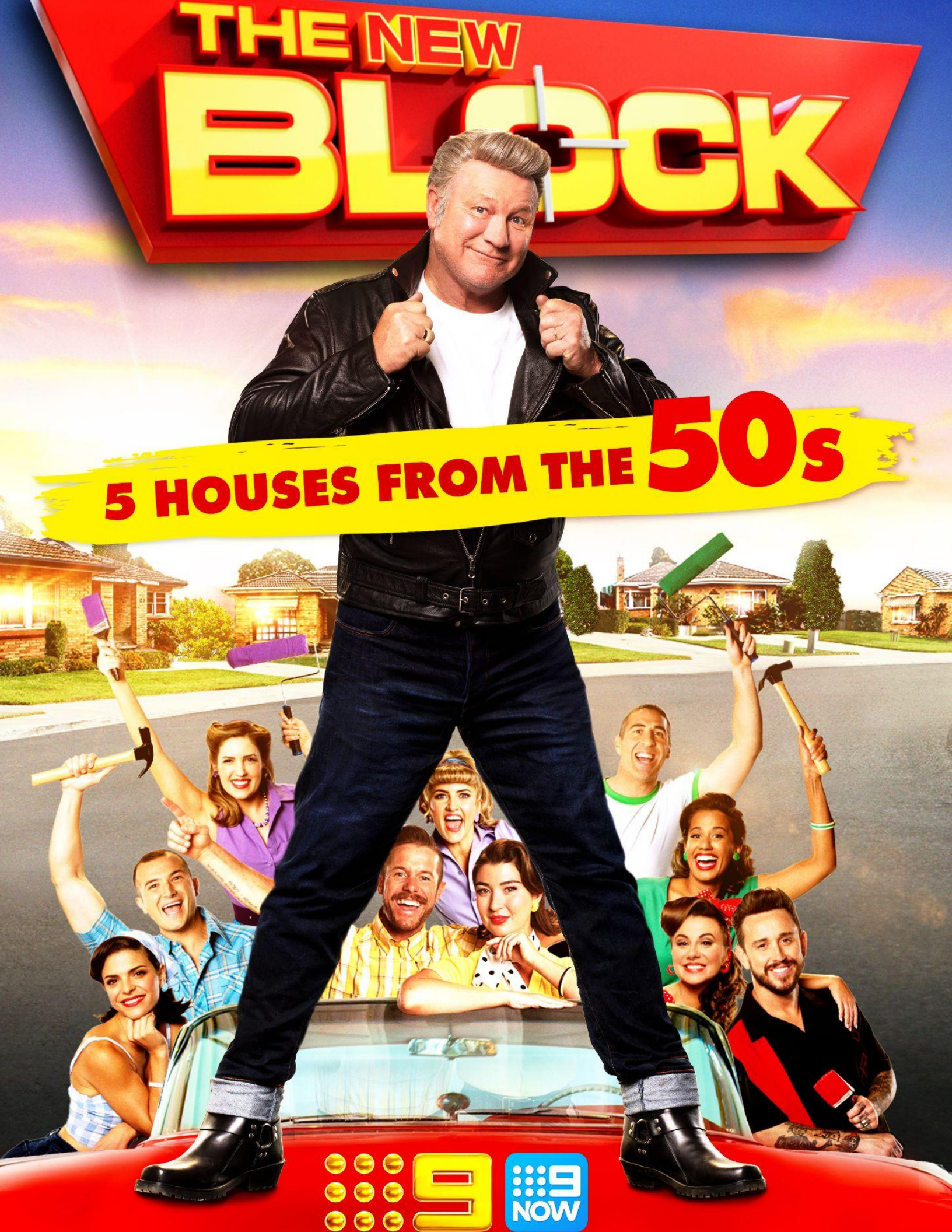


THE NEW BLOCK

5 HOUSES FROM THE 50s





Get ready, Australia. *The Block*, the number one renovation reality program, returns for an incredible 19th season on Sunday, August 6, at 7.00pm on Channel 9 and 9Now.

