



COMMON QUESTIONS





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DO I ENGAGE A BUILDER OR ARCHITECT FIRST?

There is no right or wrong way. The ideal situation is that the Architect and Builder are both involved from the concept stage of the build. That way, the vision and budget are clear, and the results are achievable. But if you already have architectural plans, that is fine. It is the communication between the Builder, Architect and Client that is important.

HOW MUCH INVOLVEMENT WILL I HAVE IN THE BUILD?

Our relationship with you is our priority. We believe in collaboration and TEAM work with our clients from the very beginning to achieve the best possible outcome. We hold fortnightly site meetings and keep you updated via our online portal. We encourage you to ask questions and be involved as much as you want to be.

I WANT TO COMPLETELY RENOVATE MY HOME. CAN I STILL LIVE THERE DURING THE RENOVATION?

Depending on the project, you may be able to live in your home during the renovation. Your safety and happiness is our priority, so if there is no risk to you or your family, we have processes in place to make it happen. You will need to understand that it is a building site, and there will be trades and works being carried out while you are living there.

DO YOU PROVIDE A SQUARE METER RATE?

We get asked that a lot. How much a square meter?

The reality is, for a custom-built project, there is no set rate. That's because no two projects are ever the same, no site conditions are the same, and no clients are the same.

It can be useful when working out a starting budget, but the rate will still need to be verified by doing an actual proposal. More often than not the rate applied at the beginning of the design process is usually different to the ultimate cost.

A proposal requires the understanding of the plan, the scope of works, site conditions, and time constraints. Like building Lego pieces, each component is priced accordingly before assembled to produce the final figure.

SOME BUILDERS PROVIDE A FREE PROPOSAL, WHY DO YOU CHARGE A FEE?

In order for a proposal to be meaningful, it has to be accurate, contain clear and detailed information for both parties. An accurate proposal takes a significant amount of time and energy to prepare as each project is different in scope and site conditions.

It is easy to get a free proposal, but those builders do not want to spend the time or effort. They will apply a square

meterage rate or low ball the proposal and make up their margin by lowering standards or missing items resulting in variations. Too often the owner engages the lowest cost builder because it is hard to understand the proposal. What sounds like a good deal in the beginning can end up more costly or the project just fails to achieve the desired outcome.

By charging for a proposal, it allows us to spend more time to investigate deeper. For major extension/renovation work, multiple site visits and confirmation may be required. If we are willing to enter into an agreement with you, we are committed to producing a quality proposal with all the scope assessed and unforeseeable items allowed.

WHAT DOCUMENTS ARE REQUIRED FOR A PROPOSAL?

Ideally, a detailed set of architectural drawings, engineering designs, soil classification report, schedule of finishes and fittings will be a basic minimum requirement.

Don't fear if you do not have these yet. We can work with you and get this organized on your behalf. This is called a 'Preliminary Agreement'.

SO WHAT IS A PRELIMINARY AGREEMENT?

Preliminaries (or 'prelims') provide a description of a project that allows us to assess the work required to formulate a scope and a cost analysis.

Depending on what stage you are at some of the preliminary works include:

- Detailed Identification and Contour surveys
- Soil or geotechnical report
- Engaging of designer/architect to draw up a concept and subsequently detailed design
- Engineering design
- Town planning advice
- Other specialist consultant report
- Locating existing infrastructure within the site
- Cost analysis/Quoting

If you are at the early stages of land purchasing, or have yet to engage a designer/architect, you may require us to perform all tasks on this list. If you have some of these we may just need to review the documents and produce a proposal.

WHAT IS IDENTIFICATION SURVEY, WHY DO I NEED ONE?

A survey which is required for the purpose of identifying existing buildings and improvements on a parcel of land is referred to as an Identification Survey or just Ident. It may only be undertaken by a Registered Surveyor.

An Identification Survey involves:

- Measuring the site to determine location of buildings and any fences.
- Existence of easements (eg: drainage)
- Covenants and restrictions to Land use
- For existing buildings, the survey reports the distance of walls. Eaves and gutters from the boundary

WHAT IS CONTOUR AND DETAIL SURVEY

Detail surveys are a basic prerequisite for building and land development. In most cases, the purpose of detail surveys is to indicate features on, and adjacent to, a property.

There are a number of site features and levels required by architects and planners. A topographic survey is a vital component of a successful development application for any development of your land.

