

Dressed for success: Sally Hanna, right, and colleague Jacqueline Henderson, from Homestaging Wellington, relax among their handiwork at an inner-city apartment. Pictures: STEPHEN WILSON



Empty homes are hard to sell because buyers struggle to picture what they would look like furnished. That's where professional house dressers step into the picture.

# SOLD

## ON HOUSE DRESSING

**F**ORGET about window dressing, house dressing is now the thing to do for people wanting to sell empty houses quickly, for maximum price.

House dressing, also known as home staging, involves furnishing a house throughout. By using designer furniture, accessories and even art works, it enables would-be buyers to see what can fit into it and what is possible, especially in those challenging spaces.

The practice started in New Zealand in Auckland about 10 years ago, with 21 house dressing companies now operating there.

It reached Wellington about six years ago, and there are now five companies operating in the capital area, Sally Hanna, a director of Homestaging Wellington, says.

"It took a few years for the concept to take off here, but it's pretty fast-growing now," she says.

"Many agents we deal with tell us

they just wouldn't sell a house empty now."

The obvious attractions of outfitting an empty house are to sell the house faster, at a premium price. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a property will fetch 10 per cent more if it is dressed, Ms Hanna says.

"We have done a number of houses where they haven't sold empty, and once home-staged sell quickly.

"It can be hard to visualise what a house will look like furnished when it is empty, especially if it has particularly small or even particularly big spaces. We did a house recently that had a very high stud, so that empty it looked huge, but once it was furnished prospective buyers could see how their furniture could fit in



and how comfortable it could be.

"It also gives people ideas what to do in different spaces, like studies and sunrooms, and has the effect of absorbing sound, because houses can often echo when empty."

Those seeking the service are split evenly between vendors and real estate agents, she says.

"There have been several TV programmes on home staging recently, and more people are becoming aware that first impressions make all the difference," Ms Hanna says.

Once they have been approached, Ms Hanna and her fellow director, Jacqueline Henderson, will have a look at the property and provide a free consultation, giving their ideas for the makeover, and a free quote

for the job.

They own all of the furniture and have a large range to choose from to suit the style of the property they are home staging. They have furnished a wide range of properties, which have sold from \$300,000 to \$3.2 million.

As a point of difference, Homestaging Wellington can also provide original artwork, courtesy of Ms Henderson's complementary business The Art Library, which rents art to companies and private homes.

The average contract is for a month – at an average price of \$2000. Properties usually sell within that time, though the contract can be extended on a weekly basis if needed, Ms Hanna says.

Wellington property developer Calabar Holdings has sold a couple of properties recently that have been furnished by Homestaging Wellington and has been pleased by the results.

One was a property in a new subdivision at Fort Dorset, Seatoun, which sold for about \$1 million, and the other a renovated house in Ngaio, which sold for about \$450,000.

"There was a marked benefit in doing it," a Calabar spokesman says. "The process was problem-free, and I'm sure there was a definite monetary benefit in it.

"The one in Fort Dorset was an expensive property but sold quite quickly, while the one in Ngaio sold after a two-week tender."

For more information phone 568 3888 or go to: [www.homestagingwellington.co.nz](http://www.homestagingwellington.co.nz)