This year *The Block* promises to be a blockbuster series set in an amazing 1950s time warp, full of new challenges to keep contestants on their toes.

Set in the family-friendly Melbourne suburb of Hampton East, the new series features five houses designed and built in the 1950s and located on the aptly named Charming Street. These grand old dames are now aged in their 70s and way overdue for a contemporary update.

For the first time in *Block* history, host **Scott Cam** will be providing contestants with the full renovation schedule ahead of time this season. So get your cameras out, Blockheads, it's photo time.

But as our five keen couples will soon find out, it's not all smooth sailing when you have to renovate a fully furnished and untouched original 1950s home.

State versus state rivalry will be ignited as our five couples will each be flying the flag for their homeland states of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.

And in a move set to push our contestants to the brink, all teams will be given the arduous task of creating secondary accommodation on their properties. While adding value and something special to each home, will the extra workload be enough to tip one of our couples over the edge?





The five couples in contention for Block glory are:

- Personal assistant **Eliza** (37) and integration producer **Liberty Paschke** (34) – sisters from VIC
- Firefighter **Kyle** (36) and teaching aide **Leslie Cottone** (34) – parents from WA
- First aid officer **Leah** (32) and builder **Ash Milton** (38) – parents from QLD
- Project manager **Kristy** (34) and safety officer **Brett Beames** (34) – married from SA
- Architect **Steph** (27) and start-up worker **Gian Ottavio** (27) – married from NSW



Gold Logie-winning host **Scott Cam**, back for his 17th series of *The Block*, is promising a series like no other.

“This series is guaranteed to be a dead-set blockbuster,” he said.

Scott’s co-host **Shelley Craft** agrees that this year’s time warp back to the 1950s will provide plenty of surprises along the journey.





“This series’ houses may seem charming on the surface, but our contestants will be in for a shock as they uncover a host of pitfalls not evident upon first inspection,” she said.

Plus, for the first time in over a decade, a new judge joins **Shayna Blaze, Darren Palmer and Neale Whitaker.**

Real estate expert, **Marty Fox**, who has sold two houses on *The Block* before – Harry and Tash’s in Brighton in 2020, and Rachel and Ryan’s in Gisborne in 2022 - will tag-team judging on Sunday nights as Neale partly steps back this season.

Marty Fox isn’t the only new addition to the lineup this season. The formidable foremen **Keith Schleiger** and **Dan Reilly** will be joined on site with the fan favourite from last year, **Tom Calleja.**



The nation fell in love with Tom and his wife **Sarah-Jane** because of their work ethic and relatable marital bickering, and he jumped at the chance to work with Scotty and come back as this year’s official *Block* plumber.

The designs of the amazing homes in this series again come from *The Block*’s resident architect, **Julian Brenchley.**

This year *The Block* also celebrates 20 years since the first series in Bondi went to air and changed the Australian television landscape forever.

Executive Producer **Julian Cress**, who created the show with fellow EP **David Barbour**, says the 20-year birthday is a fantastic achievement.





“We thought we were pretty lucky to get the show on air in the first year we made it,” he said

“Just getting *The Block* commissioned was a huge achievement and there is no way we thought we would still be here making the show 20 years later.

“But the great thing about it is we all still love making the show, and no two series of *The Block* are ever the same, as these five new teams will truly prove this year!”

At stake is \$100,000 for the overall winner of *The Block*, on top of any profit the five couples can all make on the critical auction day. Plus bragging rights for the winners’ state.

Since premiering on Channel 9 in 2003, Australia’s richest reality program has awarded a total of \$32,592,807.65 in prizemoney.





HAMPTON EAST PROFILE

- The median price for a four-bedroom house is \$1,648,000 in Hampton East (source: Domain)
- The population of Hampton East is 4,693.
- Charming Street is surrounded by busy shopping strips and shopping centres including Hampton St, Bluff Rd, Nepean Highway and Southland.
- The area is fantastic for sport and recreation with parks, tennis courts, football ovals and gyms within a 10-minute walk of Charming St.
- St Kilda Football Club's training base is just around the corner from *The Block* in the neighbouring suburb of Moorabbin.
- There are lots of new developments across the suburb, as Australians grow to fall in love with the area.





