



What you need to know about

Building and renovating

What is building and renovating?

Renovating involves restoring a house to a better state by repairing or rebuilding, while building generally involves constructing a new structure from the ground up. Both building and renovating can be satisfying, but it is important that you do your research before you start.

What kind of preparation is required?

Assess work required

Assessing the type of work required to build or renovate your home is essential. Established homes often involve hidden work and costs. By engaging an appropriate building practitioner to conduct an inspection, you can prepare for the amount of work that may need to be undertaken before renovating starts.

Select the right building practitioner

Selecting the right building practitioner for the job is critical. There is no shortage of domestic builders to choose from.

For most building and renovating work you will talk directly to the builder. In larger building companies, it may be a consultant or a manager. Whatever the case, you must be able to deal with an individual person for the duration of the project, so do your homework. Obtain at least three quotes from separate builders and check examples of their work and references.

Ensure your builder is registered

One of the most important steps in building and renovating is ensuring the builder you select is registered with the Building Practitioners Board. This is required for work over \$5,000. You can do this by visiting the Building Commission's website at www.buildingcommission.com.au and searching for a builder under the "Finding a RBP" option. For building work over \$12,000, building practitioners are required to provide warranty insurance for consumer protection.

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If you do not use a registered building practitioner there can be problems. Non-registered builders do not have to meet education and training requirements, they may not perform work satisfactorily, nor are they audited by the Building Commission to ensure effective building control. Registered builders on the other hand, are required by law to provide you with a written contract and insurance for building work with the exception of some very small projects.

If you do not use a registered builder, the work is not likely to be insured so rectification of poor quality work will be extremely difficult. Similarly, your job may not have start and finish dates, or worse still it may never be completed, particularly in the absence of a domestic building contract.

Do some research on your builder

Once you have chosen your builder, it is worthwhile researching whether they have recently been disciplined or involved in disputes by:

- Calling the Domestic Building List of Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) on 9628 9999 or checking the VCAT website www.vcat.vic.gov.au
- Checking with Consumer Affairs Victoria by contacting them on 1300 558 181
- Checking the list of prosecutions on the Building Commission's website at www.buildingcommission.com.au.

Check the contract and permit requirements

After choosing a builder, find out whether your work requires a major domestic building contract, planning permit or building permit. If the work costs more than \$5,000 or affects the structural soundness of the building, a building permit and major domestic building contract are generally required.

Another step in the building and renovating process that requires research is the building contract. A domestic contract must include a start date, finish date and details about progress payments. Work through the building contract with the builder to ensure it is accurate. Also, check the contract drawings and specifications to be sure that you are satisfied.

Reduce your risks with plumbing, electrical and gas fitting work

For plumbing, electrical and gas fitting work, there are a number of precautions you can take before work proceeds:

- Use only a registered electrical contractor and ask to see their licence
- Ensure that you are issued with a Certificate of Electrical Safety at completion of the work
- Always use a licensed plumber (look for an official ID card)
- Make sure your plumber is accredited to perform the particular kind of work you need (this is shown on their ID card)
- Make sure your plumber gives you a Compliance Certificate at the end of any job costing \$500 or more (or for an underground drain, or most gasfitting jobs, whatever the value).

Following these guidelines as a minimum when building and renovating will make the process a more rewarding one.

Any other tips?

- Use the same specification or scope of work for your three separate quotes.
- Ensure that your builder has a warranty insurance policy covering the building work for work valued at more than \$12,000.
- Sign a major domestic building contract with the builder after checking all the details. Check the details throughout the building process.
- Do not pay your builder in advance of the stage stated in the contract.
- If you have any concerns, raise them with your builder
- For complaints regarding professional conduct contact the Building Commission on 9285 6400.
- If a dispute arises, contact Building Advice & Conciliation Victoria on 1300 557 559.
- For more information regarding contracts, please contact Consumer Affairs Victoria on 1300 558 181.

Need more information?

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