

BATHROOM RENOVATION GUIDE





YOU DON'T THINK HIRING A GREAT RENOVATOR IS IMPORTANT? THINK AGAIN!

Renovating your home can be a large investment and at times it can be an overwhelming experience, so it is essential that you choose a builder/renovator who will guide you through the whole process to ensure your experience is as stress free as possible.

Designing your bathroom, selecting all the fixtures and fittings, and then watching your renovation kick-off, should be an exciting time. Select the right builder and it will be a pleasurable experience, choose the wrong builder and it can be a heartbreaking and often costly lesson. All too often homeowners hire a contractor without checking out the contractor's credentials or even more important their reputation. Or worse still, start a renovation without a contract.

There are many contractors/renovators out there, but not all are created equal. Do a little research to find out which renovators have the best reputation. Find out if the renovator is respected for doing quality work, as well as being punctual. Do they have the skills and the experience to undertake the proposed project? Choosing the right contractor can make the difference between a successful renovation project and a disaster.

With that in mind, here are some fundamentals to consider before making a financial commitment to any builder or tradesperson.



UNDERSTANDING CONTRACTOR OPTIONS

There are **THREE** main types of
Bathroom Renovators

LARGE RESIDENTIAL HOME BUILDERS

Whilst these builders generally have all the licences and insurances required for a bathroom renovation, it's unlikely that you are their number one priority.

Residential builders often use small renovation jobs as 'fill ins'. Often their employees and sub-contractors aren't familiar with the renovation process and the differences between working on an existing, often older home and a new home. Their sub-contractors', tilers, plumbers, waterproofers etc, can often be tied up with new home builds (priority No1) and your renovation can be delayed.

HANDYMAN OR TRADIE

Carpenters, plumbers, and tilers, whilst an invaluable part of a renovation team, are not legally permitted to undertake full bathroom renovations. In NSW, only a licensed builder is authorised to hire sub-contractors/trades and supervise tradespeople.

Home owners can employ individual trades for each step of the renovation, keeping in mind that any work done where the combined labour and material costs are more than \$5000 must have a written contract.

At first glance, employing individual trades may seem like a cheaper option, but procuring the necessary trades can be a time-consuming endeavour. The licensed trades required to complete a bathroom renovation could be; Asbestos removalist, bricklayer, carpenter, plasterer, waterproofer, tiler, glazier, plumber, electrician, cabinetmaker and painter.

Are the tradespeople licensed? If not, there is a high chance their work will be inferior due to lack of training and experience. Unlicensed tradespeople are usually uninsured which leaves you liable for any shoddy workmanship, property damage, public liability, and ongoing problems.





SPECIALIST WET AREA RENOVATORS

Wet area renovators should have either a full residential builders licence or a kitchen, bathroom, and laundry renovators licence. These licences allow the licence holder to perform trade work involved in a bathroom renovation excluding specialised trade work i.e. plumbing & electrical. (Unless they hold an endorsed licence in these trades as well). Only builders with a full residential builders' licence are authorised to carry out structural modification i.e. increasing window sizes, changes to structural bracing on internal walls, any modifications to internal and external structural walls.

Great wet area specialists will also project manage, meaning that you'll only need to deal with the builder and the builder will deal with the rest, ensuring trades and materials turn up on time.

An oversight of a lot of small renovation businesses, is the requirement by Department of Fair Trading to provide home owners with a certificate of insurance for Home Building Compensation (HBC) on works over \$20 000. This insurance compensates home owners for losses arising from defective or incomplete work should the builder become insolvent, die, have their licence suspended or disappears.



UNDERSTANDING INSURANCES

HOME BUILDING COMPENSATION FUND (HBCF)

Protects home owners if their builder cannot complete building work or fix defects because they have become insolvent, died, disappeared, or had their licence suspended for failing to compensate a homeowner.