THE 20 YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE BLOCK FACT SHEET

The first series of *The Block* in 2003 featured four apartments renovated in a block in Sydney's Bondi.

The finale of the first series was a ratings smash, averaging an incredible 3.1 million viewers, with the whole nation talking about the Bondi auction.

The first four couples, **Adam and Fiona**, **Gavin and Warren**, **Kylie and Paul**, and **Phil and Amity**, maintained their jobs while renovating on the show.

The most prizemoney won in 20 years of the program went to **Omar and Oz** from *The Block: Tree Change* in Gisborne last year. They won \$1,686,666.66 when House No.5 sold for \$5,666,666.66 after a bidding war between entrepreneurs **Adrian Portelli** and **Danny Wallis**.

The Block creators **Julian Cress** and **David Barbour** have helmed the show since 2003. Fellow executive producer **Justin Sturzaker** and series producer **Tim Wise**, as well as senior sponsor producer **Sarah Armstrong** and camera operator **Matt Bronger**, have also worked on every series since 2003.





The reserve price for the first series of *The Block* in 2003 for a two-bedroom Bondi apartment was \$595,000. The median two-bedroom apartment price in 2023 is \$1.4 million.

856 episodes have gone to air.

53,706 minutes have gone to air.

838 rooms have been delivered.

The Block is on air in 170 territories, and 15 territories have produced their own versions: Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, [Germany – to launch end July], Israel, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Romania, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, UK, US.

In 20 years there have been four regular judges: real estate agent **John McGrath** in 2003 and 2004, followed by **Neale Whitaker**, **Shayna Blaze** and **Darren Palmer**. Marty Fox, who joins the show in 2023, is the first major change to the judging panel since 2013.

There have only been two program hosts: **Jamie Durie** in series 2003 and 2004, and **Scott Cam** since *The Block* returned to the airwaves in 2010.





BIOS

KYLE AND LESLIE

Parents from Perth, WA

This married couple met in a nightclub 12 years ago and immediately hit it off. They married in 2014 and are an incredibly strong couple who bounce off each other.

They have two children, Luca, 11, and Archer, 7.

Archer was diagnosed with Autism at two and half years of age.

Kyle and Leslie have applied for *The Block* five times. Luca said “one last chance” and they ended up getting on the show.

“It’s the ultimate challenge,” Leslie said. “Obviously there is the opportunity of financial reward at the end, but there are the rewards of everything you go through before that.”



EXPERIENCE

They own their own house in the Perth suburb of Caversham.

“We built our house through a building company,” Kyle said. “They left it with the bare bones and we did the rest.”

They are always looking for their next dream home to have a crack at, which they hope to find after *The Block*.





Kyle, 36, firefighter

Kyle says being a firefighter is his dream job that took a few tries to get into. This hard-working family man is no-nonsense in the way he goes about things.

He is a huge sports fan and loves nothing more after a big day at work than sitting at home watching the footy with his family.

As in life, Kyle will be methodical and considered on *The Block*.

Leslie, 34, educational assistant

Leslie came to Australia from Zimbabwe with her parents and sister two decades ago.

She has a bright and bubbly personality, is very funny, warm and engaging, and is studying to become a teacher.

Leslie is very sociable and looking forward to making new friends on *The Block*, as well as the renovating experience.

“We’ve applied a few times and waited a long time, so we can’t wait to get started,” she said.



TOGETHER

They have a fantastic life together and enjoy unique experiences, such as their trip to California in 2018. “We are big on having our own adventures together,” Leslie said.

If they argue, it never lasts long. “I feel like we can give each other some pretty solid constructive criticism without ruffling up each other’s feathers,” Leslie added.





LEAH AND ASH
Parents from Brisbane, QLD

This married couple complement each other very well. Both are sociable, can be the life of the party, and are not afraid to express their opinions.

