

How to confidently invest in an Architect



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A customised and architect designed home opens a world of opportunities. It is your chance to create something you really love...a place you will enjoy with family and friends, with the perfect 'fit' for your needs and lifestyle.

On the way to your completed home you need the right professionals to determine realistic project costs, develop the right design, navigate town planning and council regulations, select researched materials, co-ordinate with builders and tradespeople and manage a building contract.

Do you need the expertise of an architect?

The first question is: ***Do you really need an architect to design your home?***

After many years in the building industry, and having seen the difference a good architect makes to the outcome, our answer is most emphatically, ***YES.***



Good architects will combine creativity with functionality, consider climatic factors such as orientation and ventilation, as well as identify potential construction problems and opportunities.

Most importantly, they will spend considerable time in the initial concept stages of design, helping you to articulate your ideas. Your project may well take a different direction from that you had first assumed. With the right advice and analysis of your requirements, a fresh and creative solution may await you.

Let's first explain the differences between Architect, Designer and Draftsperson.

1. What is an architect?

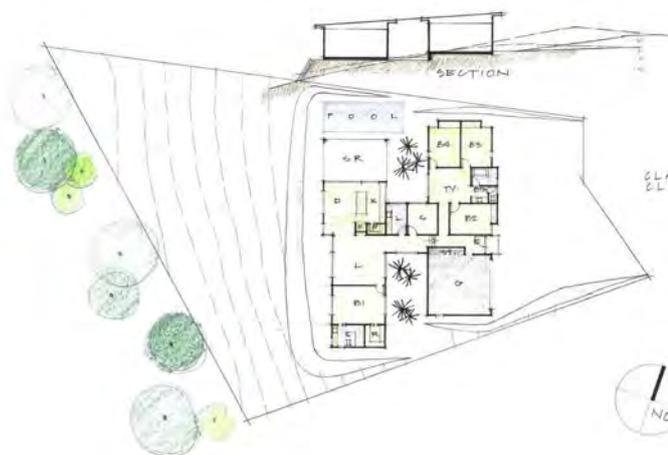
A person who designs buildings and in many cases, also supervises their construction. To be identified as an architect you must hold a university degree in architecture, applicable insurances and be officially registered as an architect with the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA). An architect will have completed a minimum of five years of study, mandatory 2 years' practical experience and a formal registration exam - separating architects from other, less qualified building designers.

2. What is a building designer?

Anyone can design a home with no qualifications or academic training whatsoever. However, to call yourself a building designer in Queensland you must be licensed as a Building Designer by the Queensland Building and Construction Commission (QBCC) and have completed a Cert IV or Diploma in Building Design.

3. What is a draftsperson?

A person who makes detailed technical plans or drawings. Whilst many study to complete a diploma, a large number of drafts people are self-taught. They may specialise in technical detailing, but lack the design ability to develop the most beneficial planning solution.





As you can see they are definitely not the same thing.

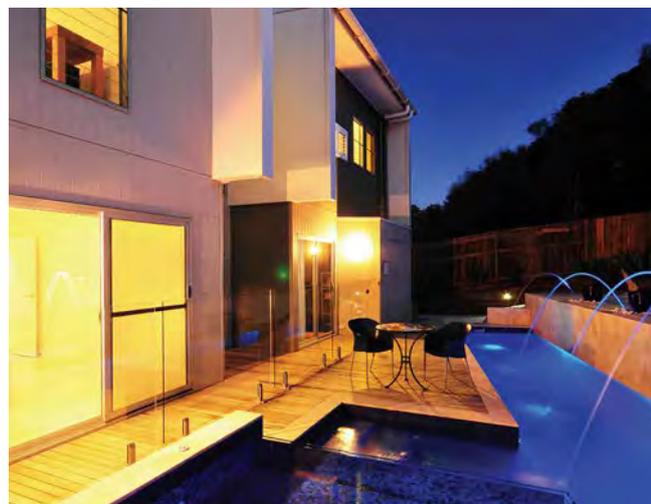
Designers may have great cosmetic ideas, but they may not have thorough experience and knowledge of how a construction comes together – it's a long way from the drawing board to completion on site.

