

how to hire an architect



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architecture + design

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Welcome to the first steps in creating your new home.

Like most things in life, knowledge is the key to success. When you embark upon the journey of building, you should look to give yourself as much knowledge and understanding as possible.

This booklet seeks to provide you with information that can assist you in gaining some of that important knowledge and it should alert you to the areas that you need to focus on. Building a new home or renovating your existing house is an exciting and fun stage of life, make sure that you know what you are doing and that you are working with people you can trust and the process should be enjoyable.

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welcome

We prepared this guide after seeing so many people struggle with understanding the design and construction process.

This process can seem like a complex and frightening roadblock for those who haven't been through it before. The first and most important step is to find and hire your architect.

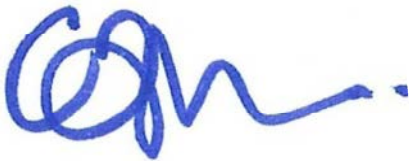
You may be wondering: how do I find the right architect for my project? Do I really need to hire an architect? How much are architect's fees? What about contractors? And most importantly: what are the key, critical steps I need to take to ensure that I hire the architect that is the perfect match for my project?

In the following pages, you will discover the answers to these questions – and more.

I hope you enjoy this guide and look forward to your feedback on the contents.

Sincerely yours,

Craig Taylor

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'CT' followed by a stylized flourish.

Nothing is more exciting than creating a new building, whether it's your home or a commercial project and nothing will affect the success of your project more than the right architect. The architect determines the design and function of a building as well as the emotional toll and financial costs involved in its construction.

Finding your perfect match in an architect is not impossible and the following eight points can guide you along the way.

Use these to help analyse the personality, design strategy and communication skills of your candidates. Your goal is to find the right architect for your project, for your budget and for you.

01

Finding an Architect

Like many other fields, word of mouth is the best way to look for an architect.

Ask family, friends and professional colleagues for referrals.

Is there a particular home you admire? A knock on the door can yield an introduction to your project's potential architect.

Look at properties that are for sale - if you see a house that you really like, then ask the real estate agent for the name of the architect.

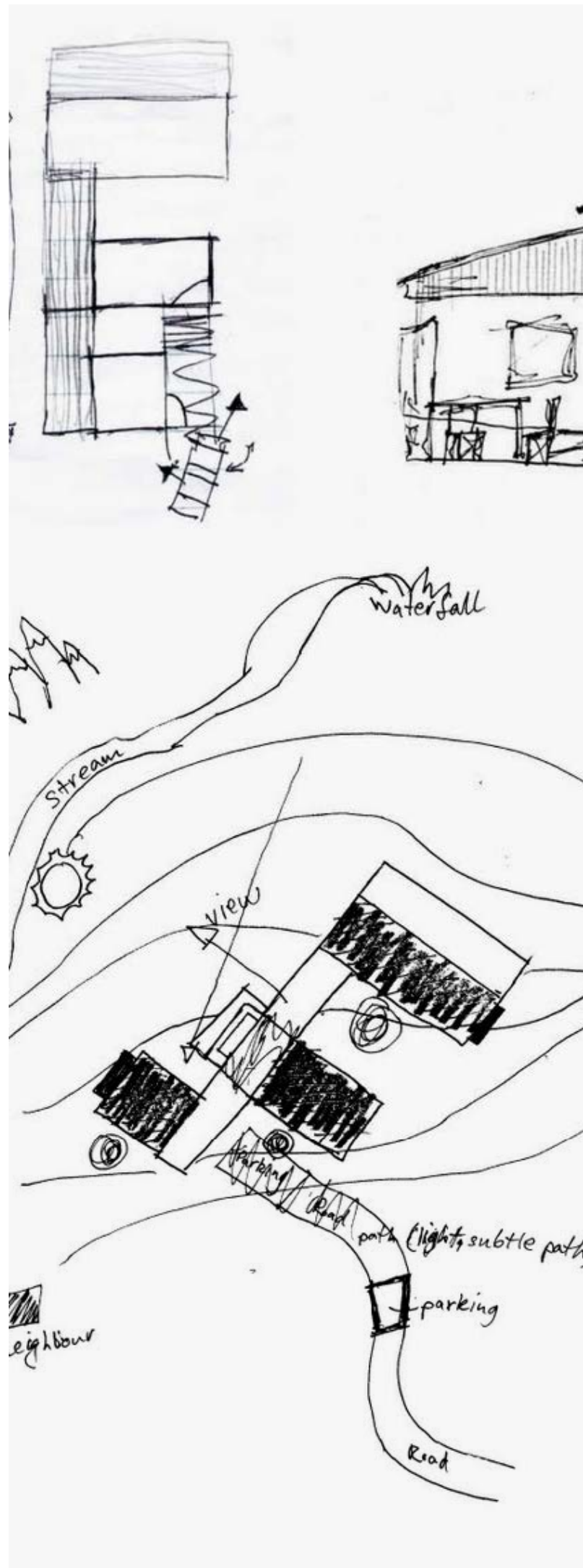
Professional organisations such as the Australian Institute of Architects is also great source to find architects.

