



BARB COOPER

# Down to Earth Real Estate

New Zealand's first website with a focus towards healthier and more sustainable homes.



## 10 Top Tips for Selling in Today's Market

#



Licensed under the Real Estate Agents Act 2008

# 2010

Barb Cooper

[www.downtoearthre.co.nz](http://www.downtoearthre.co.nz)

# Welcome

As someone who has prepared a wide range of homes to sell, it is my pleasure to provide you with this booklet. You will find the latest feedback and advice on what YOU need to do in today's market to prepare your home in order to attract your best possible price in the shortest possible time.

Right from the total do up/renovation project to preparing just built show homes for display, to selling the family home, I have been involved as the vendor or seller in these situations so I certainly understand what is involved. There have been many times I have been madly doing the last minute cleaning and tidying, at the same time ordering my 4 young children to get into the car as I wanted to be gone at least before the open home started! The best thing about preparing for an open home was that you would arrive home to a really clean and tidy home!

Today, not only are buyers impressed by presentation but they are clearly focusing more on the construction of the home. There is a growing awareness of the need to have well insulated, durable, weather tight homes. In NZ our current building code specifies that the materials used in our homes have to last for only 50 years! As the NZ home rating system is introduced in 2010, we will see a focus on not only lifting the standard of materials used in our homes but most importantly the increased focus on the comfort, healthiness and efficiency of our homes.

Whether you are considering selling this year, or in 5 years time, it is always good to be prepared by being well planned and knowing where best to invest in your home. I hope you find the information in this booklet helpful.

Without any obligation, I am always available if you would like more information.

Kind regards

*Barb Cooper*

**EcoBroker**  
CERTIFIED



# Contents

1. Buyers want to know, “How well has your home been built?” .....
2. Maintenance & home repairs.....
3. Property Information—the paperwork.....
4. Making improvements to your home - Smarter Choices.....
- 5, Making improvements to your home - Greater Efficiency.....
6. Neighbourhood – First Impressions.....
7. Presenting to Sell.....
8. Understanding price.....
9. Listing with an Agency – your rights.....
10. Other helpful tips and “stuff” you might want to know.....

# 1. Buyers want to know... 'how well has your home been built?'

*Buyers are now looking beyond the nice new kitchen or bathroom, they are asking questions such as; Does this home have a cavity system? What sort of cladding does it have? How old is it? Does it have any water penetration issues? Who built the home? Does it LEAK?*

**As a homeowner considering selling, you will be required to sign a form acknowledging you are unaware of any water penetration issues. If there are any issues, you will be required to disclose them.**

Due to the increased media attention in relation to the leaky building syndrome, buyers are very wary of potential problems relating to moisture particularly in relation to plaster homes. If your home is not plaster clad, don't be too complacent, they are looking much closer now than they have ever done ever before. Homes built throughout the 1994—2002 period were built during a time when there was a relaxation in some of our building standards. Some houses were built with untreated timber. Many of the problems have arisen through the type of building and cladding systems used. There are several different brands of monolithic type cladding: the two most common types are:

**Harditex** – a flat fibre cement type board with a plastered finish

**Insulclad** – fire retardant polystyrene with a fibreglass mesh with plaster system (*chilli bin*)

Some cladding systems are more susceptible to failure than others - the installation is the key decider, i.e. Who installed it and how well they followed the required "system of installation" and whether it fails or not.

For more detailed information go to the following websites: <http://www.bc.org.nz/mono.html>, [http://www.citywidebuilding.co.nz/Cladding\\_assessments.html](http://www.citywidebuilding.co.nz/Cladding_assessments.html)

**A building inspection** is the best way to find out whether you have any issues that need rectifying before you go on the market for sale. Good maintenance and regular checks are safeguards to knowing your home is water tight. Even by purchasing your own moisture meter from a local hardware shop, you can regularly check to ensure your home is keeping dry. Moisture readings less than 20 are generally ok. Readings between 20 and 30 are cause for concern, and anything over 30 means you have a real problem that needs sorting.