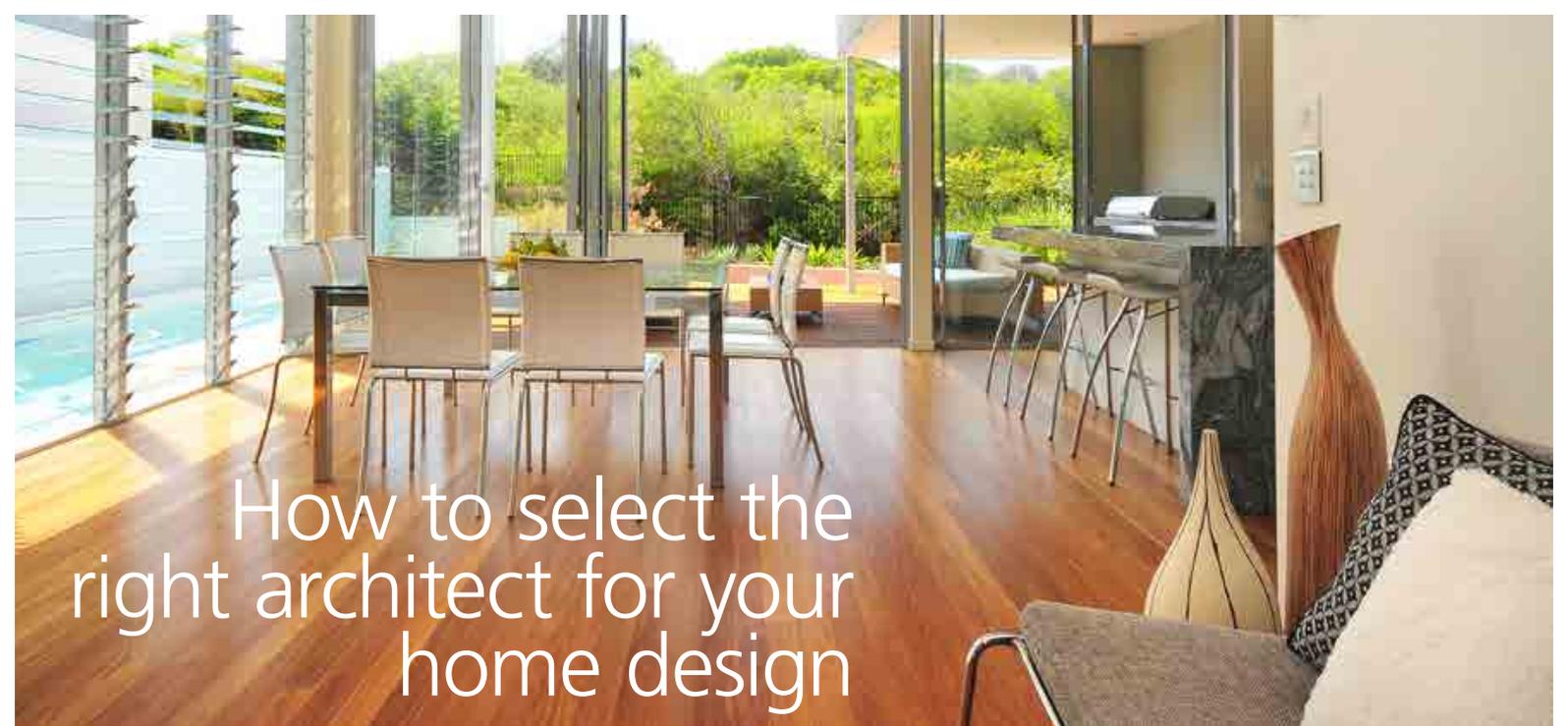
Similarly, while a draftsman may be an absolute whizz with computer aided design, their role is often to simply formalise a design that has been developed by an architect.

Depending on what you want to achieve, we recommend working with an architect, as they have the professional training, qualifications, vision and experience to manage what can be a complex design and construction process.

