

# Renovating reality a smooth operation

**A Wadestown family had a dream run when they renovated their home and are attributing most of the project's success to Wellington company RealtyRETURNS.**

**A** WADESTOWN family's motto, "finishing touch crowns the work", could just as well be the mantra for the company that's helping them to renovate.

Jennifer Tebbs and her partner bought their 1930s, four-bedroom home six months ago knowing they would have to reconfigure it for their family's needs.

"It was tired but we thought we could turn it into the perfect house for us," Jennifer says.

She'd renovated two homes in Melbourne but being fresh to the Capital, with a new partner, two stepchildren and a business start-up, she knew she wouldn't have the time or contacts to undertake a third.

"It would have cost us a lot more in terms of money and stress to have done it ourselves. I don't have that kind of energy – and didn't want to risk a complete meltdown."

Instead, she turned to Michelle van Dinther, of realtyRETURNS, which specialises in managing renovations.

"We arrange and manage the entire building project for homeowners so they have one point of contact for everything. Our processes centre on a smooth project for both the clients and the contractors.

"Once construction starts our clients don't need or want to get involved with every little detail – realtyRETURNS takes care of that so our clients can get on with life and focus on the outcome.

"There are hundreds of decisions that need to be made with a large renovation project and you need to be available constantly for questions and meetings with contractors, particularly when working on an

old house as things are not always as they appear.

"Many old houses have had alterations done to them at some point over the years, and the quality and standard of what has been done varies considerably. So often we don't know what we are going to find until we get into the work.

"This house was no exception as there were aspects that were unknown at the time of planning the job."

By shifting walls, creating a loft from roof space and adding a formal lounge, Jennifer and Michelle have opened up a poky interior to improve flow, maximise the harbour view and modernise living while retaining the house's signature character.

"We transformed a tired house into a large family home," Michelle says.

"While many of the fittings and products used are modern, they are still in keeping with the character of the property so as to not lose the appeal.

"For example, we created a master suite which includes a new ensuite, large walk-in wardrobe, study and tranquil loft accessed through the study ceiling where Jennifer and her partner can spend time reading.

"The loft is a special feature of the house and something the clients were adamant to add. The architect designed the loft so that it did not look like an add-on but rather part of the original design."

While the ensuite is starkly modern with its large shower and heated floor tiles, a clawfoot bath and chandelier provide period charm.

"The dark timber joinery and bronze toned tiles are complemented by the



**Fine tuning:** Jennifer Tebbs, left, says Michelle van Dinther, of realtyRETURNS, knows not only where to source fixtures and fittings to achieve the ultimate finishing touch, but also how to relate to tradespeople.

Photos: JOHN NICHOLSON



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bronze chandelier and orange suede effects paint on the walls," Michelle says.

Jennifer also loves how the bronze tones and orange walls complement the terracotta roofing tiles that are part of the view from the bathroom. But the biggest changes were made in the living areas, where the original lounge has been turned into a formal dining room that now adjoins a newly built formal lounge with a harbour view and private balcony.

"The existing window joinery is steel so it was decided that all new window joinery be aluminium with colonial bars to tie in with the existing," Michelle says.

She points out the same approach was taken with decor.

"By selecting wallpapers that worked with the existing wallpaper in areas of the house that were not being touched, we added flair and class."

"Michelle also had the original radiators powder-coated to make them look new yet original," Jennifer says. "And while some of the doors are new, because they have the same hardware and detailing they just look like newly painted original doors."

She adds Michelle knows not only where to source fixtures and fittings to achieve the ultimate finishing touch, but also how to relate to tradespeople.

"She's a walking encyclopaedia of building specs and housing terminology."

Before meeting Michelle after last year's Wellington House & Home Exhibition, Jennifer had engaged architect Peter Davis and builder Steve Ransley. Although Michelle has her own trusted contractors, she was happy to work with both to achieve Jennifer's dream home.

"Jennifer knew exactly what she wanted," Michelle says. "We spent many hours together looking at products and specifying all aspects of the work from a style perspective and to meet the budget."

"My job was to source best-in-class for all products and services, and the result was fantastic. All the contractors performed to a very high standard and were very accommodating when changes were made — which is not unusual during a renovation: as spaces become apparent, clients often request changes and it is our job to realise them."

Jennifer says Michelle's professionalism and "passion for what she's doing" are as extraordinary as her attention to detail and knack for understanding clients' needs.

