

number crunch

EMBARKING ON A KITCHEN OR BATHROOM TRANSFORMATION? WE'VE DONE THE MATHS TO HELP GET YOU STARTED

WORDS GERALDINE CARDOZO

With the cost of kitchen and bathroom renovations ranging from a couple of thousand dollars up to tens of thousands, it helps to know what influences this cost swing before you commit to a project. It's important to pick a reno solution to suit your available funds.

Firstly, set your budget. Work out how much you can realistically afford to spend, allowing a little for unexpected extras. Then write a wish list, based on the space available, intended functions and aesthetics. Edit the list down and work out what's realistic and what can be sacrificed – this will be all about a degree of compromise and adjustments. Don't forget to factor in any structural and labour costs.

Whether designing a high-end kitchen or updating the fittings in your bathroom, the same principles apply, regardless of budget, says building designer Dane Richardson, of Dane Design Australia. "In the back of your mind, you understand what fixtures and finishes are viable or not, depending on how much you want to spend, but this still doesn't change how you intend to use the space," he says.

What will it cost? Budgets will vary depending on the individual job, but according to Archicentre, the Australian Institute of Architect's building advisory service, the average renovator will pay somewhere between \$9600 and \$25,000 for a bathroom makeover and \$10,500 to \$35,000 for a kitchen. These estimated costs factor in any plastering, painting, wiring, plumbing, relocation or replacement of windows, new fittings, cabinetry additions and surfacing, such as tiling.

Archicentre's Spring Cost Guide (a free guide providing typical price ranges for different renovations) suggests that, if replacing a kitchen or bathroom but sticking with existing fittings and making minimal structural alterations, you'll pay less; from \$5,600 to \$18,500 for a bathroom and between \$7,650 and \$28,600 for a kitchen.

What can I expect for my money? "When designing a bathroom at the basic end, you can get everything you need for around \$3500 to \$4000," says Dan Kim, of Just Bathroomware. This would include bathtub, shower set, a basin and mixer set and vanity. But remember there will be labour costs and floor and wall work on top of the fittings. If you have a bigger budget, then you might want to extend to custom-made vanity units, underfloor heating and extra accessories, such as heated towel rails and large mirrors. Prices hike as you start to look at designer and imported fittings (there are tubs for over \$20,000 alone) and floor-to-wall tiling, particularly large-format stone and mosaic. "Tile prices vary enormously. The more you use, the longer they take to lay, so labour prices creep up," says Dan.

Keep costs in check For bathrooms, labour costs are the biggest variable. You can avoid budget blow-outs by keeping existing plumbing and fixtures in place, tiling only where necessary (opting for ceramic or porcelain over stone), going with a wall-hung basin and simple wall shelf instead of a full vanity and by keeping an eye out for seconds or sale fixtures and fittings at auction or online.

"When planning a kitchen renovation, divide costs into five spending areas: cabinetry, benchtops, tradespeople, splashback or tiles and appliances," says Michael Kitchener, of Kitcheners Kitchens. You may want to splash out on one area and economise on another. Here are Michael's estimates for kitchen spending:

Under \$14,000: DIY flat-pack cabinets in melamine, laminate benchtop, tiles and low-cost appliances. You will save money on tradespeople by assembling the kitchen yourself, but make sure you know what you're doing.

\$14,000 to \$26,000: New kitchen prices in this range might see you spend \$7000-\$10,000 on cabinetry (perhaps laminate or basic polyurethane), \$2000-\$2500 on a stone benchtop, \$1500-\$3500 on appliances, \$3500-\$4500 on tradespeople and \$1500 upwards for a glass splashback. Choosing a laminate benchtop and tiles instead of a splashback could help reduce costs. At the top end, you could install more cabinets, choose a stainless-steel or solid-acrylic benchtop, like Corian, and opt for profiled doors and soft-close drawers.

\$26,000 and over: These rooms often incorporate timber, either as a veneer or solid timber, and top-of-the-range appliances. For this money, you have more options with finishes and styles of doors and cupboards. Internal accessories are also an option, from fully extended drawers to stainless-steel soft-closing drawers.

