

A **7 Step Essential** Guide to

EXTENDING & RENOVATING Your Home

SPANNENBERG & SON PTY LTD

since
1971

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In the world of home construction, there are two types of clients. The first has the gold standard experience, which sees them move into their newly renovated home smiling broadly and wondering why so many people complain about the process. The builder had completed the task with their sterling reputation intact. The owner has walked away feeling fulfilled and positive, with no hesitation in taking on another project in the future.

The second client has the all-too-common, polar-opposite journey. The project almost ruined their faith in mankind with a builder who was non-communicative, resentful of suggestions, and all too eager to cut costs, raise their margins and move on regardless of their client's opinion.

They are two very different experiences from the same process and whether you enjoy the first and avoid the second starts here, because whether your build experience is a dream or a nightmare is also down to you.

Keep reading to learn more.

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How to Plan your Design

First and foremost take all the time you need to find a designer or architect who you and your builder can work with. Once this has been determined, it is essential to include your builder early in the design stage so as to benefit from their construction experience. We see so many homeowners spend thousands and thousands on architect designs, only to learn that the design dream cannot be realised within budget. Only your builder has the experience to map your renovation designs and existing home together with your budget in a way that will see the end result you want actually achieved.

Then, putting your desired lifestyle first and foremost in your initial thinking, work towards the details. In these initial stages, brainstorm wildly – discuss all the things that you and your family would really love to have in your new home. This allows everyone to discuss and collaborate. Once the bigger picture is known, work forwards in time, refining the details, right down to your light shades and window treatments.

Once you have the best combination of designer and builder you'll be confident your dream team will deliver the perfect outcome for you.

How to Choose the Right Builder for You

There are several critical features you will find in any reputable, best practise builder. For the sake of your sanity and your project, it is vital that you do not settle for anything less.

Your builder must:

- Have a reputation for being able to build a strong relationship with your architect or designer.
- Be a specialist builder in the kind of project you are undertaking (e.g. sloping site, water access, build and raise under).
- Be able to demonstrate a tried and tested process from first contact through to handover and beyond.
- Happily provide the details of a string of mostly happy clients (no one's perfect) for you to speak with.
- Have an excellent track record of delivering jobs on time and to budget.
- Agree to provide one Site Supervisor as your main point of contact throughout the build.
- Have a professional online presence they use to showcase their portfolio of work.

Communication is the factor that will make or break your extension or renovation project. It is essential that you find a builder with whom you feel that cooperation and collaboration will be forthcoming, someone who shares your construction goals. As a result, the shape of your finished home will meet or exceed your highest expectations with a smooth hassle free build experience.



How to Compare Quotes

Construction is an art form, and so too is the quoting process. As a result, you'll often find yourself looking at quotes provided by three different builders thinking you're comparing apples with apples when really you are lining up oranges and pears.

There are a multitude of factors that cause one quote to read very differently from the next for the same construction project. They include:

- Have soil, engineering and BASIX reports been completed? If not, your quote will have been flooded with lower, provisional sums to win you over on price. These are guesswork, placeholder figures used to provide somewhat of a guideline as to cost. However, they in no way reflect the actual price of site excavation, for example, until your site reports have been completed.

Be alert to provisional sums in your quote for gas, power, water, sewer, driveway, slab, retaining walls, rock removal and more.

- An accurate Bill of Quantities so you can comprehensively compare the figures between builders and see how design influences cost, inclusive of guesswork prime costs for any finishing items for your home such as taps, window fittings and door furniture where you have not yet made a final selection.
- Permits and approvals fees and charges.

If you are working with a quote that has a large number of provisional or prime costs, this is a strong indicator that your builder has not put in the time or work required to get an accurate price guide (not unusual in the case of a free quote). In these cases, you can expect to end up paying at least as much, if not more, than any of the higher quotes you received, along with the added problems and frustrations that go with fixing cheap deals.





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Where to Invest and Where to Pull Back

There is a delicate balance the most experienced builders know how to achieve. It's the craft of managing your budget to give you the highest return on investment, both for the value of your home, the quality and longevity of the build and the lifestyle returns gained. Everyone wants the best of the best; high-end finishes and a visible wow factor to impress. When planning your renovation or extension, talk to your builder very carefully about the risks involved in funnelling your budget too heavily into the glitz and glam and not enough into the structure, and be very aware of the risks of overcapitalisation.