**As salespeople we are obliged to recommend that buyers obtain their own building report, however , if as a seller you already have a satisfactory building report, your buyer may be satisfied with that. In this case you are on a winner here as you are removing another barrier to buying, plus you have peace of mind knowing what you are selling.**



## 2. Maintenance and Home Repairs

*Buyers are poor judges of the cost of repairs, and always build in a large margin for error when offering on such a property. Sellers are always better off doing the work themselves, ahead of time.*

Repairs and maintenance are better off done regularly. There are recommended material requirements detailed by all building product manufacturers which will void any warranty if not done. Keep records of any trades people you have used, what has been done, along with any guarantees or warranties. *Ask Barb about the Naturally Smarter Home Folder.*

In the past, homeowners have concentrated largely on visual appearances. Nowadays, buyers are even more discerning, especially regarding the construction types of homes. People are looking to buy homes that have been well maintained throughout the years. They want to know how long the present owner has lived there and also how many times the property has changed hands. Buyers are looking for good value, they do not want to be paying out to fix future problems.

It pays for any homeowner to keep up with the maintenance of their home, however, if you have a home that is clad with a monolithic cladding, you will need to be much more vigilant with the maintenance and care of your home.

### General Maintenance Tips

- Combat damp through insulating, ventilating and quality heating.
- Maintain all claddings - whether they are monolithic fibre-cement, weatherboard, brick or concrete block. Follow the manufacturer's maintenance recommendations and inspect annually.
- Check that balconies and decks allow water to run to a collection point. Check for rotting, swelling, cracks, rust and keep drainage points clear.
- Check your roof, chimneys and flashings annually. Look for corroded or lifted flashings and crumbling chimney mortar. Keep your gutters clear.

[Download Consumer Home Maintenance Checklist](#)

Know your DIY limits - sometimes it's cheaper and less stressful to hire a building professional rather than make costly mistakes. In 2010 there will be some changes to the building code making it mandatory for a qualified tradesperson to do the job. As a nation of DIY kiwis, there is still plenty we can do ourselves on the upkeep and maintenance of our homes. For more information go to [www.dbh.govt.nz](http://www.dbh.govt.nz)



### 3. Property Information—the paperwork

*More questions from buyers... Does it have a Code Compliance Certificate? Do you have a copy of the LIM report?*

**By providing any of this information at the beginning of a genuine enquiry, you are helping to remove any barriers to buying by making the research of the property so much easier.**

Just because a property has a code compliance certificate, it does not mean it will pass a building inspection. Many specialist cladding/roofing systems are installed and certified (PS4 construction) by the supplier or installer. The local council inspector is not an expert and relies on the supplier/installer for proof of acceptable system installation and durability. The more standard the construction in your home is, the lower the risk.

**Council Property File.** The Council file should hold all building and renovations made to your home as well as any major changes to the land. It should also have a copy of the Code Compliance Certificate. It normally takes around 5 days to receive a property file, however it can get to you within hours if you order an email version through the North Shore City Council.

North Shore: You can obtain a copy of your property's Council file for \$25 received on line or \$32 sent to your address. This can usually be done online, by phoning a council or by visiting a Council reception. This way you will know exactly what information purchasers may be looking at before they purchase. Ph 09 486 8600

[Order a Council file North Shore](#)

[Order a Council file Rodney](#)

**LIM Report.** Like the property file, the LIM report is easy to order from your local council and costs \$200. A LIM (Land Information Memorandum) should tell you about rates, restrictions on use of the land/buildings, resource consents relating to the property, sewage and storm water pipes, and any environmental issues such as erosion, flooding and hazardous substances that might affect the property.

[Order a LIM North Shore](#)

[Order a LIM Rodney](#)

**Zoning.** You may wish to check the District and/or local Council design guidelines - this will tell you what you can build on the property and guidelines to how you may use the property. For example, you may be able to build a minor dwelling, therefore it is good to check to see what is permissible. You can always ring **North Shore Actionline 486 8400** or **Rodney Council 0800 426 5169** and ask to speak with a town planner, it's free!

[Rodney District Plan](#)

[North Shore District Plan](#)



## 4. Making improvements to your home - Smarter Choices

*Buyers are now starting to ask, which way is North? Has this home been insulated? Buyers want warm, dry, healthy homes. Instead of spending money upgrading your kitchen, you may want to consider for example, double glazing your bedroom windows.*

**A general rule of thumb is not to spend more than 7% of a home's value in doing it up. While many people have prioritised their spending on the visual aspects of a home, it is now the health and comfort aspects that are starting to take precedence. You cannot change the way your home is orientated, however there are some ways you can make it more efficient and more comfortable to live in.**

**Insulation:** Government grants are now available to help upgrade the insulation in your home. This may be one of the best investments you can make. If you do decide to go ahead and insulate, remember to keep good records of what you install. People cannot see the insulation, they can only feel the indoor temperature, therefore having good records is added proof. Buyers are now asking questions about insulation.

