



Bathroom Renovation Guide

2026

Costs, timeframes, consent requirements and what to expect when renovating a bathroom in Christchurch.



Appleton Builders Limited | Christchurch | 027 310 7334 | appletonbuilders.co.nz

Who am I, and what is this?

I'm Toby Appleton, a licensed and qualified carpenter. Since 2017, I've owned and operated Appleton Builders, a Christchurch company specialising in bathroom renovations. I've written this guide to give homeowners a straightforward overview of what's involved in a bathroom renovation. Renovations can feel complicated, so the aim is to share practical information to help you make confident, informed decisions.

Inside, you'll find:

- What a bathroom renovation actually costs, and how long one takes
- When a renovation needs a building consent, when it is exempt, and why tiled showers are so often misunderstood
- Key advice on tapware selection and how to check if you have a low-pressure hot water system
- Guidance on the importance of using qualified tradespeople for a quality finish
- Our step-by-step renovation process, so you'll know what to expect from start to finish
- What happens if something unexpected is found once the work has started
- A selection of real case studies with before-and-after photos, total project costs, and descriptions of the work carried out

This isn't a technical manual or a glossy sales pitch, just a practical resource to help you understand the essentials of planning your bathroom renovation, backed up with real-life examples of bathrooms we've completed.

Typical straightforward renovation

3 to 4 weeks

Real projects in this guide

\$21,801 to \$47,488

Site visit and quote within Christchurch

Free

What does a bathroom renovation cost?

It is the first thing everyone asks. Rather than quote an average that fits nobody, we have put five real projects at the back of this guide with the figure we actually invoiced for each.

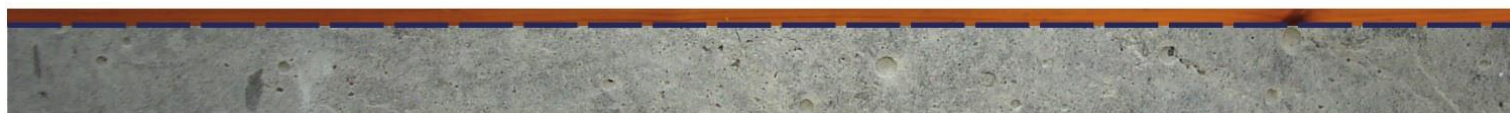
They run from \$21,801 to \$47,488 including GST. Read the description alongside each one, because they are not all like for like. On some, the homeowner supplied fixtures or arranged the consent and design separately, and where that happened we say so.

What moves a bathroom up or down that range

- **Tiling.** A fully tiled shower and floor costs considerably more than an acrylic shower and sheet vinyl.
- **Layout changes.** Leaving fixtures roughly where they are is cheaper than moving plumbing and drainage across the room.
- **Structural work.** Removing a wall or reconfiguring the room adds framing, and sometimes consent and design as well.
- **The age of the house.** Older homes hide more, and what is behind the linings is not known until they come off.
- **Fixture quality.** The part you control most directly, and the gap between entry-level and premium is wide.

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What our price covers

Our quoted price typically covers project management, every trade, and all fixtures and fittings we are supplying. It does not cover building consent fees, discretionary exemption fees, or design work, in the cases where those are needed. If they are, we can introduce you to the draftsman we work with, under a separate agreement between you and them.

If you would rather have a figure for your own bathroom than a range, the site visit and the quote are both free.

How long will it take?

For a straightforward renovation, meaning an acrylic shower, no full tiling and no consent, we allow three to four weeks on site.

That is not three weeks of noise. Some stages cannot be rushed. Plaster and paint need drying time, the shower installer and the vinyl layer each need their own day, and the plumbing and electrical fit-off happen at the end, in sequence.

Full tiling, structural work and building consents all add time, and product lead times are the most common cause of delay. That is why we confirm a start date only once your selections are locked in. You will have a written Time Frame Schedule before we start. Any dates discussed before that are indicative.