Leah and Ash have three children, Austin, 8, Marnie, 4, and Hugh, 2, and want to get out of their comfort zone on *The Block*.



“I’m looking forward to seeing what we are capable of,” Leah said. “We’ve done the process of building renovations many, many times, but this is on a whole new level.”

EXPERIENCE

One of the more experienced couples on *The Block*, this pair have a long history of renovating.

They bought a dilapidated Queenslander recently that they are living in and renovating. Ash had a background in sales before starting his own building company with Leah.

It’s been a chaotic few years, but doing *The Block* seems like the natural thing to do.

“We have just started a new business, we have three kids and we are halfway through this mammoth renovation, so why not do *The Block*?” Ash said.





Leah, 31, first aid trainer

Leah has a passion for building and design, and can see herself having a real future in that field. Her style of design on *The Block* will be bold and different and will turn heads. Her aim is to build a house with a modern art/deco feel.

Leah has a very generous nature, but she's not afraid to express her opinions. She is described by her husband Ash as a "go getter".

Ash, 38, builder

Ash had a career in sales before following his dream to start his own building company.

He loves his children and is a fantastic family man. He could be described as your typical, laconic Queenslander.

"I'm a real bloke's bloke," he said. "I feel like I get along with everyone."



Ash will save money on *The Block* by using his skills as a builder/carpenter.

TOGETHER

The couple met on Tinder in 2015. "I came out of my marriage and Ash came out of his engagement, and we instantly connected," Leah said.

Ash will take the reins of the build and demolition on site, and Leah will focus on the styling, shopping and budget.

They are set to be major characters on *The Block* who will stick by each other no matter what.





KRISTY AND BRETT
Married from Adelaide, SA

Together for ten years and married for three, Kristy and Brett are strong characters who will never be far from the action or the drama on *The Block* this year.

Both are forthright in their opinions and won't be afraid to stir the pot in Charming Street. They are very structured in their lives and looking forward to the unpredictability of *The Block*.



“It's the unknown that is exciting for us,” Kristy said. “In our roles back in Adelaide we have done it for so long, and you don't get out of your comfort zone. But with this there is such an unknown and we are looking forward to that.”

EXPERIENCE

The couple own their own house in Adelaide and are planning a renovation, having renovated a bathroom before.

Kristy and Brett work in the power and energy space and have very successful careers. They plan to bring those planning skills to *The Block*.

Kristy, 34, project manager

Kristy describes herself as very competitive, and that will show early on the program due to the dedication and drive that has marked her successful career.





She wants to create a house that will feature both Victorian and modern contemporary features and she isn't afraid of getting on the tools, saying: "I'm all for getting my hands dirty."

She isn't afraid to call people out if she sees something she thinks is wrong.

"If I see something that is wrong or someone is being unfair, I will be the first person to speak up," she said.

Brett, 34, safety advisor

Brett works at a power substation but has a history of working as a tiler – which he wants to keep quiet on *The Block*.

"I'm a former tiler, but I don't want to tell people that," he said. "I want to keep it a surprise."

When he isn't working he loves Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

TOGETHER

This pair admit they can bicker, but they end up making up and laughing.

They knew each other in high school but didn't get together until they were in their twenties, after meeting again through mutual friends.

They will be a formidable force together on *The Block*.





STEPH AND GIAN
Married from Sydney, NSW

At 27, Steph and Gian are our youngest contestants on *The Block*.

They are childhood sweethearts who met on the school bus in year 7 and have been together ever since.

“We had an instant connection just as friends,” Gian said

They married last year in a glamorous ceremony and are adored by their family and friends.



EXPERIENCE

The couple recently bought and renovated the home they live in now in Sydney, so they are ready for *The Block*.

“The reason we wanted to go on *The Block* was because we renovated our house last year and fell in love with the process,” Steph said.

Steph being an architect means they have a strong advantage from the beginning. They have watched the show over the years, and Steph’s family are all in construction.

Steph, 27, architect

Steph is confident and assured, and impressive in her profession. In her spare time she enjoys Pilates.

