab or brick paving."
New driveway*	Plain concrete per sqm	\$48-\$65	
	Coloured concrete per sqm	\$56-\$78	
Slate impression on concrete	Per sqm	\$63	
Stencilled concrete	Per sqm	\$70	
* Based on average 75 mm thickness and minimum area of 50 sqm. (An average driveway is about 70 sqm).			

Tree removal

Cutting down and removal per tree	\$275-\$1,450	According to Archicentre, "Prices are extremely variable and depend on the following: tree height; trunk circumference; density of branches/foliage; access to site for travel towers, woodchippers and grinders; obstructions; buildings underneath; tree alive or dead."
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Replacement roofing*

Tiles	Concrete	\$7,700-\$9,350 or \$42-\$57 per sqm	<p>Before you re-roof a house, Hallett suggests you do some forward planning.</p> <p>"Establish whether or not you're going to be adding any roof area (later on). So are you (going to be) adding any rooms that are going to require a roof? It doesn't make much sense to re-roof a house and a year or two later be modifying the roof because you'll end up having to dismantle or demolish some of the work that you've only just paid to have done."</p>
	Terracotta	\$9,500-\$11,400 or \$56-\$72 per sqm	
Metal	Zincalume	\$4,240-\$7,780 or \$28-\$44 per sqm	
	Colorbond	\$5,570-\$8,600 or \$36-\$52 per sqm	
Slate	Strip and re-nail	\$10,100-\$12,000	
	New roof	\$22,700-\$43,000 or \$139-\$300 per sqm	
Repointing	Renewal of mortar around the outside of ridge and valley tiles	\$700-\$1,425	
Rebedding	Removal of tile and its old mortar and repositioning tile on new mortar	\$850-\$1,700	

* Unless otherwise stated, prices based on 150-sqm house with conventional pitch and simple roof lines.

Window renewal

Awning	Aluminium (per sqm)	\$215-\$425	<p>Square metre rates increase for smaller windows and decrease for larger windows, according to Archicentre.</p> <p>"Double hung window costs are about 20 per cent more. Sashless are around 50 per cent more."</p>
	Timber (per sqm)	\$285-\$575	
Double glazing		Add \$95-\$275 per sqm	
Skylight (including shaft installation)	600 x 600 mm	\$420-\$850	

Guttering and downpipes

Zincalume	Per linear metre	\$27-\$40	<p>If you're looking to save money, Hallett suggests: "Perhaps consider getting unpainted guttering and painting it yourself."</p>
	Whole house*	\$2,250-\$2,970	
Colorbond	Per linear metre	\$32-\$50	
	Whole house*	\$2,700-\$3,600	

* Based on 70 linear metres of guttering and four downpipes, supplied and fitted.

Painting

Exterior	Timber* – good condition	\$11–\$22 per sqm	"Poor (interior) surface conditions can double these indicative prices. For example, for extra coats of paint, and for extensive preparation," according to Archicentre.
	Timber* – bad condition	\$16–\$26 per sqm	
Interior	Brick*	\$11–\$13 per sqm	
	Per sqm	\$10–\$22	
	Single room 3 x 4 x 3 m	\$600–\$750	
	"Victorian style" per room	\$1,650–\$2,070	

* Painting of timber houses includes windows and door frames, plus the weatherboards. Painting of brick houses involves only windows and door frames.

Floor repair

Framing	Joists and bearers (per linear metre)	\$12–\$30	"Joist spacings for a normal room are 450 mm apart. Bearer spacings are around 1500 mm apart. So a 20-sqm room would cost around \$825 to \$1,350 to replace," the report says.
Floor boards	From particleboard to feature timbers (per sqm)	\$30–\$300	

Tiling

Floor	Ceramic tiling (per sqm)	\$84–\$145	"You can spend widely different amounts on the tiles themselves – the materials," says Hallett. "You can get tiles for as little as \$30 a square metre, or as much as \$300 a square metre."
	Quarry tiling (per sqm)	\$85–\$117	
	Vinyl tiling (per sqm)	\$40–\$95	
Wall	Ceramic tiling (per sqm)	\$80–\$145	

Wiring

Complete house rewire*		\$5,200–\$7,850, or \$33–\$51 per sqm	Hallett says, "On an older home, say 50 years or more in age, that hasn't had a switchboard upgrade and it's got one or two dodgy powerpoints and there's a few questionable bits of wiring around the place – you'd almost bet that house probably needs to be rewired completely."
Other common items	Safety switch	\$250–\$350	
	Service call	\$70–\$125	
	Individual power points	\$70–\$150	

* Based on 150-sqm house with 15 to 18 power outlets, 15 to 18 light points, new mains and box circuit breaker switchboard with reasonable access.

