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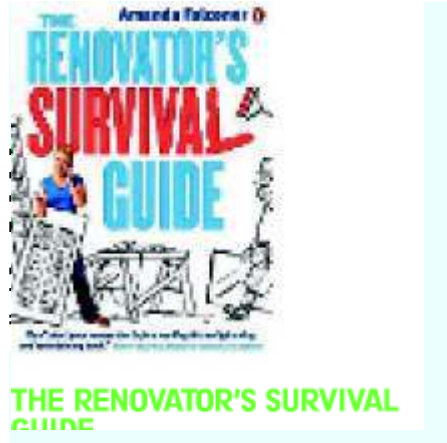
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Amanda Falconer
Penguin, \$26.95

Renovation is the great Australian sport. It is also fraught with peril. A term well-known to lawyers and real estate agents is “renovator’s divorce” — from spouse, builders and large amounts of money. Falconer experienced the renovation from hell, and survived to write about it. She also collected similar tales of woe and created this guide to stress-free renovation. She talked to all sides, from lawyers to building inspectors, and her book is exhaustive but user-friendly. The approach is to pinpoint what can go wrong and try to avoid it. She advises educating yourself in the process beforehand, getting expert advice and being assertive. Devious courtesy also has its place. The neighbours might lodge an objection with council? Hold a wine and cheese night for them. Recommended for anyone considering renovation.