She won’t be shy to give her opinion, which might ruffle feathers. She is a kind soul and highly organised.





Design-wise, she will bring Japandi – a mix between Japanese and Scandinavian – to *The Block*.

“As a residential architect I specialise in Scandinavian, art deco, mid-century homes,” she said.

Gian 27, start-up worker

Working in finance, Gian is now with a tech start-up where he drives growth strategies. He is a problem solver and a great thinker who enjoys running and fitness when not working.

According to Steph, he has a fantastic attitude to life in general and is a whizz at budgeting.

“You give Gian a task and he gets it done,” she says.

TOGETHER

This pair are great communicators, even though they may fight at times.

“We are a really good team because communication is the key,” Steph said.

“We definitely will be bickering because I’ll probably be a bit fanatical about certain things being a certain way.”

Gian believes they will take the judging on *The Block* well.

“We are our own harshest critics,” he said. “I don’t think anyone could say something that would hurt our feelings because it’s not something we haven’t thought about ourselves.”





ELIZA AND LIBERTY
Sisters from Melbourne, VIC

These mid-thirties sisters grew up in Adelaide, and now live in Melbourne together, and were as surprised as anyone when they ended up on *The Block*.

They are very different personalities who complement each other, but are both single and ready to mingle.



“I’m into health and fitness, and Eliza would rather sleep,” Liberty said.

Both say they lead great lives, but having the same routine day after day made them approach *The Block* as their way of stepping out of their comfort zone and doing something different.

EXPERIENCE

The sisters have zero renovation or building experience.

“So if we can do it, anyone can,” Eliza declared. “It’s overwhelming. Despite thriving in our careers and like being on top of our game, we could not be further from it here.”

Despite having no experience they will throw everything at the challenge from day one.

Eliza, 37, personal assistant

Eliza has worked in the entertainment industry and as a radio producer, so she is no stranger to television.





She has a fantastic attitude and will be very well liked on *The Block*. “I’m just going to give it a red-hot crack,” she said.

In her personal life she is a mental health advocate who gives talks in schools. She loves to cook and sleep in.

Her sister Liberty admires how strong she is. “Eliza is not afraid to have very open and honest conversations with people, and I love that.”

Liberty, 34, producer

Liberty gets up at 5am everyday to go to the gym and loves her routine.

She has worked for the Richmond Football Club as a producer in events, and now works for an advertising company.

The Block has come along just at the right time for them.

“We are both single, in our mid-thirties, and nothing is holding us back,” Liberty said. “Everything has just aligned.”

A fitness nut, Liberty was the first person in the world to reach 700 classes in the Body Fit training gym franchise.



TOGETHER

Their parents in Adelaide were shocked to hear that they were on *The Block*, but have since come around.

“We have found that even though we are massively different, we have massively worked well together in the past,” Eliza said. “It’ll be the same on *The Block*.”





HOSTS

SCOTT CAM

Seventeen series in, and host Scott Cam has enjoyed filming in Hampton East just as much as any series.

After building his own house in Gisborne last year it's back to normal for Scott on set.

"I have really enjoyed this year," he said. "It was a really tough series for everyone involved last year, for no other reason than the weather and the mud."

"*The Block* is tough on everyone, but for me this one is a little bit less stressful."

"Day one, the contestants are part of our *Block* family," he said. "There are no ifs and buts about it, we care about them and we want them to have a good time along the journey as well."



Scott spends three months of the year in Melbourne, living in his adopted home of Port Melbourne.

Scott has been a fixture on our television screens for over 20 years on shows such as *Backyard Blitz*, *Reno Rumble* and *Domestic Blitz*.

He won the Gold Logie in 2014.





SHELLEY CRAFT

Shelley Craft loves coming to Melbourne every week from her home in Byron Bay to be part of *The Block*. When not on *The Block*, Shelley works as a real estate agent in Byron.

This series in Hampton East is her 16th on the show, working alongside her good friend Scott Cam.