**Thermal Mass:** Many new homes today are making good use of thermal mass, and this may be something you can do as a renovation. This is where a dense material (usually concrete or brick) is used to absorb and store heat. This heat is then re-released into the air as the air temperature becomes less than the temperature of the thermal mass. Concrete floors or walls are good examples. If you have a north facing room that receives sun, you may want to consider polished concrete or tiles as a way of gaining more heat in your home for FREE.

**Heating & Cooling:** Keeping your home warm in winter and cool in summer are becoming increasingly important. Decent sized eaves, outdoor shades and deciduous trees planted in the right places can help keep a home cool in summer, while energy efficient log burners, wood pellet burners or heat pumps are recommended by consumer as being economical forms of home heating. If you have gas, it must be flued outside as gas creates moisture. Radiant heat is the healthiest type of heat (heat emitted by an object) as opposed to convection heated air).

**Moisture Control:** Keeping the moisture content low in your home will mean your indoor air temperatures are healthier and what's more drier air is more cost effective to heat than moist air. If you have moisture on your windows in winter, unless it is regularly wiped away, you will develop mould in your home. Buyers look for mould. Good air flow through a home is important. You may wish to consider a home ventilation system that will help move fresh air around the home and help prevent the condensation. A long term solution, which is initially a greater investment, is to upgrade insulation and double glaze windows. It is always important to vent bathroom areas and driers outside and to ensure you have a dry heat source.



## 5. Making improvements to your home – Greater Efficiency

*At present we have many buyers asking to see what the Council rate bills are, however not so many are concerned at seeing what the power and water bills are (otherwise known as operating costs). THIS IS GOING TO CHANGE! With the introduction of the Super city structure and the NZ home rating tool in 2010, we are expecting that buyers will become far more aware of these aspects as we follow the general worldwide trend for greater efficiency within our homes.*

Our power and water bills are going to increase. The difference between paying \$100 per week for power to paying \$250 is \$1,800 over one year! If you are able to put in a water tank to collect water off your roof, or a grey water tank to recycle your water, you will be making a wise investment.

Below are some features worth considering if you are wanting to invest wisely in your home. This may be more of a long term option and not something you want to try and do just before going onto the market to sell. If you do make any of these improvements, it is very important to ensure they are well promoted in the marketing of your home.

- Insulation – ceiling, floor, walls
- Windows – double glaze
- Eaves/shades for cooling
- Incorporate use of thermal mass
- Good natural ventilation or mechanical ventilation system
- Heat pump/fire/flued gas
- Pellets & thermal drapes
- Efficient lighting, skylight for darker areas
- Low flow shower heads/taps, flow restrictors
- Low flush toilets
- High efficiency appliances—energy and water
- Hot water cylinder wrap
- Heat pump/solar/wetback
- Greywater recycling, water tanks for gardens or toilet flushing, (non potable)
- Longer lasting materials



## 6. Neighbourhood – First Impressions

*Often we think of the entrance of the home as the first place buyers look. STOP! As soon as buyers drive into your neighbourhood they have their eyes peeled! This is where it really pays to get on with your neighbours!*

Location...Location...Location...

Many buyers will start their search on where to live by driving around an area to get a feel for where they want to live. The state of the housing within a neighbourhood or within a street can make a big impression on whether or not they will choose to look to buy in that area. Unclipped grass, messy front yards, old cars, loud music are guaranteed to be a turn off to most buyers.

**First Impressions.** Remember the first impression a buyer has of your property is a lasting impression. You must GRAB a buyer's interest right at your entrance. Make sure your letterbox looks GREAT (this is often forgotten about), while your entrance needs to look welcoming and inviting. Maybe a few extra pot plants to dress it up will give it that extra touch.

Everyone wants to live in a community that feels safe. Over the last 20-30 years many people have lost touch with their neighbours, however this is now changing. People want to have that feeling of belonging, they want to get on with their neighbours especially in the country where they may be required to rely on one another even more.

If you have a neighbourhood support group running in your street or neighbourhood, it is a very good way of proving you live in an area that people are proactive and keen to look out and care for one another. Anyone can start a neighbourhood support group, it's as easy as making a phone call to the local Neighbourhood Support Office to ask for a speaker to run a meeting at your home. You just need to invite the neighbours.