Will my renovation need a building consent?

Bathroom consent requirements are often misunderstood. There are three possibilities rather than two, and a large amount of ordinary renovation work falls into the middle one.

Consent required

Structural work, or increasing the number of sanitary fixtures.

Schedule 1 exempt

A large amount of ordinary bathroom renovation work. Automatic, with no application and no fee.

Discretionary exemption

Work the council may agree to exempt on application.

Usually exempt

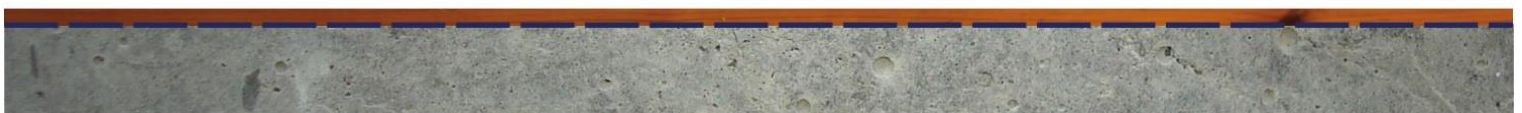
- Linings, tiling and waterproofing membranes (clause 12).
- Altering existing sanitary plumbing, provided the total number of sanitary fixtures does not increase and an authorised person does the work (clause 35).
- Swapping one fixture for another, say a bath out and a toilet in. The test is the number of fixtures, not the type or the position.
- Minor drain alterations by an authorised person (clause 34), and replacing or repositioning a hot water cylinder (clause 38).

Usually needs consent

- Structural work, including recessing the floor to form a level entry shower.
- Removing a load-bearing or bracing wall.

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- Adding a sanitary fixture, so the total goes up. The trigger is when the fixture is connected, not when the pipe is laid.
- A new bathroom where there was not one before.
- Plumbing by someone who is not an authorised person, which removes the exemption on its own.
- Replacing something that failed its durability obligations, a leaking tiled shower being the usual example.

Tiled showers and waterproofing membranes

A fully tiled shower is often assumed to need a building consent simply because it includes a waterproofing membrane. In an existing home, that is not necessarily the case. In Determination 2024/054, MBIE concluded that the wet-area membrane forming part of the tiled shower walls fell within the clause 12 exemption for internal linings and finishes, so building consent was not required for the wet-area membrane work. Christchurch City Council subsequently confirmed this interpretation to us in writing in November 2025. For the type of replacement shower work described here, three conditions apply:

1. No alteration to the floor structure. The base is built on top of the existing floor, not cut into it.
2. No increase in the total number of sanitary fixtures.
3. All sanitary plumbing carried out by an authorised person.

An exemption does not lower the standard

Work that needs no consent still has to comply with the Building Code in full. The same determination found that the showers in that case did not comply, because cracked grouting had let water into the wall and floor structure. It is why we use certified membrane applicators and qualified tilers, and can lodge as laid plans, applicator records and photographs to your property file at the end of the job.

Getting certainty before work starts

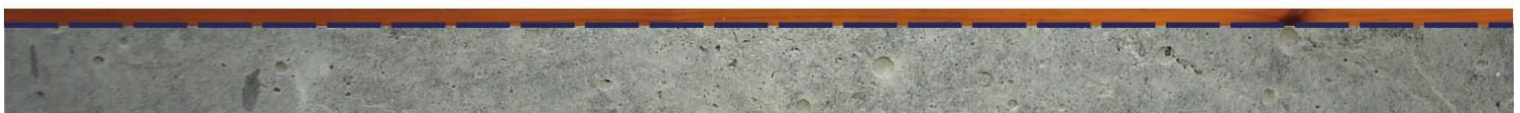
Where the consent position is not straightforward, we can order the council property file, check the original plans, describe the proposed work precisely, and seek written confirmation from Christchurch City Council before any work begins.

General guidance, based on the law as it stands in August 2026. Every house is different, so we confirm the position for your job before work starts.