Shelley has two girls, Milla, 12, and Eadie, 9, and with husband Serge is renovating another house in Byron Bay.

She takes a keen interest in the Blockheads' renovations as she undergoes her own projects.

"I think this season in particular we have seen things on *The Block* that we haven't seen before, which is surprising our judges," she said.

"That is one of the reasons why I keep doing my own projects, because you do get fresh ideas every season."

She is excited to see what the contestants come up with this year.

"I think there is more continuity between the whole house, the interior and the exterior," she said of the Charming Street properties.

She has been a fixture on our screens for decades, starting out at Channel 7 before coming to the 9Network and hosting Australia's Funniest Home Videos.





JUDGES
SHAYNNA BLAZE

The Block in Hampton East is Shaynna Blaze's 15th season of judging on the show, which is some achievement in television.

Coming back to *The Block* this year, Shaynna was sceptical how the show could outdo the massive build in Gisborne but she thinks the new location is perfect in what will be another very impressive season.

"I think the show will put the area on the map without a doubt," she said. "I'm also loving the fact that this is the first year where contestants have been allowed to see the exterior of the houses to help them move forward, and I think that is a real game changer."



Shaynna has had a busy 12 months since the last series of *The Block*. She had her own show, *Country House Rescue*, on the 9Network, in which she and her children Jess and Carly Anne renovated their home in Kyneton.

Shaynna and her children also produced, wrote and starred in the feature-length film *The Fort*, which has been critically acclaimed. Shaynna is executive producer of *The Fort*, which has brought awareness to her charity, Voice For Change.

"To say I've learnt a lot the past year is an understatement," she said. "Going naively into making a film and distributing a film is wonderful, but also very scary."

In the next year Shaynna is looking to get back on the tools and renovate again.

"I have been yearning to do a very modernist property and I am looking for properties now," she said.





DARREN PALMER

Darren Palmer is back on *The Block* for his eleventh year of judging.

Because of the variety in the houses and what the contestants are building and designing, Darren has found this season both rewarding and challenging when it comes to judging.

“This season has probably been one of the more difficult to judge because each of the houses are so different, the floor plans are so different, and the spaces are all unique,” he said.

“But as always, once the houses are near completion it’s great to see the transformation.”



Back home at Bondi in Sydney, Darren is doing exactly what our contestants are doing on *The Block* – renovating and building a home.

“It’s a dream come true,” he said of his project, “something I’ve been thinking of doing for years. However, I have been living through it, which has been hard. I know what the contestants are going through, except there are no cameras on me 24 hours a day and I have more time.”

Darren lives in Sydney with his husband Olivier and the couple have a number of properties, including in Byron Bay and Hyams Beach in Jervis Bay.

His first gig on television was as a contestant on *HOMEMade* in 2009, which was made by the same producers of *The Block*. He caught the eye of executive producers Julian Cress and Justin Sturzaker and the rest is history.





NEALE WHITAKER

Neale Whitaker is stepping back from judging on *The Block* full time this year to spend more time at home, but he will still play an important part in judging in Hampton East.

Neale has been judging on *The Block* since 2010 and has loved every minute of it.

“It’s been an amazing honour really,” he said. “There is no other way I could describe it. It’s been a privilege to be part of this show for so long.

“When they asked me to judge in 2010, if someone had told me I would still be here in 2023, 13 years later, I would not have believed them.”

Neale will start off judging alongside Shaynna and Darren in the House Decider challenge before tag-teaming judging with Marty Fox.



He especially enjoyed this year coming and going from *The Block* on a Sunday and seeing the houses transform from their original 1950s heritage.

“I love houses from the 1950s, so it’s been great to see how they have been adapted for the renovation from start to finish,” he said.

When not travelling the country for work commitments, Neale lives with his partner David in a beautiful house at Berry in New South Wales. They designed and built a guest house on the property last year which has been booked out most weeks.

Neale moved to Australia in 1999 and has had a long history editing magazines such as *Belle* and *Vogue Living*.