PUBLIC LIABILITY

This covers the builder or tradesperson if anyone is injured because of the building work. If the builder or tradesperson does not have this type of insurance, you could be liable because you own the property.

CONTRACT WORKS INSURANCE

This insurance is for your protection and covers the loss or damage to materials and work. If the builder or tradesperson does not have this type of insurance, you may risk; inconvenience, time delays, disputes, and possible financial loss if materials are damaged or stolen.

UNDERSTANDING QUOTES

It's essential to know what to look for in a quote so that you can make an informed decision when deciding which renovator to go with.

When tendering for a renovation, the contractor should give a detailed quote, listing all the inclusions and exclusions. The fixtures and fittings should all be listed, or a prime cost allowed for. Contractors are obliged to provide a reasonable estimation of the cost of the work, as well as informing you of any limitations.

It is crucial that you provide each renovator, who you have asked to quote, with the same comprehensive information about what you want to achieve, so they can deliver a quote that is as accurate as possible and ensures you're comparing apples with apples.

A plan or design is also necessary if the bathroom layout is to be changed. If you're unsure on a design or layout, a consultation with a good renovation provider should give you some creative ideas to consider. Their ability to think creatively can be a good indicator of how they'll also approach your renovation.

Look for a complete quote. Look carefully at a quote to ensure that it outlines the scope of work to be undertaken and lists all the inclusions you've requested. When comparing quotes, it is crucial the comparison is fair. What is in one quote must also be in the other quote, with the same quantity and of the same quality.





UNDERSTANDING CONTRACTS

Once you have finalised your plans, are happy with your budget and have decided on a builder, the homeowner will need to sign a contract if combined labour and materials is more than \$5,000.

Beware if a builder uses their own 'custom made' contract. Housing Industry bodies such as MBA, HIA and Department of Fair Trading, all have standard contracts for their members to use, which protect both the homeowner and the builder.

By law, your chosen builder or tradesperson must give you a written contract if:

- the contract price is over \$5,000 (including GST) or
- If the contract price is not known and is for the provision of labour and materials by the contractor and the reasonable market cost of which is more than \$5,000 (including GST).

Residential works worth between \$5,000 and \$20,000 must be covered by a 'small jobs' contract.

Residential works worth more than \$20,000 requires an extensive home building contract.

Legislation requires both types of contracts to include a copy of the Consumer Building Guide.

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Bathroom design is the art of meeting your wants and needs, within your budget and confines of space, and providing a functional and great looking addition to your home. It is perhaps the most critical stage of your renovation. With careful consideration and thought put into the design process, you'll achieve a much better outcome.

There's no legal qualifications or certificates required for a person to call themselves a bathroom designer. Many companies that offer bathroom renovations will have in-house designers. Therefore, it is essential for home owners to do their homework to make sure that the renovator does have the right skills and experience to achieve the desired outcome. It is worth considering the level of extensive building knowledge that a renovator may or may not have. Often the best results are achieved by repurposing underutilised space, which may include changing window sizes or reconfiguring walls. Not all renovators will have this higher level of building experience and knowledge and not all renovators are legally permitted to make such structural alterations.



A well put together bathroom is one that balances all the important practical considerations against aesthetic choices. In other words, the bathroom needs to be practical as well as look great. Here are just a few points that a great bathroom designer needs to consider:

- Cohesive visual style or theme
- Practical layout and accessibility
- Safety and slip prevention
- Material and product choices
- Ergonomics
- Waterproofing
- Appropriate lighting
- Plumbing and electrical requirements and limitations
- Adaptability for special needs (if required)
- Privacy
- Energy and water efficiency
- The practicality of the design being able to be executed by tradespeople.

Things to consider when choosing a bathroom renovator/ designer.

- How well did they cover the above-mentioned design points?
- How well do they know their products?
- What do you think of the designer's/ renovator's previous work?
- How well do you and the designer/ renovator communicate?
- What extent do you believe the designer/renovator will go to, to create something you like?
- What experience and skills do they have?
- Did they give you some creative ideas and options to consider?