What can make kitchen costs skyrocket? "Drawers – the design and layout of the kitchen will have a huge bearing on the price, as there is a big difference between a kitchen with mostly cupboards and one set of drawers and a kitchen with, say, five sets of drawers," says Michael Kitchener. Soft-close drawers and additions like electronic servos will ramp up the price. Solid surfaces, such as timber or stone, will also cost more, and look out for detailing in stone benchtops, he says. "Keep an eye out for things like a waterfall end – which gives the illusion that the benchtop is really thick – that will add to your costs, as will such things as an undermount sink with integrated drainer into the stone." You can also save or splurge on appliances, getting an economical package for around \$1000 or choosing imported European brands for up to \$40,000.

Archicentre Cost Guide can be downloaded at www.archicentre.com.au.



In creating a simple and affordable bathroom, interior designer Megan Hounslow, of Melbourne-based Meme Design, recommends retaining the essence of the home's original character, rather than trying to start from scratch.

Instead of opting for a vanity, Megan suggests making a floating solid bench from recycled timber topped with an above-counter basin, such as the 'Cube 500' from Caroma (\$395). With an additional shelf underneath, this unique design provides storage but, at just over \$600, is a cheaper alternative to a custom-made vanity unit, which can set you back anything from \$2500 for a polyurethane cabinet with CaesarStone top and ceramic basin. Other options include buying an all-in-one cabinet with drawers and built-in basin, like a simple melamine vanity cabinet, from around \$250 from most hardware stores and bathroomware suppliers or an off-the-shelf design from Ikea, like the 'Lillängen' washbasin cabinet range, from \$120 or the 'Godmorgon/Norrsviken' timber washstand, from \$689. With your savings, invest in tiling and good-quality fixtures. "When choosing fixtures, you don't have to pay over the top to get great design and excellent quality. We like Rogerseller and Reece," says Megan.

It's likely that tiling will be the biggest expense in any bathroom renovation – keep to one type. If budget is limited, Megan suggests using fewer tiles on the walls by tiling one wall floor-to-ceiling and dropping back to the skirt line on others.

If space allows, there are some reasonably-priced freestanding baths on the market that won't blow the budget, such as the Kado 'Lure' from Reece (\$1599). While most freestanding models are a little more expensive than in-built versions, Megan says one advantage is you don't have to tile up around the bath and that may, in itself, save you enough to be financially viable.

A popular trend for recent bathroom design is the 'wet room' – a fuss-free, pared-back look, which usually incorporates bath and shower in the one section of the room. For a simple wet-room-style shower, a custom-made full-height glass shower screen and wall-mounted showerhead and wall mixer could work well in a larger room.

Add vintage finds or eBay bargains, such as an antique cabinet for towels or a bamboo ladder towel rail, into the overall mix for extra storage with a hint of personality. To afford a few luxuries, think about getting practical. If you're game enough and are keeping existing fixtures and plumbing, then you can attempt to DIY the demolition, saving on labour costs – just don't forget you will need to factor in the cost of a plumber and tiler. →

1. Bathroom fittings can be plumbed into custom-made benches. 2. 'Neutra' porcelain tile in Silver, 400 x 400mm, \$138 per sqm, from Di Lorenzo Ceramics. 3. 'Waterslide Spin Round' shower rose, \$475, from Rogerseller. 4. Invisi Series II 'Cube' toilet suite, \$1079, from Caroma. 5. Kado 'Lure' freestanding bath, \$1599, from Reece. 6. 'Logic' bath spout, \$225, from Rogerseller. 7. 'Tonic' shower mixer, \$248, from Rogerseller. 8. 'Cube 500' above-counter basin, \$395, from Caroma.

BUDGET BREAKDOWN	PRICE
'Lure' freestanding bath	\$1599
'Cube 500' above-counter basin	\$395
'Waterslide Spin Round' showerhead	\$475
basin taps and spout	\$350
'Tonic' shower mixer	\$248
bath taps and spout	\$485
custom-made full-height showerscreen	\$500
'Neutra' tiles - 17.5 metres @ \$138 per sqm	\$2415
antique cabinet for towels (family heirloom)	\$0.00
downlights - 6 @ \$30 each	\$180
'Cube' toilet suite	\$1079
towel rail	\$60
custom-made timber-framed mirror	\$100
tiler	\$1200
plumber	\$1000
TOTAL	\$10,086