

Tara's own renovation rescue is a picture of elegance



Tara's backyard before (right) and after (above) her own renovation rescue.



Renovation guru Tara Dennis's Mt Colah home was the canvas for an amazing transformation, writes ANGELA SAURINE

WHEN Tara Dennis began her career as a presenter on renovation rescue-style reality TV shows, in reality it was her own home that was in need of rescuing.

After moving into her Mt Colah home six years ago, Ms Dennis quickly set about using the skills that have helped thousands of viewers of *Our House*, *Renovation Rescue*, *Burkes Backyard*, *DIY Rescue* and *Changing Rooms*, transforming the old two-bedroom cottage into a stylish four-bedroom pad. The back shed was bulldozed and replaced with a smart design studio, which Ms Dennis lived in with her partner Martin and 13-year-old daughter while the renovations were taking place.

"With the three of us it was like living in a caravan," she said.

Over the past six months, Ms Dennis and her partner have spent countless hours back in the studio working on the book *Home: Classic Essentials For Easy Living*.

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Published by Jamie Durie Publishing, the coffee-table book is set to hit the shelves before Christmas.

"It's a resource for the whole home," Ms Dennis said. "It's about every room."

While Ms Dennis was responsible for the words in the book, her partner took the photographs.

The couple, who met working at a paint company long ago, travelled to New York and France over Christmas to research and photograph the book.

Ms Dennis, 36, was born in the UK and grew up in Canberra.

She returned to London to study design and started her own company specialising in paint decorative finishes and soft furnishings.

It was never her goal to be on TV, but working as a product manager for an art materials company back in Australia she often approached television shows with story ideas to promote her products.

She eventually got a job behind the scenes on *Our House* and was offered a role as an on-air presenter in the original *Changing Rooms* crew.

While she relishes the chance to get her ideas across, she still struggles with being in front of a camera.

"I'm certainly not a born presenter," she said. "If my hands are busy I'm okay... they give me



Television presenter Tara Dennis relaxes in her elegant Mt Colah home. Picture: SUE GRAHAM

a pair of scissors or a paint brush so I won't get nervous."

She recently filmed another series of *Renovation Rescue* which is now ready to go to air.

"We used to do a lot of filming here," she said. "It was just convenient for the crews, they're

always trying to find a location. One room could be blocked off and if you decorated it you could be anywhere."

Ms Dennis attributes her success to her achievable, girl-next-door approach.

She is a garage sale fiend, and

buys many of the materials for her shows from Asquith Lifeline.

"My design philosophy is about having good basics and classic colours," she said.

Visitors to her home often expect it to be bright.

Instead the home has an elegant,

clean style with strong use of natural colours.

There are white shutters on the windows and bifold doors, which open out on to an expansive rear deck. "Now I'm at the stage where I want to change things," she said. "I just enjoy tinkering."