What if a consent was required and never obtained?

Unconsented work rarely causes trouble on the day. It causes it later. On sale, work that should have been consented can appear on the LIM, affect the price, hold up settlement, or expose you to a claim under the warranties in the sale and purchase agreement. Insurers can take an interest too.

For ordinary unconsented building work, the usual remedy is to apply to the council for a Certificate of Acceptance. This is available where a building consent was required but was not obtained. A Certificate of Acceptance can be



more costly and less certain than obtaining consent before the work is done, because the council can only assess what it is able to inspect once the work is complete and may be covered up.

The reverse is equally important. Work that was genuinely exempt from building consent when it was carried out does not become unconsented work simply because no consent exists, and it does not need a Certificate of Acceptance.

What is most often overlooked when choosing tapware?

The most important consideration is whether you have low or mains pressure hot water. Most tapware sold now is designed for mains pressure, but a house with a low-pressure cylinder and older galvanised piping may only have around 20 kPa.

Get this wrong and a good-looking new shower can end up with disappointing flow. Specialist low-pressure tapware is available and performs well, and once we have identified your hot-water system we can recommend suitable options. There is more choice in mains-pressure tapware, so it is worth knowing which you have before you settle on a particular tap.

How do I know if I have a low-pressure hot water system?

Three quick checks:

- The sticker on your hot water cylinder will say Mains Pressure or Low Pressure.
- A header tank in the roof space means low pressure.
- Run the hot and the cold taps separately. Cold is almost always mains pressure, so if the hot feels much the same, you are probably on mains.

Why does it matter who actually does the work?

A bathroom brings together building, plumbing, electrical, waterproofing, tiling, flooring, plastering and painting. We use experienced tradespeople for each specialist part of the job and coordinate them as one team.

We have worked with the same trades for years, and that consistency is what holds the finish together, both on handover day and well after it.

How your renovation works with us

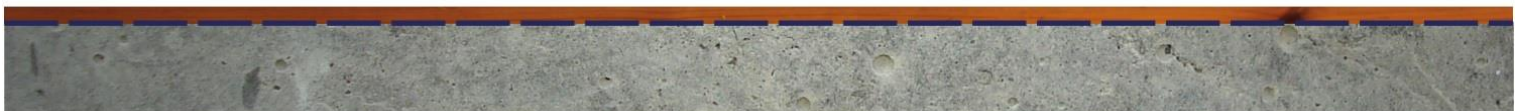
We keep things clear, organised and transparent from the first quote through to the final handover.

1. Site visit and detailed quote

We come and look at the space, take measurements, and talk through what you are trying to achieve. You then receive a written Quote and Project Specification setting out the scope in detail, so you can see exactly what is included and what is not.

2. Selections and final pricing

We are not tied to a catalogue, and we do not insist on supplying everything ourselves. You can supply some or all of the fixtures and fittings if you prefer, or re-use items from the existing bathroom. Anything we are allowing for



appears as a provisional sum, which is a realistic allowance for a good-quality, mid-range product of that type. Once you have made your selections, with help from our suppliers, we replace those allowances with actual costs and reissue the quote.

3. Scheduling and construction

With selections confirmed we schedule the work and give you a written Time Frame Schedule. From there we manage the full build: demolition, preparation, plumbing, electrical, lining, waterproofing, tiling or vinyl, fixtures and fittings, painting and finishing. We coordinate the trades and keep you updated as we go.

4. Completion and handover

When the work is finished we walk through the bathroom with you, deal with any final items promptly, and leave the space clean and ready to use. Your renovation is then covered by a 12-month defects period.

A deposit secures your booking, and the balance is invoiced in stages as the work progresses. Your quote sets out the payment schedule in full.

What if we find something unexpected?