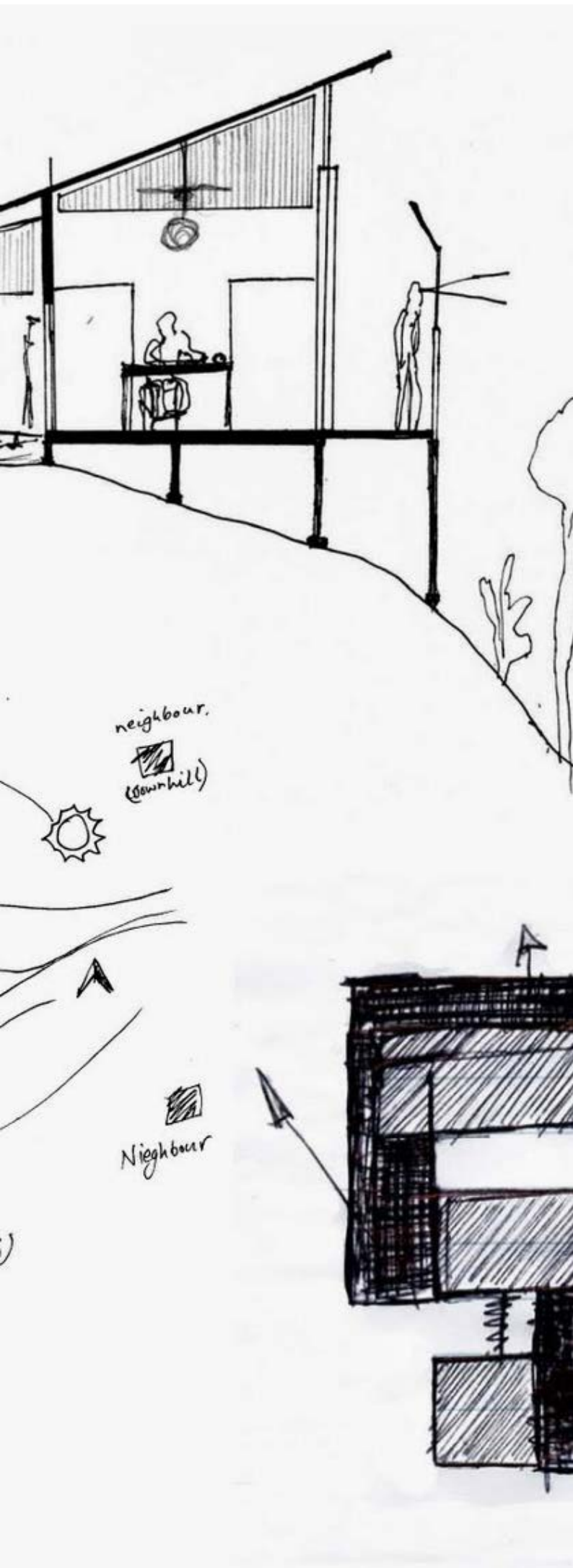
On their website <http://www.architecture.com.au/> they have a search section where you can find architects in your local area who specialise in the type of projects that you are looking to do.

Builders, interior designers and other trade-related personnel would also be able to furnish some referrals.

Be sure to visit web sites of your candidates. Look at their previous work. Get a feel for what is their design style and language - is it about blending in with the neighbourhood, is it environmentally sensitive designs or is it about making a big statement?