"She clicked to what I wanted straight away, she knows how the planning process works, how to make timelines and how to organise things efficiently."

"The personal service and attention Michelle gave to us made me feel like I was her only client."

RealtyRETURNS will be exhibiting at next weekend's Wellington House and Home Exhibition being held at the TSB Bank Arena from Friday till Sunday. For more information go to:

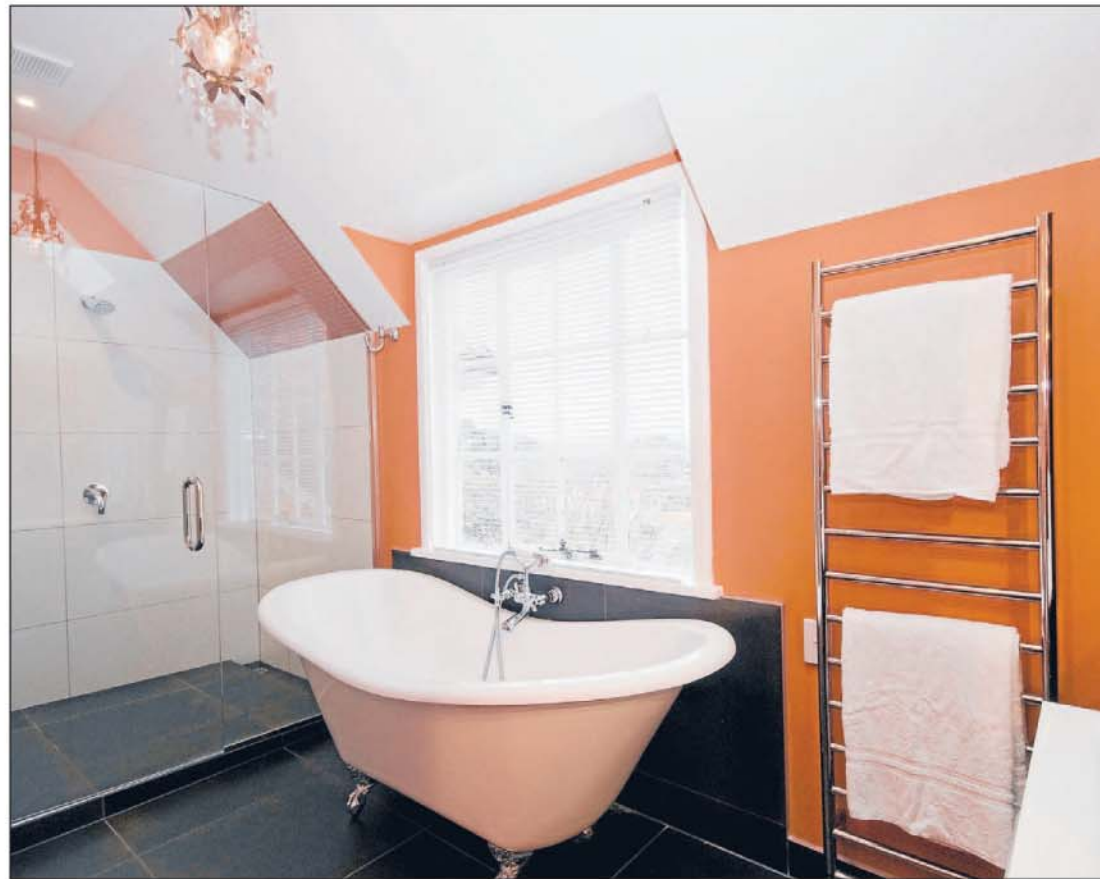
www.realtyreturns.co.nz  
and  
www.wellingtonhouseandhome.co.nz



**Family ready:** Jennifer Tebbs and her partner bought their 1930s, four-bedroom Wadestown home six months ago knowing they would have to reconfigure it for their family's needs.



**Look out:** The biggest changes were made in the living areas, where the original lounge has been turned into a formal dining room that now adjoins a newly built formal lounge with a harbour view and private balcony.



**Clever combination:** While the ensuite is starkly modern with its large shower and heated floor tiles, a clawfoot bath and chandelier provide period charm.



**Lofty pursuits:** Jennifer and family dog Millie make their way through the tranquil loft accessed through the study ceiling where Jennifer and her partner can escape for some quiet reading.