

SE Lifestyle  
HD **DESIGN DIVAS**  
WC 1,346 words  
PD 22 November 2014  
SN Townsville Eye  
SC NLTEYE  
ED TownsvilleEye  
PG 8  
LA English  
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IF YOU ARE ADDICTED TO HOME RENOVATION SHOWS, TRIED TO COPY THE PICTURE PERFECT ROOMS ON THE BLOCK AND BEEN INSPIRED ALONG THE WAY, YOU'RE NOT ALONE. THE HOME RENOVATION TREND IS BOOMING. JANE ARMITSTEAD SPOKE TO SOME CRAFTY TOWNSVILLE WOMEN WHO HAVE JOINED THE BANDWAGON WITH FLOWERS, HANDMADE POTTERY, FURNITURE AND QUIRKY DECORATIONS, OPENING HOMEWARES STORES WITH EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO DIY.

MELK : KYA FAUST What started as a business importing affordable furniture from **China** has morphed into a quaint homewares shop and a hub for potential home buyers.

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Melk owner Kya Faust, alongside Vista Homes owner Natasha Whiteside, have all aspects of homewares, design and furniture hire covered in their Gregory St store.

The pair moved their former West End shop into City Arcade a few months ago and are leaving a mark on the home renovation boom in Townsville.

It's a homewares store with a difference, with their largest and most popular business coming from furniture hire and **property** styling.

Faust, 29, jumped on **board** to meet the demand of **property** owners looking to spruce up their homes for **sale**.

"People might want a lounge for a certain number of weeks or they might want to lift their lounge space for a photoshoot. Other times we'll go in and do a total overhaul of the space. What we do is work with people on the space and lift it. We started importing furniture from **China** but that kind of failed because once you receive the product in Australia they wipe their hands of it and the quality can be compromised. Now, we support Australian importers and Australian-made products." Faust said more **property** owners were turning to stylists to help sell their homes.

"There are a lot of houses for **sale** and people can see the value of making their homes look immaculate from the get-go. The pictures that go in the paper are everything and that's how you get people through the door." Faust knew she had an eye for detail when she spent her Saturday mornings as a teen rearranging her bedroom.

"This is what I've always loved to do, I love the styling ... it makes you feel good when your house looks great or your shopfront looks different." In between running Melk, the stylist operates her side business, Vanilla Design, where she designs **residential** and **commercial** spaces.

Faust says Melk, which focuses on design, is the perfect complement. "Initially with interior design you do the paint, the carpet and tiles and never get to go in after and soften the space up with furniture so this is nice to be able to do it all." MELK FURNITURE AND HOMEWARES IS ON FLINDERS ST, TOWNSVILLE CITY, IN CITY ARCADE.

THE HOMEROOM : NIKKI HODKINSON While most people worry about what they'll cook for a dinner party, Nikki Hodkinson is more concerned about the table decorations.

Hodkinson, 27, turned her eye for design and love for decorating into a full-time career six months ago and opened her shop, The Homeroom.

It was a snap decision that led the former Townsville Entertainment and Convention Centre events planner to take over a space on Gregory St.

Hodkinson and her accountant husband Todd, 27, were headed towards investing in a hairdressing business before pulling out at the last minute.

Their loan had already been approved so they decided instead of wasting it, to take a gamble and invest it in Hodkinson's hobby.

"It was very scary going from a full-time job to opening your own store but we looked at all the risks and we weighed them all up and made a decision to do it. We thought if we played it safe we would always wonder what would have happened. I'm glad we did it because it's been working out really well." Hodkinson has always had a love for beautiful things, especially ones in the home, and after years of working in **hotel** reception and event planning, it was time to get back to that love.

Hodkinson couldn't have picked a better time to strike and reap the rewards of keen local home renovators, freshly inspired by popular renovation shows House Rules and The Block.

"Those shows definitely get people out and having a look for homewares, people stop in and get inspiration and discuss different ideas. We definitely look at the trends that are going on in those shows but we only get things that will fit our store and the look that we're going for." Sourcing products comes naturally to Hodkinson who discovered many of her stockists while planning her own wedding.

"We got married in April and I was looking for table centre pieces and other things and they turned out to be things I wanted to sell in the shop. They're not wedding items but they just had beautiful things and the timing was perfect because we just got the lease approved for the shop the week before the wedding." She now stocks more than 200 different products mainly from Australia. "We have lots of things like cushions, vases, oil burners, body products, a beautiful range of gift wrapping that's designed in Melbourne, coffee table books, chalk **board** wallpaper and even beard oil and beard shampoo, which was my husband's influence." THE HOMEROOM IS AT SHOP 2, 42 MITCHELL STREET, NORTH WARD.

HELLO HANDMADE: KARISSA CHASE , ELLE ROBERTS, CLAIRE HAMPTON Good things come in threes, according to a trio of crafty Townsville women. Karissa Chase, Claire Hampton and Elle Roberts have combined their passions for flowers, gifts and crafts and packaged them into one store, Hello Handmade in City Arcade.

Chase handles the handmade gifts, Hampton sells her flowers under The Secret Garden and Elle Roberts runs craft workshops as 'Ello Yellow.

Chase, 38, jumped at the chance to open the shop after she was approached by the Lancini **Group** to be part of the City Lane/Arcade development.

The shop is the next project for Chase who was the brains behind the Renegade Handmade Markets and later the Renegade Gift Shop in Warrina, which sells pure locally made wares and her own handmade pottery line.

The Townsville-based potter has **sold** her pottery creations in markets across the world and it was after a stint living in America, she came back to Townsville to launch the Renegade Handmade Markets. Along the way she met some talents including, Roberts, 28, who stopped operating craft classes in her living room to join Chase in her Warrina Store and now at Hello Handmade.

Roberts has grown up with a love of craft and swapped the corporate life for handmade arts when she had her first baby and hasn't looked back.

"When I had a baby I didn't want to work that much so I got a part-time job in a craft shop and the owner taught me how to knit, scrapbook and everything. I love that joy that people get when they learn a new skill and I find making things very magical." While bead making, crotchet, clay and knitting classes are happening in one corner, the other is taken up by Claire Hampton, 31, owner of The Secret Garden.

It's the first shop space for the florist who regularly **sold** flowers at The Renegade markets.

She's a point of difference in the floral industry with her brown paper wrapping and native long-lasting flowers.

"I strip back all the rules and go for the natural lawn, organic look. I want the flowers to shine as opposed to the boxes they are wrapped in. This climate here is terrible for a lot of flowers and the humidity destroys them so I try and get longer lasting products so people get more value out of their bunch." While the women all have separate loves, they share a common passion for craft and hope their pop-up store will become permanent.HELLO HANDMADE IS ON FLINDERS ST IN CITY ARCADE.

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