Plastering*

Contemporary finish	Whole house**	\$10,200–\$13,650	"If you've got a brick home... the wall surfaces internally are probably already hard plaster. So if you're looking to match that, or patch it, you'd be looking to hard plaster rather than using plasterboard," Hallett explains.
	Single room 3 x 4 x 3 m	\$1,300–\$1,725	
"Victorian" style finish	Whole house**	\$18,700–\$30,300	
	Single room 3 x 4 x 3 m	\$2,200–\$3,600	
Hard plaster	Per sqm	\$30–\$65	
Standard plasterboard	Per sqm	\$20–\$35	

* Costs don't include demolition or removal of existing plaster walls.
** Figures based on 150-sqm house with reasonable access.

Plumbing

Renew cold water pipes	\$1,400-\$2,150	Access difficulties can increase prices. You may need a separate quote for any guttering work, since "roof plumbers and drainage plumbers are becoming different fields of expertise", says Hallett.
Hot water service unit renewal	\$1,050-\$1,425	
Complete house replumb*	\$6,300-\$10,600	

* Including hot and cold water replacement, gutters and downpipes, using house with 70 linear metres of guttering and four downpipes.

Restumping (reblocking)*

Per stump (concrete)	Melbourne	\$55-\$85	Archicentre suggests allowing \$50 per hour for any extra excavation that might be required. It also says, "Poor sub-floor access requires that floorboards be lifted and replaced at a carpenter's hourly rate... and could double the cost."
	Brisbane	\$210-\$350	
Per average (150 sqm) house	Timber (80-90 stumps), Melbourne	\$4,700-\$7,800	
	Timber (80-90 stumps), Brisbane	\$14,000-\$23,000	
	Brick veneer (60 stumps), Melbourne	\$3,800-\$5,600	
	Solid brick (40 stumps), Melbourne	\$3,100-\$4,200	

*Only relevant in states where houses have stumps as part of their sub-floor structure.

Underpinning

Per pad (or pin size) 1000 x 1000 x 900	\$1,140-\$2,150	"In some cases of footing failure or extreme ground movement, the footing needs to be replaced," Hallett says. "We're seeing more and more evidence of cracking in homes these days as our dry weather continues... (however) get some advice from an architect or a structural engineer and determine conclusively that underpinning is required."
Per pad (or pin size) 1000 x 1000 x 600	\$950-\$1,700	
Soil test	\$200-\$325	
Engineer's report	\$280-\$730	
Replacement of bearers and joists	\$28-\$45 per linear m	
Removal of sub-floor soil	\$160-\$315 per sqm	

Extensions (shell only)

Single room (ground level)	Based on 20 sqm	\$15,200-\$33,000	"In Melbourne, and probably Sydney, we're expecting prices to come down a little bit. The market's been extremely busy the last several years but it's showing signs of slowing down a bit," says Hallett. "We'll probably stop seeing annual price increases. We might just see it level out for a little while."
Larger extension (ground level)	Brick veneer (per sqm)	\$850-\$1,500	
	Solid brick (per sqm)	\$925-\$1,775	
	Weatherboard (per sqm)	\$750-\$1,425	
Single room (upper level)	Based on 20 sqm	\$23,500-\$41,000	
Larger extension (upper level)	Brick veneer (per sqm)	\$1,100-\$1,950	
	Solid brick (per sqm)	\$1,250-\$2,175	
	Weatherboard (per sqm)	\$980-\$1,525	

Renovations

Bathroom (ensuite is less)	\$8,200-\$21,500	Figures include plastering, painting, wiring, plumbing, relocation or replacement of windows, renewal of fittings and fixtures, cabinetry additions and surfacing (such as tiles). The estimates exclude stormwater drainage, paving, carpets, drapes, appliances or the construction of internal partitions to modify the room layout.
Kitchen	\$9,200-\$28,000	
Laundry	\$3,650-\$8,500	
Bedroom	\$3,450-\$7,300	
Single room 20 sqm	\$4,100-\$8,850	

Source: All price information is courtesy of Archicentre Cost Guide August 2006.