



Archicentre Architects Poll/Renovation Trends



## Trends in Contemporary Home Renovation, 2008

More than half of Australians renovate at some point in their lives. According to Archicentre — whose Design Service cites a 40 per cent rise in the past year — a lot of them are doing it right now.

Not only one of Australia's largest providers of renovations, Archicentre is also one of the most knowledgeable building resources. The Archicentre website ([www.archicentre.com.au](http://www.archicentre.com.au)) is a treasure trove of renovation information including up-to-date building costs, Do-it-yourself checklists and step-by-step case studies of successful building projects. It's hard to imagine starting a project without consulting Archicentre in some capacity.



According to Managing Director Robert Caulfield, renovating is the process of transforming one's cramped and tired homestead into the ultimate bastion of comfort and appeal.

"A good renovation can alter your life dramatically," he says.

"For some, even the addition of an extra hand basin in the en suite is positively life-changing. Now imagine what a really good design could do!"

As Archicentre is discovering, people are letting good design work for them and sitting back and enjoying its benefits. Archicentre polled its membership of over 800 architects on what steps their clients are taking to improve their homes and these trends form the essence of *Trends in Contemporary Home Renovation, 2008*.

### Kitchen Trends

- |                             |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| 1. Drawers not cupboards    | 81.7% |
| 2. Large island benches     | 77.2% |
| 3. Walk-in pantries         | 58.0% |
| 4. Concealing appliances    | 50.2% |
| 5. Colourful splashbacks    | 35.6% |
| 6. Computer data points     | 22.8% |
| 7. Concealed food prep area | 20.5% |



A few elegant factors define today's kitchen. Open-plan layouts, clean featureless appearances, concealed appliances — what one architect refers to as 'hidden architecture'. Statistics from the 2008 Architect's Poll illustrate these points.



Hello drawers, goodbye cupboards seems to be the dominant catchcry (82%) for architectural kitchen joinery in 2008.

A sensible one it is too. Searching behind item after item in cupboards that are too high to see into is no longer necessary now that drawers are the main draw. Renovators are also going for the flush look — not putting any handles on them, the openings are strictly push-action.

Second behind drawers was the request for a large island bench (77%), a testament to the kitchen's rebirth as the home's mouthpiece. "Integral to the contemporary kitchen's claim to a social hub is an island bench to huddle around," says Mr. Caulfield.



"Probably one of the most surprising trends is the move of having computer data points in the kitchen this year," says Mr. Caulfield. "Almost one out of four renovators are using a computer in the kitchen. Five years ago this would have been unheard of."

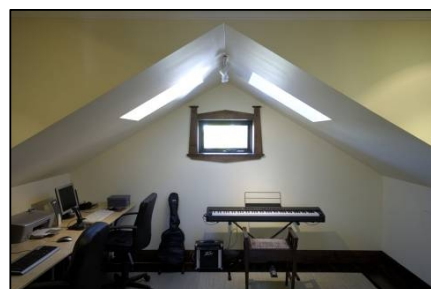
Today's colour schemes stick to a strict code. "Neutral colours for the joinery and benches and radical colours for the

splash backs," says Mr. Caulfield.

Meanwhile, Archicentre architects from around the country have caught wind of a trend started in Victoria a few years ago and are now specifying coffee machines on nearly every job.

#### Activity Centre Trends

Rumpus Room	54.3%
Parents' retreat	50.7%
None of the above	21.0%
Gym	17.4%



Commonly, additions and alterations comprise two living spaces, one for the family and another used as an informal retreat or activity centre.

"In Sydney, rumpus rooms often double as home theatres to use space more effectively," says Mr. Caulfield. "Architects get the odd request for a billiards or snooker room, and gyms get requested too, but the money-wise renovator will want a door, so they can convert the space into a regular room later on if necessary. It adds resale value."

"In Victoria, it's called parents' retreat or adult play zone, though the latter sounds more tasteful," Mr. Caulfield admits.

One out of five homes do not have an activity centre or they refer to it as something else, according to the survey.

#### Master Bedroom Trends

En suite	93.2%
Walk-in-robe	85.4%
Deck or balconies	57.5%
Study	28.8%
Freestanding furniture (sofas)	17.8%
Bidet	7.3%

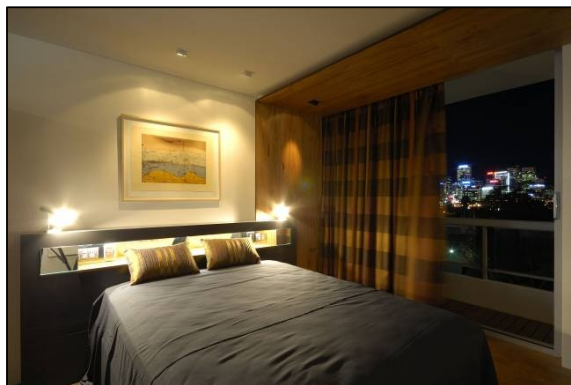
En suites and walk-in-robos are practically a given in Australian master bed refurbishments (93% and 85% respectively).

