



# The Builder Quote Review Checklist

The 42 things to check before you sign a renovation quote — written by a Perth carpenter with 20 years in construction.

Most renovation budget blowouts aren't caused by bad trades. They're caused by quotes that were never complete in the first place. This checklist shows you exactly where to look.

By Josh O'Hart — carpenter, renovation advisor, founder of Renovation Clarity Co., Perth WA

# How to use this checklist

Print one copy per quote. Work through every item with the quote in front of you, and tick only what is clearly answered **in writing** on the quote — not what the builder said on the phone, not what you assume is included. If it isn't written down, it isn't in the price.

When you finish, count your unticked boxes. Every untick is either a question for the builder or a future variation — and variations are where renovations blow out. A good quote will let you tick almost everything. A vague one-page quote for a \$80,000 job usually won't survive page two of this list.

Golden rule: you can only compare quotes that price the same scope. If two quotes are \$30,000 apart, the cheaper builder usually hasn't left out profit — he's left out scope.

## Part 1 — The basics (every quote, every time)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Builder's registration number is shown (required in WA for permit work valued at \$20,000+) <i>Check it at the WA Building Services Board register. No number on a big job is a walk-away red flag.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quote is addressed to you, dated, and references your site address
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quote validity period is stated (30/60/90 days) <i>Material prices move. An undated, open-ended quote is unenforceable in practice.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fixed price vs estimate vs cost-plus is clearly stated <i>An "estimate" is not a price. Cost-plus means you carry the risk of every overrun.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	GST is shown and clearly included or excluded <i>A "\$70,000" quote ex-GST is a \$77,000 quote.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Insurance is listed: public liability, and home indemnity insurance for jobs over \$20,000 in WA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Payment schedule is staged against completed work, not calendar dates <i>Never pay ahead of work done. Large deposits beyond the legal limits are a red flag.</i>

## Part 2 — Scope and inclusions

<input type="checkbox"/>	Every room or area in your project is named in the quote <i>If the laundry isn't mentioned, the laundry isn't in the price.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Demolition AND rubbish removal/tip fees are listed <i>Skip bins and tip fees on a full kitchen strip-out can run \$2,000–\$5,000.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Site protection is included (floor coverings, dust barriers, furniture protection)
<input type="checkbox"/>	All trades required are listed: electrical, plumbing, gas, plastering, tiling, painting, cabinetry <i>The most common gap: quote covers the "build" but not the trades that finish it.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Electrical work itemised: points, switches, lighting, switchboard upgrade if needed <i>Older Perth homes often need switchboard/RCD upgrades — a \$1,500–\$4,000 surprise.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Plumbing itemised: rough-in, fit-off, relocation of points, hot water unit if affected <i>Moving a sink 2 metres is cheap to say and expensive to do.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wall/ceiling making-good after trades is included (patching, sanding, corners)

	Painting is included — and says whether it's the room or just the patched areas <i>"Paint to match" a 15-year-old wall never matches. Whole-wall or whole-room is the honest scope.</i>
	Floor coverings: supply AND lay both included, with floor prep/levelling mentioned <i>Floor levelling on older slabs/boards is a classic hidden cost.</i>
	Fixtures and fittings: who supplies what is listed item by item <i>If you supply, your items aren't covered by his warranty — and delays become your fault.</i>
	Appliance installation (not just delivery) is included
	Stone/benchtop templating and installation included, with cut-outs for sink and cooktop
	Waterproofing to current standards is included for any wet area <i>Non-negotiable. Failed waterproofing is the most expensive small job in renovation.</i>
	Permits, approvals and certification: who applies and who pays is stated <i>Structural work, plumbing and some electrical need approvals in WA. Silence here means it's yours.</i>

### Part 3 — PC sums, PS sums and exclusions (read twice)

This is where “cheap” quotes hide. A PC (prime cost) sum is an allowance for an item not yet chosen — tiles, tapware, appliances. A PS (provisional sum) is an allowance for work not yet priced — “allow \$3,000 for electrical”. Both are guesses, and you pay the difference when reality lands.