A registered architect will:

- > Absorb your design brief and look at the big picture
- > Thoroughly assess your site conditions and local regulations
- > Visualise precisely how your home will take shape on your land
- > Provide highly detailed documentation and schedule of finishes
- > Balance the aesthetics with the functionality and practicality of your project.





How to select the right architect for your home design

Not all architects are the same – nor do they all specialise in residential architecture.

We recommend an architect is best to design and document your home – but not just any architect. Ideally, you want to select an architect that specialises in residential design, one that lives and breathes your kind of project.

A commercial architect who works on the occasional residential project may not have an up to date and thorough understanding of costs and efficiencies in the housing market. It could be some time since they exercised their skills on a project of your scale and could be out of touch with the latest developments and planning ideas that really work. They are unlikely to have the continual feedback from clients who are living in their homes – refining what works, what could be improved, what are highly successful planning solutions.

Not all architects work in a dedicated business relationship with a builder.

While architects give you the option to purchase ownership of design copyright, this leaves you with a big disconnect between documentation and building. It also means that you take on a large responsibility and a great amount of risk when you must then, contract a builder to quote and build for you as per the documentation.

It is hard to convey and fully illustrate the numerous areas of risk that are taken on in this process of going to tender and selecting a separate builder.

We have witnessed many cases where the owner is left with the burden of covering costs for incorrect documentation, unquoted items, discrepancies in detailing, and outright under quoting.

We cannot stress this enough. While it appears that you have more control over your project, it in fact leaves you with full responsibility for any problems that arise – and believe us, problems do arise! We do it every day and it's not easy.

From experience, our in-house architect believes that the architect and builder must work side by side in a dedicated and wholly responsible partnership. In the case of Civic Steel Homes – going one step further – our Architect is in fact our Licensed Builder. One in the same person means that the full responsibility lies with us to deliver your home successfully.

Not all architects are about functionality and liveability.

Some architects start from an aesthetic base and their planning follows later, giving priority to the style and look of your home over its functionality. In addition, not all architects are experienced in the spatial requirements of a functional home; not all have a clear understanding of the proportions and planning ideas that work well.

We recommend that the built form should follow and reflect the functionality of your design. The bottom line is, great functionality is where the joy and liveability of your home is to be found. A home that works with you and supports the way you live is what you will appreciate on a daily basis.



How to make the most of your investment in an architect

Architects are highly knowledgeable creative specialists who – depending on their skill, experience and reputation – can command fees as high as 10-15% of your final construction cost. With their skill sets highlighted above, this may well be an appropriate investment, PROVIDED the relationship is well managed from commencement to completion, and you get the best value you can from these fees.

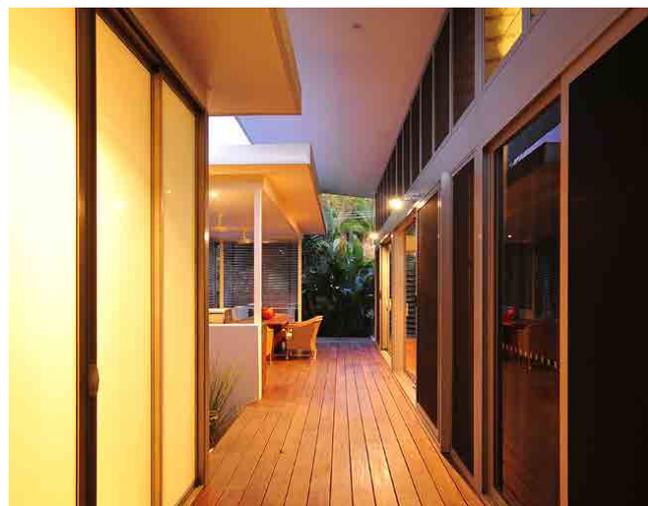
Not all architects are clear about managing your project costs.

You can't achieve a great result WITHOUT having a commitment from your architect to budget control. There are three things you MUST do to control costs and manage your budget:

One, you must work out what your budget actually is, keeping it as realistic as possible. It is well documented that everybody's brief is bigger than their budget. So be open about your total budget and contingencies. This must form part of your very first conversation with your architect.