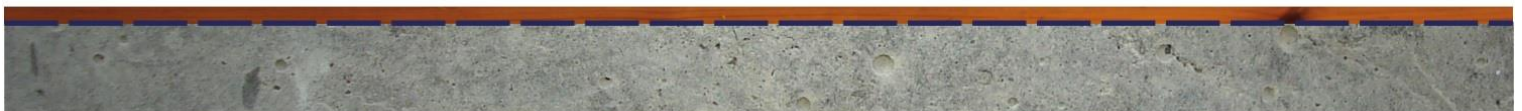
Nobody can see behind a wall until it is opened up, so no renovation price can account perfectly for what is hidden. Typical issues we may uncover include:

- Water damage or rot, where a shower or a waste has been leaking slowly for years.
- Existing flooring or framing that is not a sound base for the new work.
- Asbestos or other older materials that need testing before work can continue.

We do not load a contingency for this into every quote, because most customers would then be paying for a problem they do not have. If we find something, we stop, show you, and agree the cost with you in writing before carrying on. You will not get an invoice for work you did not know about.

Real Bathroom Renovation Case Studies

Each case study below includes a written description, before and after photographs, and the total cost of that job. The total generally includes project management, all trades (builder, plumber, electrician, plasterer, painter, tiler, vinyl layer and so on) and all fixtures and fittings supplied by us. It usually excludes design and consenting costs. Anything not included, such as homeowner-supplied fittings or consent fees, is noted in that project's description.



Modern Bathroom Upgrade in Spreydon

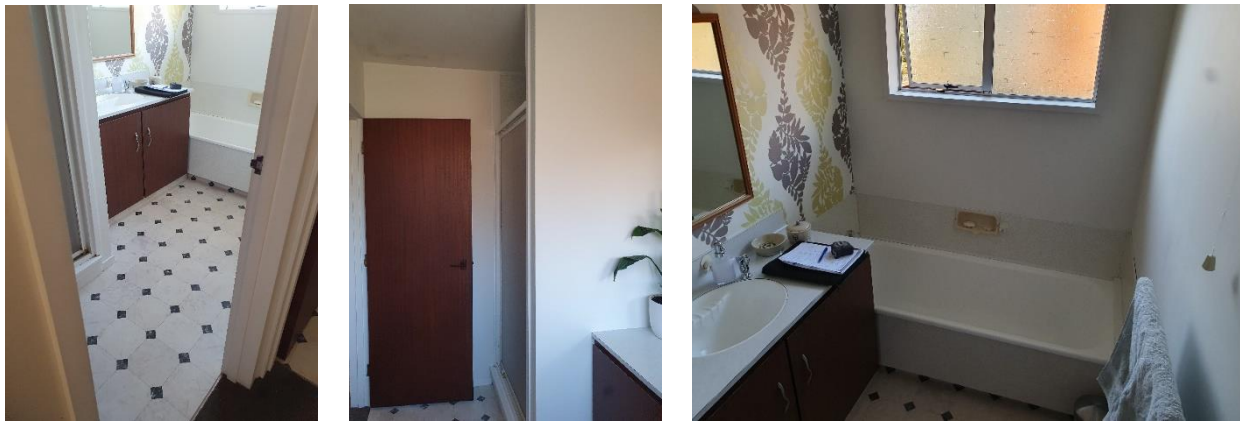
In this 1980s timber-floor home, the existing bathroom was dated and in poor condition, requiring a full strip-out. We removed all fixtures and fittings, took the walls back to framing, and replaced most of the floor substrate before relining the space to create a solid foundation for the new bathroom.