*I recently sold a home where the owner left a lovely folder for the new owners providing the names of the people in their small street and a little message about them. It was a very welcoming touch for the new owners who were made to feel really welcome by their new neighbours.*

*Tip: A name plaque at the entrance can add extra appeal for buyers, especially if you are trying to sell a Lifestyle Block.*



## 7. Presenting to Sell

*If you think buyers won't look in the back of your linen cupboard – WRONG! Buyers will want to check out your storage facilities, they are likely to poke a nose into your wardrobe and even turn on a shower head to check out water flow. Don't worry, these are all good buying signs however it does mean you may need to have a good clean and tidy.*

**Touch ups:** Definitely worth doing. Anywhere that is obvious is worth the effort of going over with the paintbrush. You may like to ask a friend who hasn't been to your place for a while to pop over and give you some quick feedback on what they notice when they walk through.

**Clean:** When you prepare your home to go on the market, every corner counts! The number one rule is that everything must be clean. Around windows, in corners, you name it, it needs to be clean. Water blast any old moss or lichen off paths and buildings. Inside and out, it needs to be spotless.

**Lighten:** Ensure your home looks as light and airy as possible. Buyers don't like dark. More light gives the impression of space and brightness and it makes rooms seem larger. Table lamps can also be helpful for lighting up that dark corner.

**De-clutter:** Having less in a room makes it look bigger. Today's modern look is all about clean lines without any clutter. While it is important for a home to look homely, it is important that it doesn't look junky.

**Garden:** Often this is one of the last areas to be focused on, yet our gardens are often an extension of our indoor living. Plants in tubs are a great way to enhance a garden, and you can take them with you. Make the effort to plant veges in your garden a few weeks before going on the market;. More and more people are looking for edible gardens and nowadays, every bit counts!

**Home staging:** This is when you hire furniture and accessories to enhance your home. If you are selling an empty home, this certainly makes a difference and is almost certain to get you a better price. The cost to stage a typical 3 bedroom home is roughly \$2,000 per month. Staging a home can be a good option especially if you are running a high profile campaign such as an auction, it can be very worthwhile. Other than that if you have to beg, borrow or steal from your friends, for the time your property is on the market, do it!

**Removing Valuables:** When you prepare your home for sale, you need to think of it as being a little more like a show home for a period of time. Just to be on the safe side, it is important that you put away anything of any real value. You don't need to remove all your personal items, your home really needs to look and feel like a home, it just needs to be displayed to the same standard of cleanliness and tidiness of a show home.

**Pets:** Dogs greeting your prospective buyers is not usually helpful when you are marketing a home. While you know your dog wouldn't hurt a flea, not everyone will be so self assured by your pooch, no matter how friendly they may seem. If you can, remove pets from any viewings.

**Smell:** How does your home smell? Do you have pets inside? Does it smell musty or damp? Be wary if you are having open homes, some cooking smells linger. Find someone who doesn't live in the home to see if they can detect any distasteful smells and definitely do something about it. When you live in the home the whole time it is not easy to detect bad smells. Fresh flowers make a great addition, especially when they smell nice!

## 8. Understanding Price

*When buyers are interested in a property, they always ask the same questions;*

*How much is this property?*

*How long has it been on the market?*

*Why are they selling?*

So how do you know what price to put on your property? Are you basing your asking price on needs or emotion, on how much you invested in your property, or on what you see other properties advertised for?

To base your pricing on any of the above can be an expensive mistake. If your home is not priced competitively, agents then buyers will reject it in favour of other well priced comparable homes leaving yours on the shelf collecting dust.

The sad part of that is, the buyers who should be looking at your house will not see it because it is priced over their heads or agents have eliminated it from their list of properties to show.

The result is increased market time, and even when the price is eventually lowered, the buyers are wary because "nobody wants to buy a house that nobody else wants". The result is low offers and an unwillingness to negotiate. Every seller wants to realise as much money as possible from the sale, but a listing priced too high often eventually sells for less than market value.

To understand price, we are best to look at several aspects:

- Previous nearby sales of comparable properties
- What is currently on the market for sale that is comparable?
- The number of buyers v's sellers in the market at any given time
- Interest rate levels and availability of loan money.

