



TOTAL PLAN SERVICE  
Turning Your Dreams Into Reality...

# 10WAYS

to avoid messing up a perfectly good renovation!

*A decade of designing renovations and new homes in Brisbane has shown some interesting trends. From changing design tastes to evolving client expectations, we have been lucky enough to witness the good and bad of the residential construction industry. This experience has shown 10 areas which have proven to be the keys to a successful renovation.*

## 1 Start with the end, **FIRST!**

*Having a clear understanding of exactly what you want to achieve is key to getting exactly the right outcome for you. Often an experienced eye can foresee potential issues, give unbiased opinions or even suggest another way to achieve your ideal outcome that might better suit you. Even if your ideal outcome is just out of reach for now, knowing your end goal allows us to take steps that get you closer. Take the time to talk amongst your family about what is the ideal end goal. Prioritize multiple goals into must have and would like to have, and then which goals you would like to see happen first. Don't forget to get it down on paper, and don't be afraid to sketch your dreams- the best client brief I received was drawn in crayon!*

## 2 PLANNING AHEAD FOR THE LONG HAUL WILL SAVE YOU.

*There's no sense in renovating one part of the house if it has to be moved to make room for extensions later on. Likewise it would it wouldn't make sense to design a small kitchen in a growing family home.*

*Just as the why, jot down any thoughts you have that may come into play long term. This might include how long you plan to stay in this home, if it's eventually going to be a rental, any possible development in the area or even if you have any hobbies that you are thinking about. It's much easier to plan now if we need to fit your dream boat in the yard!*

## 3 Understanding budgets can be difficult,

**PARTICULARLY WITH THE POPULARITY OF RENOVATION SHOWS, WHICH TEND TO HELP FORM UNREALISTIC BUDGET EXPECTATIONS.**

*There are a few rules of thumb which can be used to estimate construction costs based on floor area, complexity of design or required structure, and selected finishes. Once plans are complete with all required structural design, builders can accurately quote on the materials and labour required. Without plans, most builders are using the same 'rule of thumb' along with experience to estimate, which is why most won't even look at a job before seeing plans. Plans must be produced to clearly identify the proposed building works along with various features of the building, any existing structure, any demolition to take place and how services such as stormwater is dealt with.*

*Start by working out the area of the new building in square metres by approximating the length times width. Working on \$2000 per square metre for renovations, \$1200 per square metre for new homes and \$1000 per square metre for a roofed deck, you can start to work out a very rough figure to understand if your renovation budget is close. Similarly raising and enclosing under an existing residence starts from around \$110,000 and averages somewhere around \$150,000, removing a wall or posts under a home and installing a steel beam generally starts at \$3000, kitchens generally \$25,000 and bathrooms \$15,000. Obviously these are only very loose guides and every renovation is different and affected by so many factors, but having some understanding of construction costs will help you begin to plan to suit your budget, or perhaps how a renovation can be staged to meet your budget over a longer period.*

## 4 *Environmental awareness* has driven change in many industries. *Building and renovation is no different.*

*Fortunately, the smarter and more environmentally sensitive the design, the greater the long term benefit in power saving and comfort levels. A minimum energy star rating must be achieved by all new building including most renovation to ensure homes stay thermally comfortable more of the time. The more comfortable the home in summer and winter, the less power required to heat or air condition the home.*

*Think about how nature will interact with your home. Good design starts with orientation and in particular which rooms face East or West. Building materials, how the sun is allowed to enter a window to heat a room or how the window is protected from the sun, prevailing breezes, even ventilating the roof space or use of insulating materials all work together to improve the comfort of a home. Understanding how you would use your new home also helps- a deck on the western side is likely to need a raised and insulated roof along with sun blinds if you look forward to entertaining on summer afternoons, whereas a media room is best designed to be cool and away from traffic noise and bedrooms.*

## 5 The *approval process* is under constant review, and varies significantly between councils.

*The simplest and most common level of approval is undertaken by 'Private Certifies', who are able to assess most common building proposals. Additional levels of approval may be required based on building height above natural ground level, distance to boundaries, even the size of the block or special conditions on the house or block. Each level of approval requires information or reports from different professionals based on plans or site investigations.*