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Why Not to Buy on Price

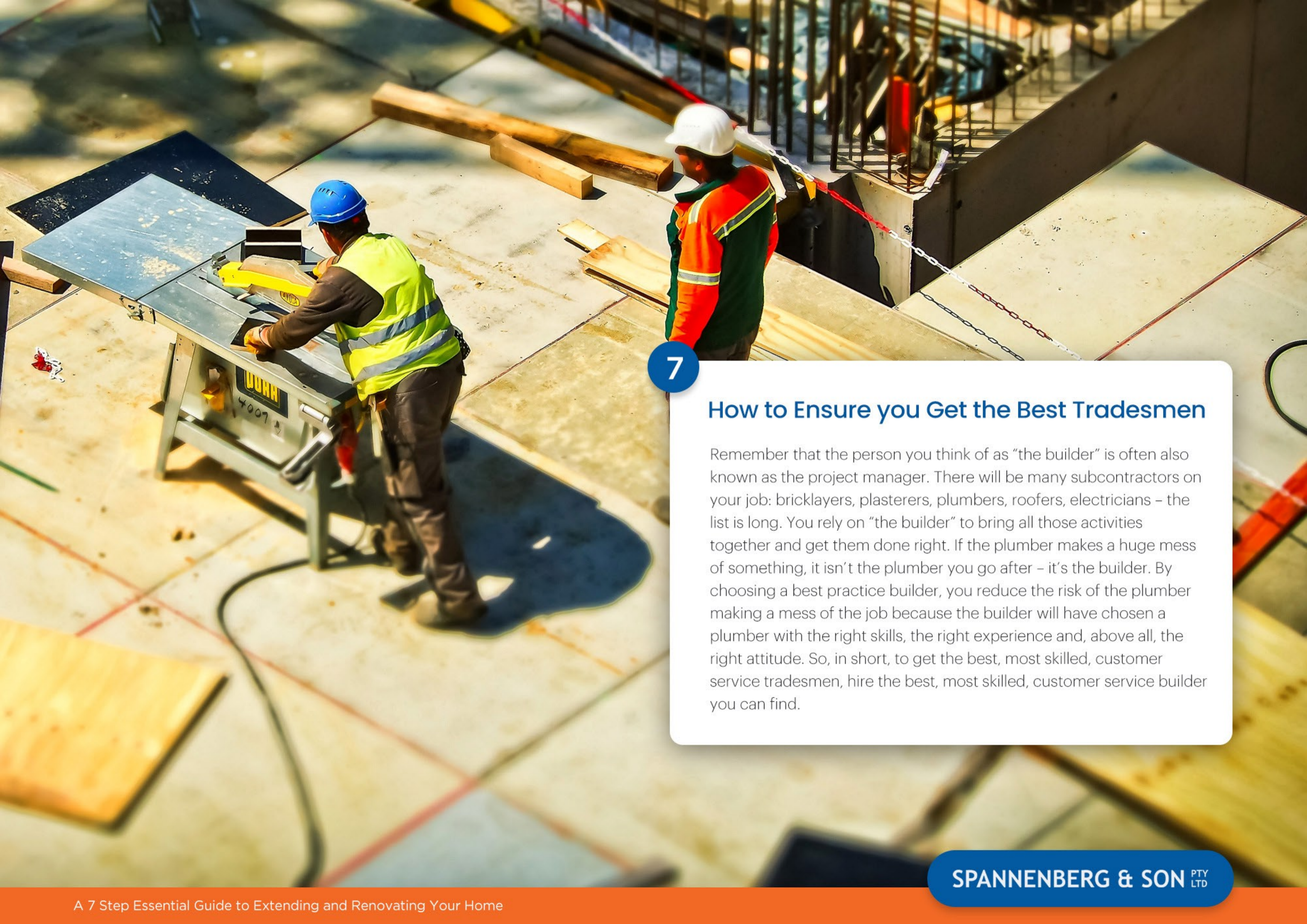
As we discussed in Point 3, not all quotes are created equal and it is an all too common mistake made by homeowners to get caught up in the lure of a cheap quote, not realising the very real long-term cost this mistake has. There are more stories than we would like to believe where financially desperate building companies (and there are many of them) undercut the competition on price out of a need to make up ground, get the next job at any cost to avoid going broke. In construction, you really do get what you pay for, and when it comes to getting a really cheap price, you'll also be getting a really cheap build. For whatever reason, the builder is low balling you just to secure the job, knowing full well that guesswork provisional and prime costs mean you will never be able to complete your project at that price.



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All In-Site Visits are Essential

Everyone concerned with the design and construction of your renovation or extension absolutely **MUST** visit your site. The details of your land, existing dwelling, potential asbestos, current state of wiring, and so on, must be thoroughly checked. If your engineer doesn't visit the site, quote figures will be based on guesswork, leaving you exposed to heavy price hikes once the engineer's report is complete. If you are putting a pool in your yard, for example, soil samples **MUST** be taken and done so from the exact spot where the work will be done, or you are at great risk of the quoted materials not being up to standard for the size of the job, leaving you to either pay out so much more, or abandon the pool all together.



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How to Ensure you Get the Best Tradesmen

Remember that the person you think of as “the builder” is often also known as the project manager. There will be many subcontractors on your job: bricklayers, plasterers, plumbers, roofers, electricians – the list is long. You rely on “the builder” to bring all those activities together and get them done right. If the plumber makes a huge mess of something, it isn’t the plumber you go after – it’s the builder. By choosing a best practice builder, you reduce the risk of the plumber making a mess of the job because the builder will have chosen a plumber with the right skills, the right experience and, above all, the right attitude. So, in short, to get the best, most skilled, customer service tradesmen, hire the best, most skilled, customer service builder you can find.

At Spannenberg & Son, we are committed to bringing homeowners face-to-face with best practice builders. For any family looking to build, and particularly those doing design and construct custom builds or large renovations, we are here to guide so you can avoid expensive pitfalls and unforeseen risks as you embark on your project.

We know there are a lot of cowboy builders around. We know you know that, too. What we want to bring you is confidence and the peace of mind that comes from knowing there are best practice builders out there, and that you need never fear being ripped off by a builder so long as you know what to look for.

To discuss your home extension or renovation project, don't hesitate to contact me directly on:

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