Two, you must track and assess estimated costs of your project right from the very first concept design. Every design you see should be accompanied by an indication of price. You can't be expected to make intelligent design decisions in isolation of the costs and without developing the design hand-in-hand with pricing, you will very quickly escalate the design costs out of reach.

Three, and here's the kicker, you must carry this assessment of costs through to the detailing and fitout of your home. The whole process is one of weighing up your priorities and, dare we say it, compromise. Your most important wants and long term needs should be put first and not be lost in the desire to run with the latest trend.



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Controlling your budget is a team responsibility

A good question to ask early in the process is who is taking responsibility for your budget?

Your architect is not only there to design you the home you've briefed them on, they are there to advise on costs and help you prioritise your needs in line with your budget.

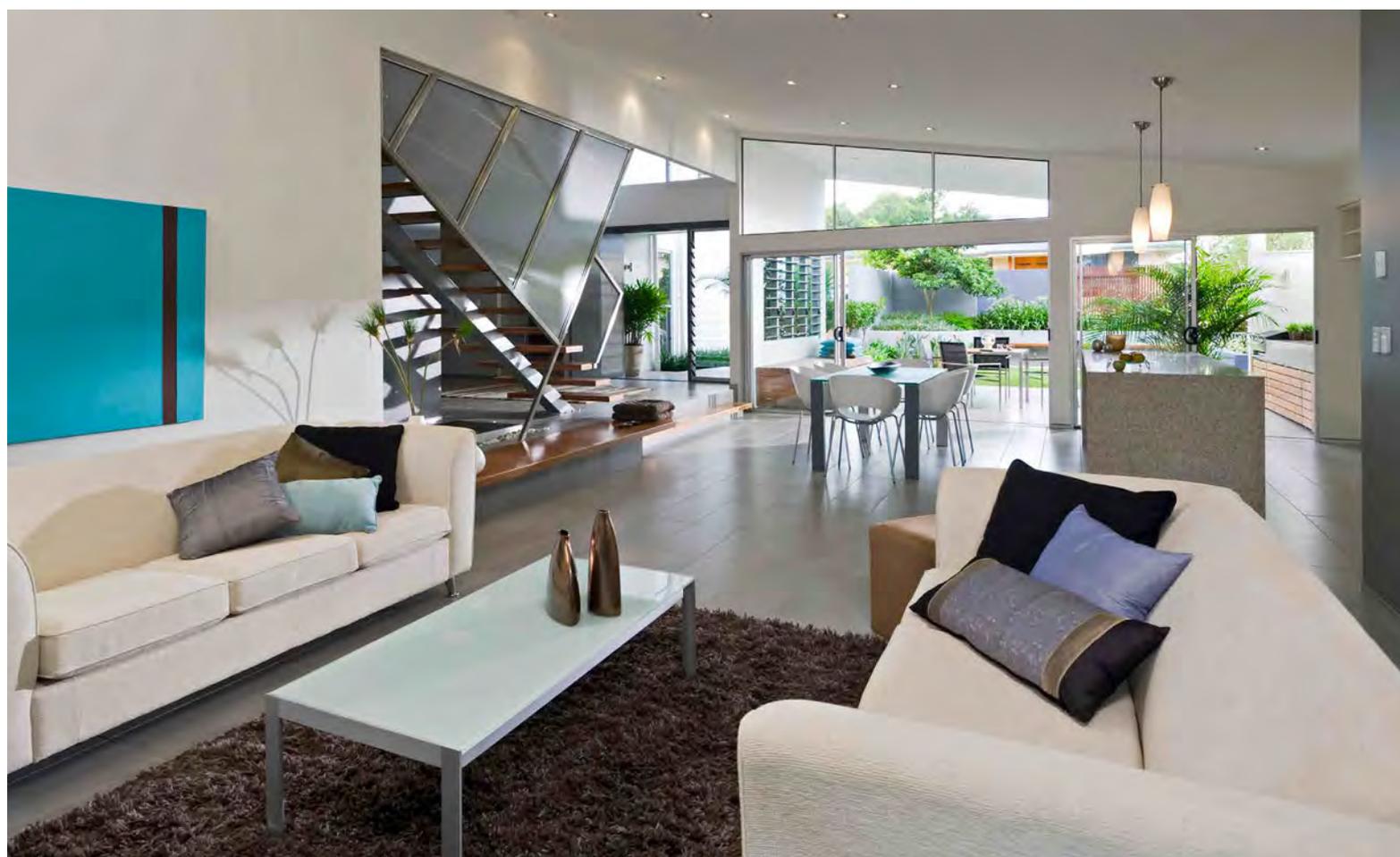
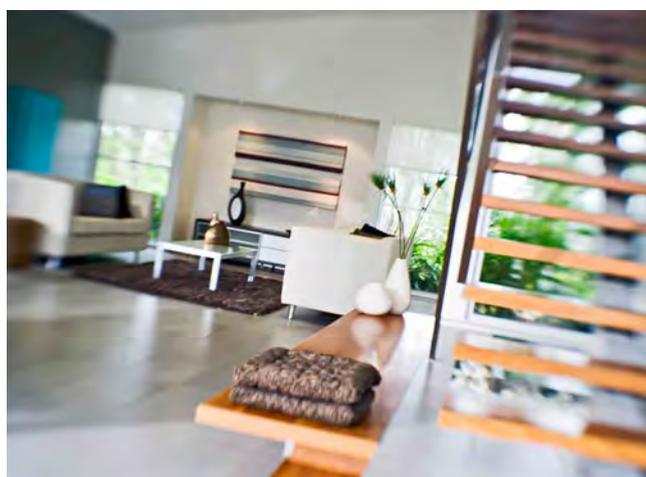
Your role is to keep track of where costs are at and make sure you are clear on what is included in the price and what is not included. It is your responsibility to ask questions and manage your list of wants.