The finished room features:

- Symphony 1600×900mm acrylic shower system with frameless glass sliding door and Greens tapware
- VCBC 1200mm custom-painted, wall-hung vanity with two drawers and Adesso tapware
- A stainless steel grab rail, installed with reinforced timber blocking for added safety and stability near the shower entry
- Retained and reused the existing mirror, mirror light and heated towel rail
- Belgotex Geo sheet vinyl flooring, providing a durable, modern finish

Total Cost: \$21,801.14 (incl. GST)

Before:

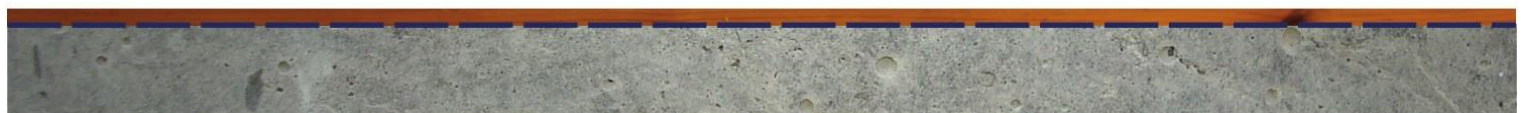


After:



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Family Bathroom & Toilet Conversion in Casebrook

This 1980s timber-floor home originally had a dated vinyl wet room and a separate toilet accessed from the hallway. The bathroom was showing its age, with a deteriorating floor and worn finishes.

We transformed the space by removing the dividing wall between the bathroom and toilet, then closing off the old hallway entry to create one larger, functional room. A new cavity sliding door was installed to improve accessibility and maximise space. The existing single-glazed windows were upgraded to double glazing, supplied by the homeowner and installed by our team.

The completed bathroom now features:

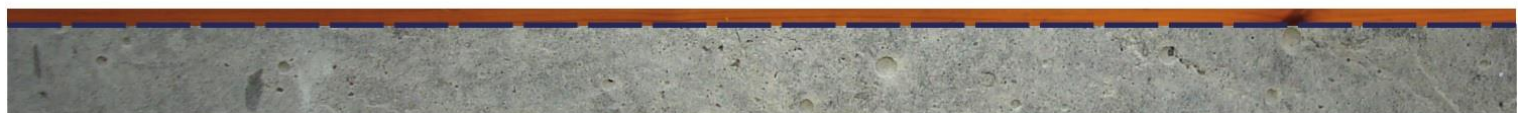
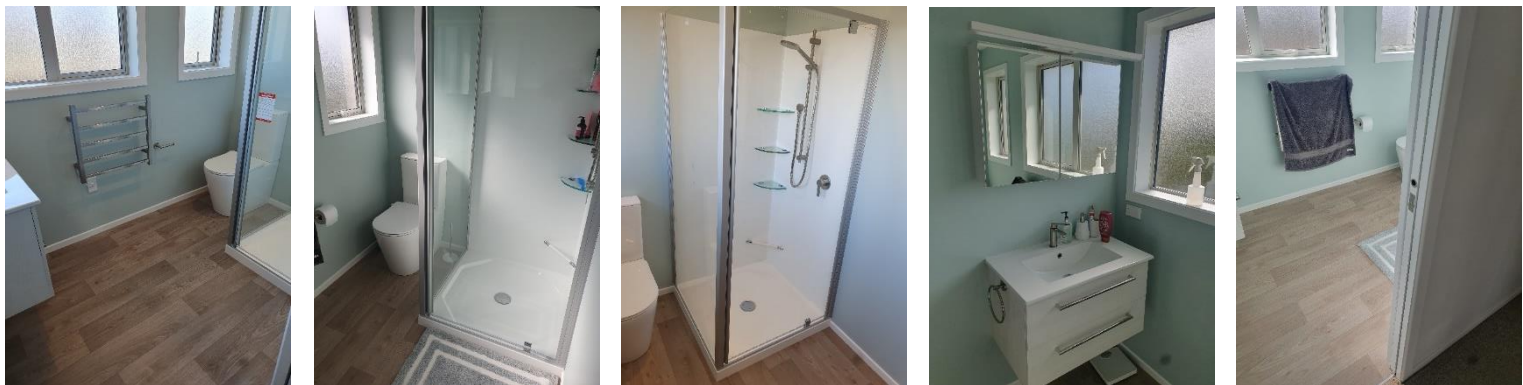
- ClearLite 900×900 acrylic shower with Greens brushed nickel tapware
- Raymor wall-hung vanity with matching brushed nickel fittings
- Tessa mirror cabinet for practical storage
- 5-bar brushed nickel heated towel rail
- Robert Malcolm sheet vinyl flooring for a durable, easy-care finish
- Tornado rimless back-to-wall toilet