Bedrooms have grown considerably, but there's fewer of them, says Mr. Caulfield. "Main bedrooms now allow for additional furniture: couch, seats, desk, drawers etc. Meanwhile, most upstairs beds will invariably have a balcony or deck, to go with walk-in-robe and en suite"

Walk-in-robos are bigger than ever and today double as dressing rooms, says Mr. Caulfield. "Highly detailed and generally larger so that the user can easily get dressed in there, particularly without disturbing their partner who may still be asleep!"

"The dark cavity wardrobe with mere hanging space is passé and ill-conducive. Today's walk-in-robe must be purpose built with natural light, 'his and hers' space and a full-length mirror," says Mr. Caulfield.

"She, and let's face it, sometimes he, may want separate joinery for their shoes and the ability to display them."



#### Bathroom Trends

Frameless showers	80.8%
Double basins	54.8%
Separate powder rooms	50.2%
Baths	48.4%
Double showers	37.9%
Concealed cisterns	37.0%
Heated floor	37.0%
Free-standing baths	30.1%
Views of internal courtyard	28.8%
Spa baths	13.7%
None of the above	1.8%



Today's toiletry trends comes in twos. "Double showers and double basins are very popular right now. Frameless glass shower (double size if feasible) and freestanding period-style baths are also en vogue," says Mr. Caulfield.

"Spa baths — definitely out!"

Around the country, the aesthetic trend of the kitchen has carried over to the bath where stonework or large tiles with even larger shower tiles flourish around neutral and soft colour themes.

Toilets are slowly disappearing. Over one out of three Archicentre clients request a concealed cistern.

Meanwhile one out of three want heated floors. "You would find heated towel rails pretty standard on most Archicentre jobs as well," he says.

"Size-wise bathrooms are diminishing but en suites are bigger than ever."



**En suite Trends**

Parent's En suite	93.2%
Children's En suite	12.8%

"In luxury homes there's an increasing incidence of one en suite per bedroom," says Mr. Caulfield.

"Many clients request en suites with glass walls overlooking lush, secret gardens, a 'bath with a view' is what it's called."

"The sophisticated, sunken-floor open shower is one example of a masterful low-maintenance innovation. Shower cleaning is reduced drastically not to mention the wide open space being less restrictive to the point of liberating the bather. You can just walk in and walk out," says Mr. Caulfield.

"Frameless glass shower (double size if feasible) and freestanding period-style baths are also severely en vogue," he notes.

**Australian Children's Bedroom Trends**

Computer data point	65.8%
Study	46.1%
En suite	12.8%

"Some kids have decent-sized rooms, but not necessarily so big they get their own desk. Many parents prefer open shared study areas where computers can be monitored," says Mr. Caulfield.



**Home Office/Study**

Niche, nooks, alcoves, a dedicated corner, a stool at the island bench in the kitchen. Needs have radically changed when it comes to home offices. Wireless technology means the laptop can go anywhere, even the toilet, if necessary.



"Every home must have at least some dedicated private space for serious office work," he adds. "The minimum being an alcove or niche. If clients desire a little privacy, a study space can be sectioned off the main living area behind screens."



#### Australian Technology Trends

Security systems	56.6%
Wireless	46.6%
Not wireless	22.8%
Smart wiring	39.3%

New technology has eliminated the need for upfront planning. When demanded, architects place dedicated studies in the front of the house with a window to the entryway.

"An intelligent multi-purpose approach is to take a large space, sectioning it off in the middle with bi-fold cabinet doors, so you have a study on one-side and a guest room on the other."

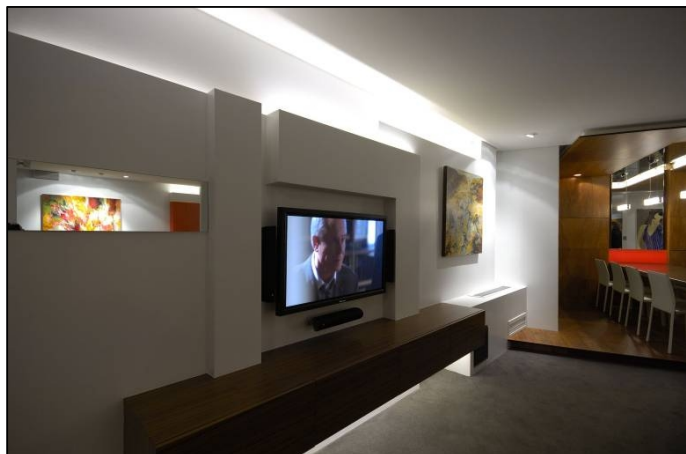
#### Home Theatre Trends

Plasma TV	61.2%
Just a fad	36.5%
Ceiling Mounted projectors	15.5%
Mini-cinemas	10.5%
Data projectors	8.2%

Plasma screens are hot, mini-cinemas are not. Over a third of architects polled rated Home Theatres just a fad.