Features of general detail surveys include:

- Levels & contours related to Australian Height Datum (AHD)
- Tie into cadastral reference marks & plot approximate boundary on plan
- Field survey of site detail & features
- Field location of visible services
- Spot levels & contours over site
- Detail of significant trees on site over 0.2 diameter trunk
- Note of retaining walls, changes of grade etc onto adjoining sites
- Location of existing and adjoining houses/structures and floor and apex levels
- Pickup of road & kerb details at site to crown
- Place site level datum

DIAL BEFORE YOU DIG SEARCHES

Projects involving excavation will require an assessment to find out what services are underground around your property. Common searches include:

- Telecommunication location
- Gas lines location
- Sewer main and water supply lines
- Storm water main
- Underground electricity supply

We can advise if there are problems connecting your house to the mains. Common problems can be:

- Unavailability connection to the sewer main or sewer main
- Man hole located on your block
- Unavailability of storm water main for legal point of discharge

TOWN PLANNING AND OVERLAY CONSTRAINT

Part of the preliminary searches will involve extracting information from council regarding your property. Most of these searches are done through publicly available data. We can help you make sense of the search result. We pay attention to these common constraints:

- Zoning of your property
- If the old house is protected if you are seeking to knockdown and rebuild
- If the property is affected by flood, or is in the overland flow path
- If there are protected vegetation
- Heritage listing
- Bush fire zoning
- Indicative contour of the site

The result will determine if we need to call on other specialist consultants such as a town planner, or hydraulic engineers.

SOIL TESTING. WHY DO I NEED IT?

The types of soil usually present under the top soil in land zoned for residential building can be split into two approximate groups – granular and clay. Quite often, the foundation soil is a mixture of both types. The general problems associated with soils having granular contents are usually caused by erosion. Clay soils are subject to saturation and swell/shrink problems.

Soil classification for a given area can be obtained by getting a geotechnical report (or soil test report). As most building suffering movement problems are founded on clay soils, there is an emphasis on classification of soils according to the amount of swell and shrinkage they experience with variation of water content. The table below is Table 2.1 from AS 2870, the Residential Slab and Footing Code.

GENERAL DEFINITIONS OF SITE CLASSES

CLASS	FOUNDATION
A	Most sand and rock sites with little or no ground movement from moisture changes
S	Slightly reactive clay sites with only slight ground movement from moisture changes
M	Moderately reactive clay or silt sites which can experience moderate ground movement from moisture changes.
H	Highly reactive clay sites which can experience high ground movement from moisture changes
E	Extremely reactive sites which can experience extreme ground movement from moisture changes
A to P	Filled sites
P	Sites which include soft soils, such as soft clay or silt or loose sands; landslip; mine subsidence; collapsing soils; soils subject to erosion; reactive sites subject to abnormal moisture conditions or sites which cannot be classified otherwise

CSIRO BTF18 Foundation Maintenance and Footing Performance: A Homeowner's guide

I AM READY TO GET A PROPOSAL. WHAT ARE THE PRIME COST (PC) AND PROVISIONAL SUMS (PS) INCLUDED IN THE PROPOSAL?

To make the proposal/contract as accurate as possible, you need to define what exactly is going to be included down to details such as what light bulb you are going to use. Sometimes, that is not possible at the time of quoting or contracting. There are two common terms used to allow for such variables.

Prime Cost Item (PC):

Is an allowance made in a tender or contract for the supply and delivery only of an item or items of material (e.g. taps, baths, light fittings etc.) that have not been selected at the time of tender or before the contract is signed or for which the Contractor was not able to provide a fixed price on entering the contract.

Provisional Sum (PS):

Is an allowance made in a tender or contract for particular work which could not be finalised before tendering or signing a contract and which includes the total cost of the supply and installation (e.g. joinery, landscaping, air conditioning, rock removal).

Where Prime Cost Items (PC's) and Provisional Sum (PS) allowances have to be shown in a tender or contract document, the amount shown should be exclusive of GST. e.g.:

- Tile allowance PC \$35/m² (exclusive of GST)
- Landscaping Provisional Sum \$10,000 (exclusive of GST)

HOW PC AND PS CAN AFFECT THE CONTRACT PRICE?

Unlike a variation, PC and PS are adjustments to a contract. If you want a water tight contract, it is better to have as little PC and PS as possible.

On the other hand, having an agreed PS or PC can work in your favour. A good example is site excavation where it is difficult to work out how much soil will be excavated, and carting off the excess spoil due to dump location and traffic conditions of the day.

HOW MUCH DO YOU CHARGE FOR A PROPOSAL?

The fee ranges between \$200 for an estimate to \$3,300 depending on the complexity and size of the job.

HOW LONG WILL MY PROJECT TAKE?

Every project is different. We can assure you that when preparing the contract, we will provide you a program to follow. Our schedule also allows for any inevitable setbacks or delays that are part and parcel of building.

READY TO START SOMETHING NEW?

GET IN TOUCH WITH US TODAY

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