Total Cost: \$25,169.43 (incl. GST)

Before:



After:



Contemporary Bathroom Renovation in Halswell

This 2000s-era home, built on a concrete slab foundation, required a complete bathroom upgrade. We stripped the space back to framing, removing all wall and ceiling linings, before relining to create a fresh, solid base for the new fit-out.

The transformation included:

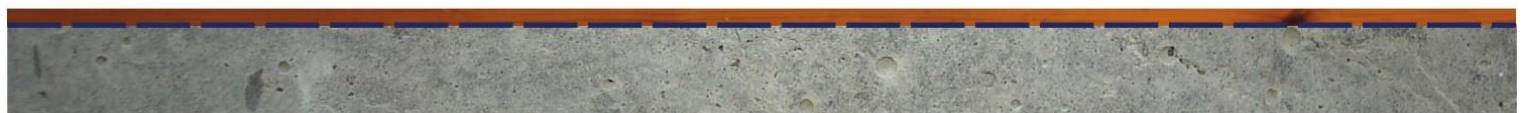
- Replacement of the original drop-in bath with a 1700mm back-to-wall freestanding bath, paired with an Adesso Mode wall-mounted bath spout and mixer
- Removal of the old 900×900 acrylic shower, upgraded to a larger 1200×900 acrylic shower system with frameless glass sliding door and an Adesso Urban three-function column shower
- Installation of a modern 900mm two-drawer wall-hung vanity paired with a 900mm round LED mirror
- New 600mm floor tiles, continued up the walls to 1.2m high for a stylish and durable finish

Total Cost: \$29,096.16 (incl. GST)

Before:



After:



Wheelchair-Friendly Ensuite Conversion in Hillsborough

This 1930s timber-floor home originally featured a walk-in wardrobe off the master bedroom, which was converted into a wheelchair-accessible ensuite. The project required a complete strip-out, removing all wall, ceiling, and floor linings before rebuilding the space from the ground up.

To achieve accessibility, the floor was reconstructed with a 1:50 fall toward a strip drain at the far end of the room. The ensuite now features fully tiled floors and walls, with an open-plan shower design, no glass or curtain, for easy wheelchair access.

Additional upgrades included:

- Installation of a new small double-glazed opening window, positioned above the toilet for natural light and ventilation
- Elevate 460mm basin with Methven Glide basin mixer, paired with a mirrored storage cabinet
- Raymor Brighton multi-spray slide shower with Methven Glide shower mixer
- Elementi Uno toilet for a modern, compact finish

This project required building consent and design work (handled separately by our recommended designer), but our price included all construction, trades, fixtures and fittings.

Total Cost: \$36,092.88 (incl. GST)

Before:

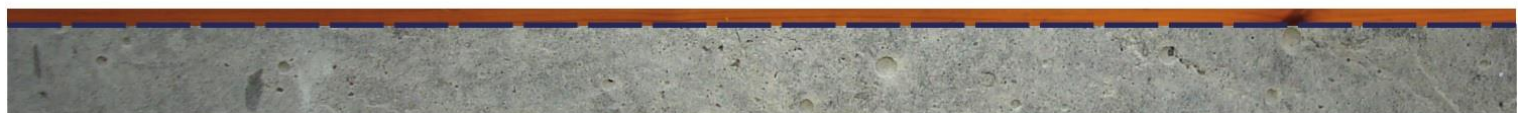


After:



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High-End Ensuite Renovation in Burnside

This ensuite, part of a large family home originally built in the 1920s, had been through multiple extensions and alterations over the decades. Located upstairs on the first floor, the old space was dated and inefficient, with a small acrylic shower, vinyl flooring, a basic floor-mounted vanity, and a standard toilet.