	Every PC sum is listed with a dollar figure — and the figures are realistic <i>A \$25/m<sup>2</sup> tile allowance sounds fine until you learn the tiles you like are \$85/m<sup>2</sup>.</i>
	Every PS sum is flagged, and you understand it can move up
	Total of all PC/PS sums calculated — if they exceed ~15% of the quote, it's not really a fixed price
	The exclusions section actually exists and you have read every line of it <i>No exclusions section usually means the exclusions are unwritten — worse, not better.</i>
	Asbestos testing/removal is addressed (any Perth home built before 1990) <i>Asbestos in wet area walls and eaves is common and removal is licensed work — \$2,000–\$10,000+.</i>
	Structural surprises clause: what happens if termite damage, rot or dodgy past work is found
	Margin on variations is stated (e.g. cost + 20%) <i>Unstated variation margins are where disputes start.</i>
	“Builder's margin on PC/PS overruns” is stated <i>Some builders add margin when your tile choice exceeds the allowance. Know before you choose.</i>

### Part 4 — Timing, site and process

	Start window and estimated duration are stated in writing
	Lead time on cabinetry, stone and windows has been mentioned <i>These long-lead items set your real timeline, not the builder's start date.</i>
	Who manages the schedule and the trades is clear (builder, or you?)
	Working hours, site access and key arrangements discussed

	<p>What stays usable during the job (kitchen? bathroom? hot water?) is understood  <i>Six weeks without a kitchen changes how you feel about the “cheap” quote.</i></p>
	<p>Defects/warranty period stated, plus statutory warranty acknowledgment  <i>In WA, builders are responsible for defective work for 6 years under the Building Services (Complaint Resolution and Administration) Act.</i></p>
	<p>A contract will be used (not just the quote) for any significant job  <i>For \$20,000+ work, a proper written contract is a legal requirement in WA — and your protection.</i></p>

## Part 5 — Comparing two or more quotes

	<p>All quotes price the same written scope (you gave them the same brief)</p>
	<p>You have lined up inclusions side by side, not just totals</p>
	<p>PC/PS allowances normalised — same tile budget, same appliance budget in each</p>
	<p>Cheapest quote: you have found WHERE it is cheaper (missing scope vs lower margin)</p>
	<p>You have spoken to at least one recent client of the builder you prefer</p>
	<p>Gut check: the builder answered your questions directly, in writing, without irritation  <i>How a builder handles questions before the contract is how he'll handle problems after it.</i></p>

## 10 questions to send your builder (copy-paste)

Email these — answers in writing. Any builder worth hiring answers them happily.

1. Is this a fixed price or an estimate? If anything in it can move, what?
2. Can you list exactly which trades and items are NOT included in this price?
3. What PC and PS allowances does the quote contain, and what happens if my selections cost more?
4. Who applies and pays for any permits or approvals this work needs?
5. Does the price include making good and painting after the trades are done — whole walls/rooms, or patches?
6. What happens to the price and timeline if you find asbestos, termite damage or non-compliant past work?
7. What margin applies to variations, and will every variation be priced in writing before the work is done?
8. What is your payment schedule, and what stage of work does each payment correspond to?
9. When could you realistically start, how long will the job take, and what are the long-lead items?
10. Can you give me the contact details of two clients from jobs like mine in the last 12 months?

Scoring your quote: 40+ ticks — strong quote, proceed with confidence. 30–39 — decent, but send the questions above before signing. Under 30 — do not sign. The gaps in this quote will surface as variations, and variations always cost more than the same work priced upfront.

## Want a second set of eyes on your quote?

I review builder and trade quotes for Perth homeowners — line by line, against the property and your actual goals. You get a written summary of what's missing, what's risky, what to push back on, and the exact questions to send before you sign.

**Quote Review — from \$295.** Or book a **Renovation Clarity Visit (\$395)** and I'll walk the property with you before you commit to anything.

**Contact:** Josh O'Hart — Renovation Clarity Co., Perth WA  
Find Renovation Clarity Co. on Facebook and Instagram.

### Disclaimer

Renovation Clarity Co. provides independent renovation planning and advisory support. We are not a registered builder, architect, engineer, certifier, or legal or financial advisor, and this checklist is general information, not certified professional advice. Where required, engage appropriately licensed builders, engineers, architects, designers, surveyors or certifiers. Regulatory references are current for Western Australia as at June 2026 — verify current requirements at [wa.gov.au](http://wa.gov.au).

© 2026 Renovation Clarity Co. All rights reserved. This document is for the personal use of the purchaser and may not be redistributed or resold.