Then, start a conversation. Make an appointment for a consultation. Meeting face to face will help you decide if it is a fit.





02

An Architect's Biggest Success + Largest Obstacle

How will the architect approach your project?

Let them know the most important aspects of your project and ask how they will be incorporated into a process.

If you are doing a home renovation or an addition, start with what aspects of your home you currently like and ask how they can be improved?

Typically, a renovation should try and blend seamlessly with the rest of the home. Ask how will this be achieved?

Even though the architect might have an attractive portfolio and good references you will still want to make sure their design process and approach is right for you and your project.

However, architect's are not mind readers. They rely on you to provide them with a brief. This brief is critical and it is a lot more than: "Four bedrooms, two living areas, a walk in robe...". Whilst this is all critical important information, the architect needs to know if there are any special circumstances that need to be designed for, what sort of style and look you like, how you live your life.

They need a complete picture so they can start to create the end product.

Web sites such as Pinterest are great ways to create a virtual scrapbook of images and looks that allows the architect to see inside your head!

03

Signature Style: Who's got it and do you want it?

It is common for an architect to be known by a certain design style – ultra-modern, heritage, Hamptons to name a few.

Though most architects are able to adapt their signature style to what you want, think twice about hiring an architect with a neoclassical signature style to design your contemporary modern glass waterfront home.

Have plenty of examples of the look you want; these can be found from catalogues, magazines or the Internet. Start a Pinterest page and save images that appeal to you. You can always share the page with the architect later so they build a true understanding of what you are expecting.

Environmentally friendly, sustainable “green” designs and construction however can be applied to any style. Discuss the importance of these elements with your architect from the outset and make sure you have a full understanding of the cost implications.

Make sure you discuss with your architect the style you are seeking and ask to look at examples of their work to see if their style matches yours.



04

Meet your Project Architect

Signing a contract with an architect representing an architectural firm does not necessarily mean that person will be your project architect.

Actually, outside of small-architectural practices, it is common for you to do your negotiations and introductions with one person and then be handed over to another person who you have no rapport with.

Be sure to meet the project architect before making any final decision about signing on with that architectural firm.

Being able to communicate freely and openly with your project architect is vital to the success of your project. You should share a clear understanding of the project with your architect and feel completely comfortable.

You do not want to go through a process of explaining to one person your hopes and desires for your new house, only to then have someone else start doing the design work and either not have your wishes delivered or have to explain your thoughts all over again.



3D modelling: Don't build your home without it

Architects understand how elevations and floor plans translate into actual buildings, it's what we do for a living, it's what we are trained to do; our clients necessarily don't. We can look at sketches and visualise the 3 dimensional building or space.

There are many stories within the industry of clients who were devastated when the final built product didn't match the image that the client's had in their mind for the building, even though the building was built according to the plans that the clients approved.

So, what happened?

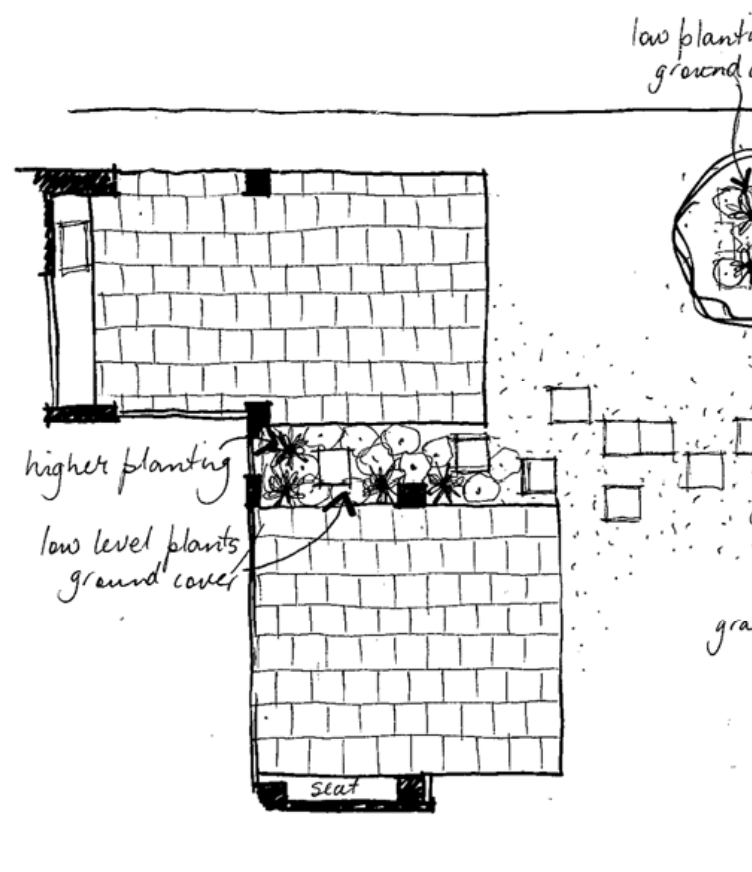
There wasn't a 3-D model of the project. A 3-D model is the best way to see how your new home will look when built.