The market is continually changing. Check out our graph on the overall cycles of real estate at [www.downtoearthre.co.nz](http://www.downtoearthre.co.nz) It is important that you consider all aspects and not just the 'opinion' of one or two salespeople. 'Government Valuations' or 'Current Valuations' are not overly reliable as they are computer generated figures that take no account of upgrades or house appeal.

When it comes to actually pricing the property there are many sales strategies that are available. It is a good idea to fully understand how each method works. Discuss it fully with your agent so you can decide which method you feel the most comfortable with.



## 9. Listing with an Agency—your Rights

*Research has shown throughout the years that the most important criteria for home owners choosing to list with a Real Estate Agency is that they find a salesperson whom they feel they can get on with, someone who they can trust and rely on. You are now able to go to the REAA website and view the public register to check out any salesperson you may be unsure of. The new terminology for salespeople is now licensees.*

The REAA (Real Estate Agent's Authority) have produced a very informative booklet to help home owners become aware of their rights and responsibilities. Nowadays you are entitled to have a full break down of marketing costs, and there are stricter rules ensuring you receive a better service.

[Download a copy of the REAA booklet on 'Guidelines to Selling'](#)

Below is a full list of what you can expect to receive from a salesperson listing your property. You are referred to as the client.

- Client provided with estimated appraisal price
- Listing price agreed with client
- Client advised of estimated commission payable based on listing price
- Client provided with REA Auth Listing Guide
- Client provided with REA Auth Selling Guide
- Client provided with in-house complaints process
- Client provided with REA Auth Professional Conduct and Client Care Rules
- Client provided with written statement identifying rebates discounts
- Client provided with advertising and marketing program
- Client advised they have until 5.00 p.m. following working day to provide notice in writing of cancellation of agency
- Client advised that they may seek independent advice
- Client advised that if they have already entered into another agency agreement they may be liable for payment of two commissions
- Client has advised of any water penetration issues
- Client has advised of any work completed that requires permits
- Client has advised of any pending work on adjoining properties for which they have signed consents.



# 10. Other helpful tips and 'stuff' you might want to know

**Easy access:** The easier the access to your home the greater chance you have of attracting more salespeople with buyers they are working with.

**Lockbox:** This is something that most companies use to secure the key to your property on site. There is a generic key that salespeople hold to open the lockbox which will provide easy access to your property.

**OSH:** You will be asked at the time of listing your property if there is anything on site that may be hazardous to any member of the public.

**Dogs on site:** Always best to remove if possible if there is a viewing. You will also need to declare whether you have a dog.

**Presentation:** Remember not only looks but smell too. Fresh bread or coffee, a drop of vanilla on an element will give you the smell of home baking.

**Neighbours:** Talk with your neighbours just so they don't end up mowing their lawns while you are having an open home

**Open Homes:** If you are having open homes, make sure the home is left how you would like it presented—if you want the corner lamp going—turn it on, don't leave it for the salesperson to do. Imagine your home is a show home just for the duration of the open home.

**Viewing by Appointment:** These are generally more relaxed and if you are at home, it's a good idea to carry on with what you are doing but still be rather discreet. My second home was sold when the buyers came through at around 6pm – it was eeeeeek dinner, bath time chaotic kids time, however it was also very warm and very homely and they loved the 'feel' of the home and bought it!

**Solicitor or Conveyance Company:** It is a good idea to have it worked out who you are going to use in advance.

**Certificate of Title.** This information will help you identify any covenants or easements, and to verify the legal boundaries of the property. Titles are available through the Land Transfer Office, however if you are thinking of selling your home, and you use a real estate agency, you will normally be provided with a copy of the title. It is still good practice to be aware of what is and isn't on your Certificate of Title.

[Land Information New Zealand](#)

**Owners Comments:** If you are able to write down a few memories of how you have lived in your home, what works well for you, what you like about it, and if you have a few photos, this is an extra way of giving prospective buyers more of an insight into what it is actually like LIVING in your home. You can ask your marketing agent to present it in a nice format if you don't have the facilities to do so.



#

**Down to Earth Real Estate**  
**[www.downtoearthre.co.nz](http://www.downtoearthre.co.nz)**



Licensed under the Real Estate Agents Act 2008

**2010**

**Barb Cooper**

m. 0275 430 288

h. 09 412 9890

w. 09 415 8460

e. [b.cooper@barfoot.co.nz](mailto:b.cooper@barfoot.co.nz)