



Ken Lewis shows the old and new bathroom facilities in a West Geelong home.

Home Renovations

The Victorian Ministry of Housing has started a Home Renovation Service, similar to the Brotherhood's Home Improvement Service.

The Ministry's Service provides help, advice and low interest loans for low income home owners in 12 inner suburbs.

Because of the similarity between the two services, the Ministry has allocated \$20 000 to the Brotherhood to continue the Home Improvement Service for the next year.

The Brotherhood's service was started in 1979 in West Geelong as an experiment to help older people to stay in their own homes as long as possible.

As one person described her reasons for using it, 'I was pretty sceptical about tradesmen and after my husband died I didn't have the money.'

Ken Lewis, co-ordinator of the Service, arranged for the necessary improvements, including an inside toilet and other bathroom facilities. The Brotherhood has made the money available at low interest to be repaid from the estate or if the house is sold.

Only a few people have taken advantage of the low interest loans as most are able, and in fact prefer, to pay the cost themselves.

The most common requests are for general repairs such as new window sashes, small plumbing jobs or new weatherboards. Other jobs done have included the removal of old, high sided baths which are difficult and dangerous for older people. They are replaced with a flexible handpiece.

Only qualified tradesmen are employed and three quotes are obtained for each job. This ensures that the best job is done at the best price. 'For one painting job I had three quotes of \$1 560, \$980 and \$960,' Ken Lewis said.

A Gardening Service is also popular with people who find they can no longer cope with keeping their garden under control.

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