

When home construction plans go bad



Just pay up: Boris Zaitzen.

WHEN water began seeping through the walls of the basement garage of their townhouse project in Caulfield North eight months into a renovation job, Boris and Lana Zaitzen knew they were in deep trouble.

Work had already stalled on their property, leaving the pine frame exposed to the elements, and they also had detected leaks in the roof.

Two months later, when the builder invoiced them for the frame stage of the house — despite a list of

defective items and disputes with the surveyor over his inspection reports — the Zaitzens sought help from the Building Commission.

“They told me I should just pay the bill,” Mrs Zaitzen said.

“The basement was full of water, everything was rotting and we spent weeks begging the Building Commission to inspect it. They just wanted us to get lost.”

Although she said an inspector’s report ignored major faults, an order

finally was served on the builder to rectify some problems and two weeks ago he returned to the site for the first time in months.

It is the first positive outcome in eight months of dealings with the commission, but Mrs Zaitzen said she has no confidence the builder will continue with the job or even if it is worth saving.

The *Sunday Herald Sun* has been contacted by many other owners who told of their feelings of power-

lessness when home building projects went bad.

Bey Loyson has spent four years battling to have major structural and electrical problems rectified in her family’s \$1 million Montrose home. It took 2½ years for a complaint to Consumer Affairs to gain any action and she was finally told to take the case to VCAT.

“The builders know they’re untouchable,” Mrs Loyson said.

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