To manage this, you need your architect to provide a full schedule of finishes and specification that spells out what you have agreed to include in the pricing – early in the design process – not at the very end.

Make sure there is great communication about costs. It is easy to get excited by design ideas, but unless you have an open chequebook, costs can easily spiral out of control. Good advice and a pragmatic approach is required to keep your budget on track.

Every decision in the design stage should be a compromise between:

- > What you want to achieve
- > Practicality
- > Cost



Get your builder to provide a reality check



Before you even get past the sketch design stage, *get a price check.*

At Civic Steel Homes, we have our own remarkable in-house architect, who brings untold value to the table. Nevertheless, he still needs our estimator sitting next to him to assess the reality of costs and advise him throughout the process.

This is the best of both worlds. All the creativity and knowledge of a registered Architect working in the cost controlled environment of a building company.

Innovative and clever design alongside a builder's eye, experience and expertise will bring everything back to reality – You get to convert a brilliant design on paper into something that fits a manageable budget set by you.

In Short –

- > Your architect needs to live and breathe residential design
- > Develop a great working relationship with an architect and build team.
- > Talk about budget control and price from day one
- > Complete a thorough price check of your design early in the process
- > Make functionality and great planning your main priority over style
- > Be prepared that along the way, you may need to re-think, adapt and solve a few issues.
- > Find a Design-Build team that fully partners with you to give you the most rewarding result



And THAT is how you make the most of your investment in your architect.

A photograph of a modern house at night, illuminated with blue light. The house features a long, narrow pool that reflects the light. The house has large windows and a balcony. The sky is dark, and there are some trees in the background.

Footnote: Do you have architectural plans you can't afford to use?

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If you've commissioned an architect to draw up house plans, only to discover that the plans have blown out and are now way beyond your budget...don't despair.

All is definitely NOT lost!

You've put in a lot of groundwork and now is not the time to be throwing the baby out with the proverbial bathwater. We have rescued many projects over the past 20 years that have initially been too far over client's initial budgets. Narrowing down the non-negotiable and with an open mind we have knocked many external architect designs into shape.

We are supremely confident that with a bit of lateral thinking and creative problem-solving, we can rescue the situation by reworking your plans to suit your budget.

Give Civic Steel Homes a call today.

Phone: (07) 3714 5900