*A little research on your property is the very first step to understanding what level of approval you will need, or if approvals and therefore fees can be minimised. Property information and relevant regulations can be found on council websites or visiting council offices. Some information is freely available, some is available for a small fee. For example, in Brisbane we must generally keep buildings 6 metres from front boundaries and single storey 1.5 metres from side boundaries or 2 metres to the second storey. Encroaching on these boundaries requires a boundary relaxation. Properties with 'Demolition Control' or 'Heritage' listings require additional and potentially expensive development approvals and limit the design to keep 'in character' with the original building or area. Any flooding on site triggers further requirements, and may involve a surveyor to prove height above flood levels, similarly without evidence of exact boundary locations may also require a surveyor to locate them.*

## 6 **Choosing a builder is an extremely personal decision, which really can make or break your renovation.**

*Getting several quotes on the plans and making sure they all have allowed for the same inclusions ensures you are not paying too much, but the investment in your home is too great to rely on price alone. Remember, a large renovation on your most personal space, your home, can take several months- it would be better to work with someone who you trust and get along with.*

*If you don't already have a good builder in mind, speak to as many as you can until you find one who speaks your language, who understands how you live and you feel you can work with over a long period. Look for reviews online or on facebook and ask friends who have renovated about their experiences. As the renovation proceeds there will be plenty of discussion about how things will come together, unforeseen issues that could incur further costs, or delays that may need to be worked through. Just like any working arrangement, a good relationship with your builder is worth far more than finding the cheapest price!*



## 7 IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY, NOW WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO SELECT YOUR FINAL MATERIALS FOR *fit out!*

*You already know the basic structure of your home and the main building materials, but now it's time to select finishes, colours, and all of the fittings that will make the house your own home. Your builder will make allowance for unknowns- which may be in the form of an allowance per square metre of tiles or allowance for taps, or may agree for you to make the purchase and 'owner supply'.*

*Visiting display homes and taking note of colours and manufacturers will give a good idea of current trends and new products available. Magazines and websites give a good indication on cutting edge development of features for your home, especially if technology integration is on your list, but remember seeing these products in the flesh really give the best impression of real world fit and finish. Don't be afraid to contact an interior designer- the fee they charge may well make up for the time you would otherwise need to spend yourself researching different products, and their contact with the industry keeps them up to date with the latest products. Many new home builders actually have interior designers on staff just for these reasons!*

## 8 YOUR GOALS ARE CLEAR, YOUR PLANS ARE METICULOUSLY DRAWN, YOUR BUDGET IS SOUND AND APPROVALS ARE IN PLACE, YOU'VE FOUND A GOOD BUILDER AND YOU KNOW WHAT COLOURS AND FITTINGS ARE BEING USED.

*You've also invested significant time and money in making sure that everything is designed right, that your building is legal and complies with all laws, and the investment is exactly the right thing for your home. Remember, an approval and relevant inspection does not guarantee quality construction, only that it meets the minimum standards as set by governing bodies.*

*To protect your investment, an independent third party can be contracted to undertake inspections and produce reports on the quality of build, ensuring that everything is constructed properly and for maximum longevity. Inspections can be performed at certain construction stages during the build, for example at footings stage, frame, waterproofing and lock up, or just a single inspection before handover of the building. These inspections are your best guarantee of quality construction, and are often the only way to spot potential problems before they occur. Remember, these inspections are not a 'check up' on your builder, but rather an experienced, independent third party who's interest is to make sure that everything is built properly.*

## 9 Statutory warranties apply to all construction, and are tabled in your contract.

*Statutory warranties apply to all construction, and are tabled in your contract. Your builder should take you through your new home or extension and give you an opportunity to look for any imperfections or defects before asking for the final payment. Make sure you spend the time going through each room and discussing any concerns with your builder before signing off. After the final payment is made, you still have opportunity to have issues rectified under the statutory warranty.*

*Maintaining a good relationship with your builder is key to good service after the final payment. As with any professional, customer satisfaction is key to referrals, so they will more than likely want to make sure you are absolutely delighted with your new home. Again, choosing a builder on price alone will not buy this sort of service! Stay in contact with your builder and don't be afraid to ask questions if anything happens after handover. Document and photograph any potential issues to inform your builder, but give them adequate time to reply and inspect any issues, knowing that you have the full backing of your statutory warranty should anything not be rectified.*





# 10 Don't forget to contact all of the professionals you have dealt with and give feedback on *your experience!*

*Feedback is not only the best way for professionals to hone their craft, but to design new ways to ensure other professionals are able to perform to the best of their abilities. For example, if a builder didn't construct a section of the home as expected, the building designer may look at ways of improving plans to ensure this does not happen again. Similarly, a builder may know to pass onto a tiler a preferred way of arranging tiles based on current trends. True professionals take their craft extremely seriously, and love the opportunity to hear how well they performed, or how they could improve next time.*



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