The renovation involved significant reconfiguration of the upstairs layout. Several internal walls were removed and reframed to create a new flow between the master bedroom, walk-in wardrobe, and ensuite. The old separate hinged doors were replaced with two premium cavity sliding doors, complete with soft-closing runners and magnetic privacy latches, one leading from the bedroom into the walk-in wardrobe, and the other providing ensuite access from within the wardrobe.

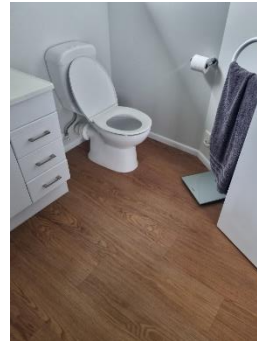
The ensuite itself was transformed into a luxurious, fully tiled space. Key features include:

- Custom-formed tiled shower enclosure, designed to work with the room's unusual wall angles
- Frameless custom glass sliding shower door, tailored to fit the space
- Full-width recessed shower shelf, with integrated LED strip lighting for a striking feature
- 1200mm wall-hung vanity with double bowls, offering both style and practicality
- Floor-to-ceiling tiling on all walls, combined with a fully tiled floor for a premium finish
- A modern back-to-wall toilet and high-quality fixtures throughout

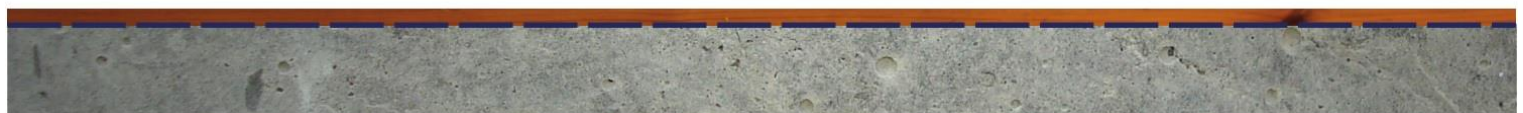
This project required building consent for the structural alterations, as several internal walls were removed and reframed. The homeowner arranged design and consenting prior to our involvement, while our team supplied all building materials, engaged the sub-trades, and organised the required council inspections. The homeowner provided the vanity, tapware, toilet, tiles, and assorted fixtures, while we completed all construction and project management.

Total Cost: \$47,487.84 (incl. GST)

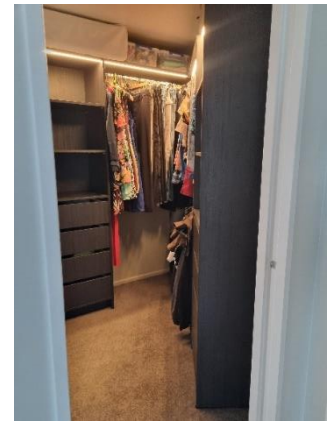
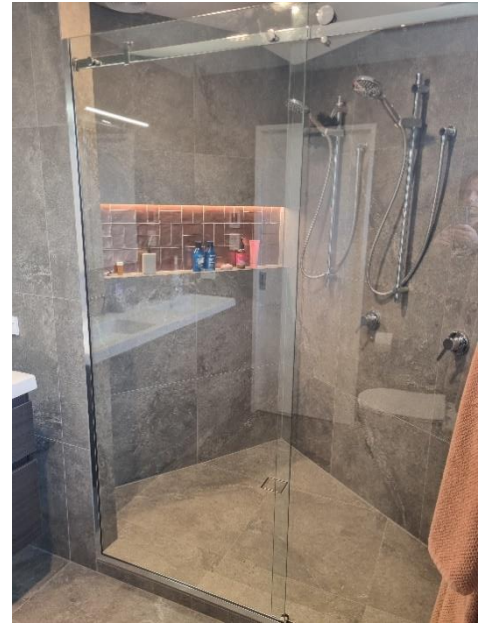
Before:



During:



After:



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