



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF BUILDING DESIGNERS INCORPORATED

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*Promoting the building design and architectural drafting professions
and advancing the quality of the built environment*

HOW MUCH SHOULD IT COST?

The costs of building design services can vary considerably according to the extent of services required and the complexity of any given project.

Even the standard of contract documentation provided can vary greatly between practitioners. Building designers should be able to show you an example of their work demonstrating the level of documentation. Working drawings may include site plans, floor plans, elevations, sections, details, room layouts, electrical plans, etc and specifications which should be individually prepared for each project and clearly detail the methods, materials and selections. Generally, the more complex the documentation the easier it will be for the builder to interpret the requirements and hence lessen the risk for problems to arise during the construction phase.

Building designers should be able to provide a firm quotation for their services and may choose to base their costs on an estimated total time for their involvement, or relate it to a percentage of the building costs based on similar projects they have undertaken, or even a cost per square metre of the building area. Some projects that are extremely complex may only be able to be undertaken on a cost per hour basis. Some building design practices may charge different rates per hour depending upon the nature of the work (i.e. design work may attract a different rate to drafting or administration).

Remember, the building designer is offering a service, not a product, and building owners should satisfy themselves when comparing costs for services that each practitioner is offering a similar extent of services and standard of documentation. There can be a huge difference in the level of information included within the documentation that is needed to obtain necessary approvals compared to that needed to ensure all of your requirements are correctly interpreted on site and inevitably within the finished product.

While the bulk of the final material provided to you by the building designer may be in the form of contract documentation, it could be said that the design is the most important phase of the process. Design work is also often referred to as an art form. It is an expression of the designer's ability and demonstrates their level of creativity. Like most art forms, costs of those services can also be relative to the level of creativity demonstrated or individual demand or worth associated with any given building designer.

The old adage "you get what you pay for" should be considered, as cost alone should not be used as a means of selecting a suitable building designer.