



Building good will

Geelong construction teams are nailing it on the small screen, SUZIE COFFEY writes

MAURICE Del Vecchio had all but decided to turn down an invitation to work on the current season of *The Block: Glasshouse*.

The Torquay builder was busy with his own business, Del Vecchio Building and Construction, when he received an approach from current contestants Shannon and Simon.

"I wasn't really interested in doing the show," Maurice admits.

"I had never really watched it much before. All I knew was that people work really hard, and I thought, I've got a lot of work on at the moment, I don't want to overcommit.

"At the time I was supposed to be building my sister's house. But the more I spoke to people about it everyone was saying 'do it, do it, do it'.

"I had to speak to my sister and get the go-ahead from her, and I had to stop everything I was doing.

"In the end I decided I didn't want to see the show go ahead and then regret that I didn't take the chance to be involved in something so huge."

Luckily for Shannon and Simon, Maurice was given the all-clear by his sister and the trio joined forces to form a formidable partnership where he is the builder for the larrikin brothers from Coffs Harbour.

Maurice joins a strong Geelong contingent, with fellow local builders Larkin and Drought Builders also on board this season to carry out the construction work for Newcastle contestants Max and Karstan.

It continues a recent run of success for Larkin and Drought with the company recently taking out the prestigious Best Custom Home

\$400,000-\$500,000 at the Master Builders Association South/West Regional Awards for their work on a Teesdale family home.

It was this winning streak, including Drew Larkin being crowned last year's Young Builder of the Year, that caught the eye of contestants Max and Karstan when they checked out the Master Builders website.

Initially, Drew and business partner Craig Drought were reluctant. But once they visited the site and met the couple they decided to take on the job.

"We thought if we could do a great job for Max and Karstan it might reflect back on us in a positive way," Drew says.

"They were really good to work for. We think we got the best, most easygoing couple."

The Block: Glasshouse pits five teams with the mammoth task of converting a three-storey 1980s Prahran office block into five apartments, underground car parks and a ground floor retail and commercial space.

Maurice says the biggest challenge of working on *The Block* was completing the work within the time constraints but without compromising on quality.

"Every week we were delayed and there were times where we really thought we had been jinxed," he says.

"Every single week we wondered if we would get it finished."

The first room reveals on The Block: Glasshouse will take place on tomorrow night's episode at 6.30pm on Channel 9.



Top: Contestants on *The Block* prepare for their first room reveal; the guest bedroom. left: *The Block* on-site foreman Keith Schleiger with Geelong builder Maurice Del Vecchio; above left: Shannon and Simon, and above right: Max and Karstan