



Move or improve?

It's hard to find the perfect home. Whether you're in Auckland or Akaroa, Edgecombe or Ellerslie, in this market we all know the complications, expense and stress the purchase of a new home can bring. By Carly Flynn.

In some parts of New Zealand, just getting on the property ladder is a big enough challenge, while in others we're constantly looking to improve or upgrade as money and time permits, and taste and circumstance change.

Which is why I think – pre-purchase, we're all looking for the 'dream home', the one that ticks all the boxes and gets us through every period of life we can anticipate. The single years, the young family years, the teenage years, and the retirement years. It's a lot to ask of a house.

Be it a much lusted after single level three-bedroom north-facing bungalow with a deck rolling on to a flat lush lawn; a stake in the ground apartment with good city and transport access, or the quarter acre kiwi dream with a backyard fit for afternoon cricket matches with all the kids (do they still exist?).

We have lived in our current central city home for six years. Bought pre-children, it was a run-down, two-storeyed do-up. Its saving grace was its fantastic location. Perfect for our double income, busy working lifestyle. We weren't there during the day, so it remained clean and tidy until we got home. If we needed something renovated, easy. Leave the keys for the tradesman and come home to a transformation.

We've done this multiple times, and with only a shabby en-suite bathroom left to replace, we've almost completed what was once the perfect pre-family home.

But that's the thing about having kids; they can change everything, despite

your best intentions that they have to fit into your life. Purchasing a home pre-kids meant we didn't really understand what is required of a home once you actually have a family.

While before children (BC) I was able to keep my walls white, live with the layout, cope without a bath, and not think too much about the multiple hazards there are for a young child (stairs, a cliff face, busy road); post children (PC) there's so much more to think about (stairs, cliff, busy road plus kindies and schools, etc).

“Equally though, this is a scary market, and some days we're just grateful to have a home we can call our (and the banks') own”

One of the biggest 'first world problems' we have in our current abode is that our master bedroom is upstairs, and the kids are downstairs. It may not sound like an earth shattering, reason-to-move-house problem, but add to the mix one of the children being a constant night-waker (Master Two), and the other right in the thick of night-time toilet training (Miss Three), and you soon see why three, four and five trips a night up and down the 14 stairs that link us becomes a bit of an annoying issue.

This will of course only be for a short period of life, in ten years time I'll probably be missing the days when the children wanted to talk to me in the middle of the night; but sleep is sleep,

and I'll do almost anything these days to maximise it, for all of our sakes.

And then there's the aesthetic side of things. What once was an immaculate spare bedroom with clean towels, lovely linen and fresh flowers placed in anticipation of our regular guests' arrival, is now a fully fledged playroom (at least I can chuck all the toys into one room at the end of the day and shut the door).

Now, when we have guests, like the out-of-town grandparents, they're lucky to get the kids' pull out couch and all the crumbs and crayons that have fallen between the cracks, let alone any fancy smelling linen.

So here is the big question – to renovate or to relocate. In this market, do you buy or sell first? And while previously I have been more than happy, excited even, to call in the tradesmen, with the two littlies who also call this home, I can't say I'm excited about the prospect of re-doing a bathroom or ripping out a wall with the munchkins about.

Equally though, this is a scary market, and some days we're just grateful to have a home we can call our (and the banks') own.

So I suspect while we think it might be easier to up sticks and try and compete with the seemingly hundreds of others looking for that 'perfect family home' that takes us through all the years, we'll probably do what I believe I've always done best. Renovate and recreate a home that's right for now and be done with it. I might just have to farm the kids out first! ■