Remember that the design process is as much about the designer's/ renovators practical and creative abilities as it is your own preferences and requirements. If you've got your heart set on a particular look, style, material or colour, it's up to you to properly communicate this and set a realistic budget for your dreams.





QUESTIONS TO ASK THE RENOVATOR

What licencing and qualifications do you have? What is your trade?

It is important that the renovator is licenced and if with this licence they can carry out full bathroom renovations. Ask also if they have a full builders licence to carry out structural changes. If the contractor does not have a builder's licence or has a plumber's or tiler's licence only, you should think twice before employing them for your renovation.

Unlicensed work leaves you without proper protection if things should go wrong. Ask for the licence number and check it out at www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au. At the same time you can also find out if the contractor has any current or past disputes.

What insurances do you have in place?

Builders should have public liability and contract works insurance. Builders will also need to be able to provide homeowners with a Home Building Compensation Insurance Certificate for all work over \$20,000. Not all builders are eligible for Home Building Compensation Insurance. When checking out the builder's licence number at www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au you can also check if the contractor is eligible for Home Building Compensation Insurance. This will be noted under the 'condition' section of their licence.

How long have you been in the industry and what experience do you have renovating wet areas?

When the renovator does not understand the fundamentals of wet area renovations you could end up with a lot of damage to your home. Experienced wet area renovators are also more likely to have a loyal team of tradespeople, providing you with a well organised, smooth renovation, completed within a reasonable time-frame.



Can you provide me with a waterproofing compliance certificate?

In NSW only a builder or a tradesperson with Certificate III in waterproofing is qualified to undertake waterproofing works. Waterproofers are required to issue a compliance certificate after completing the job. The compliance certificate is your assurance that the work complied with the Australian Standards.

**What other tradespeople will be needed for my renovation?
Are they licenced and experienced?**

A typical bathroom renovation will need a plumber, a tiler, an electrician, a waterproofer, a glazier, a plaster, and a painter. Some other trades which may be needed include a cabinet maker (if you require a custom-made vanity) and a bricklayer (if windows are being removed or resized in brick veneer homes). In NSW all the above-mentioned trades are legally required to hold licencing or certification to perform their work. Licenced builders are authorised to perform all the above mentioned trades, except for plumbing and electrical, which are specialist trades and require separate licencing.

Do you have a team of regular tradespeople?

Tradespeople are usually very loyal to the builder who provides them with regular, consistent, well organised work opportunities. This means if a renovator does not have a team of regular tradespeople, they may have trouble acquiring the necessary trades when they are needed, which in turn may make it impossible for the builder to complete your bathroom renovation within a reasonable time-frame.

Will I get a written contract?

If the answer is 'NO' and the combined labour and materials is more than \$5,000, stop right there! Move on and find a builder who will provide you with a written contract. Insist on the use of an Industry recognised contract such as MBA, HIA or Department of Fair Trading.

Do I have to pay a deposit and how much?

Under NSW home building law, the maximum deposit you can be asked to pay is 10%. The deposit is usually payable once a contract has been signed and prior to the commencement of the renovation. If the work is required to be covered by insurance under the HBCF, it is illegal for the contractor to ask for a deposit or other payment under the contract unless the insurance has been taken out, and a certificate of the insurance is given to you.

How long will the renovation take?

Quality bathroom renovations generally take 3-4 weeks. Delays can sometimes be expected due to production time of some custom-made products.

SUMMARY

Do a little research and check out the builders' reputation and ask for some work references or testimonials. Make sure the builder has the experience, and skills to undertake your specific renovation project. Check the builders' licence number to ensure they are a licensed builder and ask to see their insurance policies, you want to make sure your home is covered during the renovation period. Make sure you feel comfortable with the builder and that you can communicate clearly with them.



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