"Clever clients see these for what they are – a fad," he explains. "They expand the footprint beyond sustainable sizes. The emphasis is to provide home theatre facilities within other more flexible living spaces – ala family or informal living rooms."

"Ceiling-concealed TV screens that fold down at the press of a button or that pop up from cabinetwork are really popular."



In some instances, TVs have left the lounge room and are now only found in home entertainment areas, rumpus rooms or even stranger places. "There are clients putting TVs in the laundry or installing a flat-screen on the kitchen benchtop," says Mr. Caulfield.

#### Storage Trends

Garage Storage	78.1%
Storeroom	72.6%
Wine cellars	47.5%

"To maintain a sleek, minimalist interior, people need lots of storage," says Mr. Caulfield. "Many areas like Play Rooms, Games Rooms, Gymnasiums, Kitchens and Decks have adjacent storage cupboards for the quick hideaway of 'stuff'."

## The Great Outdoors

Build the deck and they will come

Aussies sure know how to throw a backyard party and nothing draws a crowd like a big deck and a flaming barbeque.



Archicentre architects have been instrumental in creating funky and functional barbie backdrops for years and a recent poll of over 800 Archicentre architects shows that the Outdoor Room is now more popular than ever.

"Australians take their outdoor settings very seriously," says Robert Caulfield, managing director of Archicentre. "For them, this is the place to kick back for eight months of the year."

### Outdoor Living Trends

Decks	86.3%
Barbeque	70.3%
Pergolas	68.5%
Drought-tolerant landscaping	64.4%
Paving instead of lawn	45.2%
Swimming pools	42.0%
Water features	34.7%
Sound system	20.1%
Lawn area	19.2%
Granny flats	8.2%

Mr. Caulfield says once Spring rolls around, a light bulb goes off in peoples' heads. "Invariably, once the sunny weather hits people start thinking about their backyards and how they can turn their under-utilised space into a backyard oasis.

*Right: the nifty roller door*

To ease the transition from indoors to outdoors, Mr. Caulfield recommends bi-fold or rolling doors, and for the illusion of seamlessness, extend the indoor flooring outdoors. "The architect's aim is to extend the living space and reduce the built footprint."





## Decking

Around the country, decks are number one on the wish-list. New South Wales renovators are just barely edged out by Victoria's impressive decking coverage (88% to 89%), although NSW are the leaders when it comes to pergolas (76.7%).

"A lot of people still love the timber deck and it's often the most practical solution," says Mr. Caulfield. "However, our architects have been having

great success with natural stone products and polished concrete."

"Where a deck is not feasible, a courtyard fills the void," Mr. Caulfield says. "Courtyards also create northern aspects and privacy. They seem to be most common on renovations of old properties like semi-detached or terrace houses".

## Pergolas

Leafy pergolas provide sun protection and more garden character than a boring old roof shade, but a lot of outdoor extensions have been defined by even more elaborate conservatory constructions with integrated lighting, fans, speakers and kitchenettes.

## Pools and water features

Mr. Caulfield says, "Despite drought conditions, pools remain popular: lap pools, splash pools, plunge pools and the occasional Olympian pool."



*Left: A harbour view is great if you can get it*

### What's next?

Mr. Caulfield suspects the next big trend will be outdoor kitchens. He says they are already a growing demand among Archicentre customers. "They will no doubt become an even bigger deal in the next few years, as it's another excuse to spend more time in the great outdoors."



### Additional findings

- South Australians lead the country in drought-tolerant landscaping (85.7%) and architecturally designed barbecues (78.6%).
- Over a third of Archicentre's Queensland clients ask for water features (37.5%).
- More than any other state, Queenslanders like to set their parties to music (31.3%). Acoustically treated environments with surround sound and low-cost MP3 players are most popular.
- More West Australians request swimming pools than any other state (64%).

What's In	What's Out
Water tanks Paving Drought-tolerant plants Compact sound systems Wood-fired bbqs	Hot tubs Grass

Evolution of the Low-Maintenance Garden	
High Maintenance Problem	Low-Maintenance Solution
lawn needs to be mowed plants watered pruning landscaping, consumes weekends for working families	paved courtyard no mowing, bush-like vegetation that can survive in wicked climates potted plants.

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**About Archicentre**

Over 30,000 Australians start their renovation projects with Archicentre architects, making Archicentre, the building advisory service of the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA), one of the largest renovators in the country. [www.archicentre.com.au](http://www.archicentre.com.au)