MARTY FOX

The new judge on *The Block*, Marty Fox, has had a big career in real estate, including being co-founder and director of WHITEFOX Real Estate.

Marty first came to the attention of *Block* fans as the auctioneer who sold both Harry and Tash's house in Brighton (2020) and Rachel and Ryan's in Gisborne (2022).

"I've always respected the show and been very impressed how everyone on *The Block* does business," he said.

"It's really nice to come back into the show having been on the periphery in the past. It's almost like a tick for me professionally."

Marty and his wife Charlotte live in the Melbourne suburb of Toorak with their three children Freddy, 6, Olive, 4, and Bonnie, 1.

He and Charlotte are seasoned property flippers, having renovated 12 properties over the past 15 years.

"For me, the style of a property has always been what is the best return for your investment," he said.

"In terms of our personal style it is generally of a period nature, old Victorian homes. My thing going into *The Block* is to make sure the contestants deliver a house that is as timeless as possible, but still keeping to the trends."

The Block is his first television gig.

He is only the second real estate expert to be a judge on *The Block*. John McGrath was a judge in the early series of the show.





DAN REILLY – FOREMAN

As *The Block* celebrates 20 years since the first series in 2003, one man who has played an important part of the show over the years is foreman Dan Reilly.

Dan was on the show with his wife Dani back in 2012, and then again in 2013 on *The Block: Allstars*, before he became a permanent member of the cast as a foreman.

“It’s been fantastic to be involved with the show both as a foreman and as a contestant over the years,” he said. “The show has given me so much.”

After he and Keith Schleiger had to do so much travelling on the massive Gisborne site last year, they have enjoyed the more compact site this year on *The Block*. Dan is impressed with the work ethic of our new contestants, and said he had a great time on set.



Dan grew up in the suburb of Sunbury but now calls the Mornington Peninsula home. He recently renovated a home in Blairgowrie that he has now sold, and will soon start another renovation.

He and Dani run a construction and interior design company called Manna Made, which keeps him busy when not working on *The Block*.

Dan and Dani are returning again for their popular walkarounds of the contestants’ finished rooms, which will be seen online and 9Now. With their strong opinions and the fact that they often disagree with each other, the walkarounds have become compelling viewing for fans.





KEITH SCHLEIGER – FOREMAN

Long-time foreman Keith Schleiger knows the Hampton East area very well – he lives just down the road. Keith is back for his 16th season of *The Block*.

“*The Block* has been a fantastic experience and it’s great to come back again for a series so close to home,” he said.

“It’s going to be very different to last year in Gisborne, but for me once again a very busy few months working with the contestants.”

Keith will work with Dan and *The Block* builders Nine In Six to make sure our contestants and their trades do everything by the book.



We can expect lots of bathroom inspections, walls that aren't plumb or tradies who don't follow the rules about working after tools down.

There is also quite a lot of drama this year, with Keith involved with some of the contestants' builders.

All the builders this year on *The Block* are new to the experience, which has thrown up some real challenges for both Keith and Dan.

Keith has two daughters, Ebony, 12, and Jasmin, 10, both of whom have visited *The Block* with him to check out the contestants' great work.





TOM CALLEJA – BLOCK PLUMBER

Fan favourite Tom Calleja loved *The Block* so much last year with his wife Sarah-Jane that when the opportunity came up to come back this season he jumped at it.

Tom will be the resident plumber on *The Block*, helping the contestants as they navigate the build, especially with bathrooms.

He is also a hipages ambassador who will award contestants he believes are working hard and building at a high standard with \$10,000 throughout the three months of filming.

“I’m loving being back, it was an honour to be asked,” he said. “I’m having an absolute blast and it’s great to be on the other side after being a contestant last year. It’s also great to learn and get an understanding of the production side of things.”

Tom and Sarah-Jane have a two-year-old girl, Cleo, and are expecting a new baby boy before the end of the year.

He has a plumbing business in Melbourne.

Tom and Sarah-Jane may have only won \$20,000 last year at auction day, but they impressed fans for their incredible attitude throughout the series.

