

Would you consider e-decorating your home?

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E-decorating can be a great option for anyone who doesn't have time to meet an interior designer during regular working hours. Photo: Emma Blomfield

Dragging her husband and three young children around furniture shops every Saturday morning was Colleen Connolly's idea of hell.

With a new four-bedroom house in inner Melbourne to furnish and some idea of the style she wanted to achieve, she decided to call in a professional – with a thoroughly modern twist.

Rather than inviting a decorator into her home, Connolly hired Sydney home stylist

Emma Blomfield to create a design plan, mood boards and shopping list without ever stepping foot in her house.



A mood board prepared for Colleen Connolly. Photo: Emma Blomfield

“It eliminated that stress of going into stores and trying to match cushions with children saying ‘I don’t want to be here’,” Connolly says.

E-decorating – providing customised home styling advice online – has been popular in the United States for several years, with top stylists including Betsy Burnham and Vanessa De Vargas offering online consultations.

The virtual decorating trend is making its way into the Australian interiors world as a more affordable and flexible alternative to in-home consultations.

Blomfield says most of her e-decorating clients are in their late 30s or early 40s, often with young children, and want help setting up their first or second family homes.

Some ask for advice on every item, from rugs, art works and soft furnishings to big-ticket items such as sofas and dining tables. More often, the clients have a few key pieces but are unsure how to pull the look together.

“They might have bought a home that needs renovating but can’t figure out what to do to bring the house up to its potential,” Blomfield says.

Typically, e-decorating involves a client completing a detailed questionnaire with information such as who lives in the home, how each space will be used, and room dimensions. They also email photos of the rooms from different angles and images of looks they like – via Pinterest, for example.

Blomfield, who charges from \$247 to \$447 a room, prepares a mood board with a collage of images, a detailed shopping list and floor plan, as well as an overall design plan.

“That’s their tool to execute the design in their own time, under my instruction. That’s the whole thing with e-decorating: I want the client to feel they have a lot of input, rather than me doing everything for them.”

It took about eight weeks from initial contact to detailed design plan for Connolly, who says the process gave her the confidence to trust her own judgment styling a second lounge room.

“I felt I had enough knowledge of what I was trying to achieve,” she says.

Jen Bishop, who edits the popular blog *The Interiors Addict*, says the e-decorating trend has grown massively in Australia in the past few years.

“It suits people looking for an affordable option and those who find the idea of an interior decorator physically coming into their home too daunting,” Bishop says.

It can also be a great option for people on a tight budget, those living outside major cities and anyone who doesn’t have time to meet an interior designer during regular working hours.

“At the end of the day, you can’t beat having someone physically come into your home to see it and how it flows and feels,” Bishop says. “Building a rapport with someone you work with face to face is always nice, of course, but for those who don’t want that, don’t have time or don’t live near the interior designer of their choice, e-decorating is a pretty good second.”

E-decorating tips:

- Check out the decorator’s website or ask to see a portfolio of their work.
- Start collecting images of rooms or individual pieces you like, to convey the style you want to achieve.
- Decide which items of furniture you don’t want to part with. Be open to using them in different places in your home.

- Agree on costs up front, including the decorator's fees and the budget for furnishings.
- Don't feel pressured to buy everything straight away; it can be a gradual process.



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