Don't be afraid to say that you can't read drawings, or that you can't understand what the building will look like. Again, architects are not mind readers. We would rather know that you need help, so we can help!

Architects can either make physical models for you to pick up and look at or they can create virtual models.

Software today allows design reviewing from multiple angles and room walkthroughs. Being able to work in 3-D helps clients get better involved in the design process and they enjoy the viewing experience and "walking" through the space before it is built.

Don't hesitate to ask if the architectural firm produces 3-D models. Sometimes there may be an additional cost to produce a 3-D model but the cost will be small in comparison to the total building cost. It is much easier and cheaper to make changes during the design phase than after the building is built.



The Full-Service Architectural Firm

Conceptual renderings and drawings are not the only services architectural and planning firms provide.

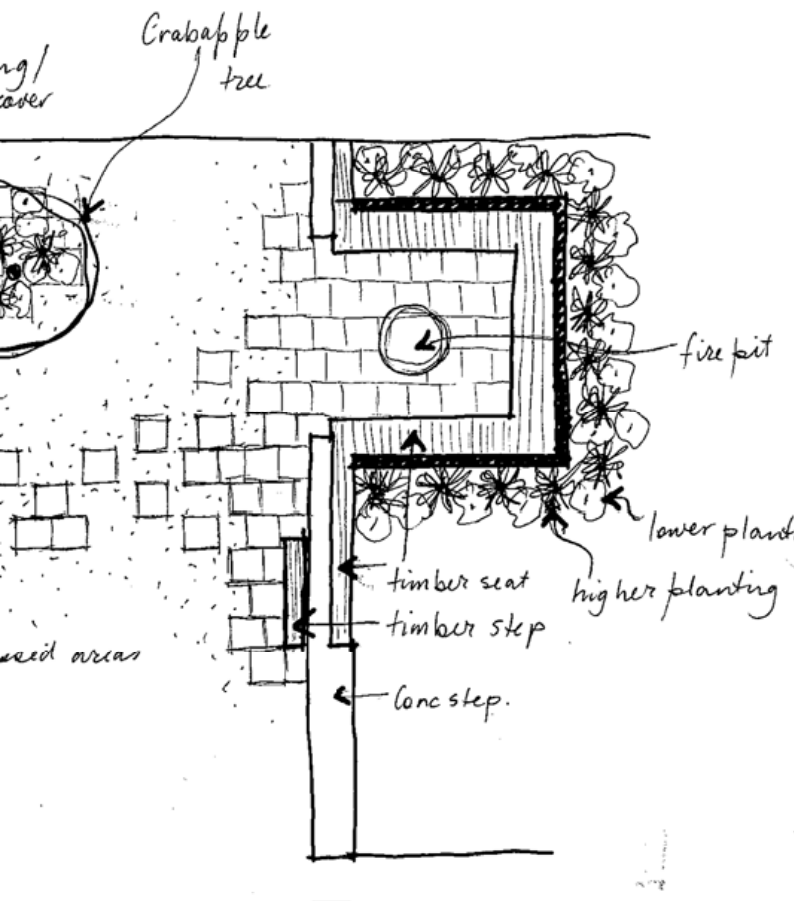
Most architectural firms can provide 'cradle to grave' services for your building and be part of the process all the way through to the builder handing over the keys.

Ask about other services your candidate's firm offers. Ask about benefits of specific services to you and their corresponding costs.

Ask your architect if there are any additional services offered and how they could be useful to you for your particular project. If a firm doesn't offer a requested service, they should be able to refer a firm that does.

Below is a glimpse into some additional services a typical architectural firm provides:

- Project Feasibility Studies
- Programming
- Master Planning
- Architectural Design
- Traditional And Computer Renderings
- 3D Models, Fly Through, Computer Visualization
- Comprehensive Construction Documents
- Preliminary Cost Estimates
- Furniture, Furnishings & Equipment Specifications
- Construction Administration



Figuring out the fees

Typically, an architect's fee is calculated as a percentage of the project's construction cost. So if the cost of the project was \$750,000 and the architect's fee was 10%, their fee would be \$75,000. Usually in the construction industry, fees are provided excluding GST.

Depending on the services provided by the architect, the rate could range from 5 to 20 percent. The bigger the project, the smaller the percentage. When projects are smaller and/or renovations, the percentage is usually higher because there is more work involved.

However, when you first start the design process for your project, it is difficult, if not impossible to accurately determine the final project cost.

During this initial time period (before a good estimate of the final project cost is possible) the architect may charge on hourly rates.

This allows you and the architect to see how you fit without committing to a large expense upfront.

Billing monthly is the industry standard. Also, ask when payment is expected and the preferred method of payment, i.e. cheque, credit card, etc. Direct deposit is the most common payment method these days.

Keep in mind that the architect's fee applies to all the costs of your project. Examples of project costs are the construction budget as well as consultant fees such as environmental impact studies or structural engineering fees.

The most important thing about fees is complete transparency. Insist upon it.





08

Hiring a Builder

An experienced architect should have a list of builders they like to work with. Your architect should be able to help you choose the best builders to tender on your project.

Always get multiple tenders on the construction of your project – even if you already have a builder. This is an industry standard and gives you better leverage at the bargaining table.

Your building will never be as cheap as when it is at the tendering stage. It is important to go to tender with as much information as possible. This assures that you know at the beginning of the process that you have all the costs covered.

Make sure that all the tenderers get the same information when they are tendering and that the prices they provide are for the same items. This way you are comparing apples against apples when deciding on which builder to select.

Just like ensuring you have a good connection with your architect, you want to make sure you have a good connection with your builder. If it doesn't feel right at the beginning, it won't get any better during construction. Make sure you look at their past projects and speak to some of their past clients to get a feel for how they work, how they are with variations etc.

Additionally, some builders offer a service where they can be part of the process from the early stages and they will be able to offer advice on construction methods and costings.

Having a builder during the design process ensures you will not be building more than you can afford. There is a cost involved in using a builder for this service, but some will absorb this cost if they win the overall job.

These tips are meant as a guide to choosing the best architect for your project.

You will be working very closely with your architect on what may be one of the biggest investments of your life.

The process may be well over 12 months and in some cases it may take years. You want to make sure you have a good relationship with the person that you have invested in.

Not only are an architect's answers to your questions important, but how they are answered speaks volumes, too. Did they take time for details to clear up any confusion? Did you feel comfortable with them? Did they conduct business in a transparent manner?

The creation process is exciting but can get intimidating at times, however choosing the right team can make it an enjoyable process.

That team always starts with choosing the right architect and we hope these tips will help you with that for your next project.

the next step...

Congratulations! You have now discovered some of the most common mistakes that people make when building a new house.

Unfortunately, I can't include every important piece of information about building new houses successfully in this guide.

Actually, that would be impossible because each project is unique and the requirements differ based on a multitude of factors.

To help you wade through the necessary requirements and make sure you aren't overlooking a crucial factor that could doom your project to failure, we now offer a custom 'Needs & Options' review where we will identify the specific requirements pertaining to your project and your available options.

Typically, the 'Needs & Options' review saves my clients thousands of dollars and weeks of lost time, not to mention the stress and headache of getting something wrong.

To learn more about the 'Needs & Options' review, as well as the price for this service and why it is critically important to your project's success email me at info@redblue.com.au. If you are ready to talk now, call me at 612 9114 6767.

Best wishes for the success of your project,



Craig Taylor

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