

Commonly Used Terms

Here are the most commonly used terms you could encounter in an Australian design project.

Design Phases

Initial Consultation

The first time you and your prospective designer meet face to face to discuss your project. There is normally at least one phone conversation beforehand. There may be an initial site visit, and items discussed may include your brief, your timeframe and your budget. The initial consultation is an opportunity for both parties to see if the potential relationship between client and consultant would be a 'good fit'. Some designers charge a fee for the Initial Consultation. Landscapology does not generally charge, except if your property is very remote from our Brisbane studio and requires extensive travel. These things are normally discussed in our first phone call.

Brief

Do you want 10 bathrooms and room for a polo pony? If so, the way to let your designer know is via a good brief. Briefs usually contain all the physical things you want: how many rooms, swimming pool, veggie garden, outdoor entertaining space, plants or colours you like etc. Landscapology also likes to know how you want your new spaces to feel: open, generous, nurturing, welcoming and so on. Some people put together image boards or a folder of clippings from magazines showing designs that appeal. The Initial Consultation and your Brief are used when the designer puts together a Fee Proposal.

Fee Proposal

This is an offer, usually in the form of a letter, from your prospective designer to you. In it the designer clarifies his or her understanding of your brief and project requirements, outlines what steps they will take, or the process they will use to complete your project, and states their proposed remuneration. The designer's Terms and Conditions should be attached. If you are happy with the Fee Proposal you should engage your designer using a Client-Consultant Agreement.

Client-Consultant Agreement

This is legal contract between you and your designer. It protects both parties by outlining their obligations with respect to services, payments, revisions, timing, copyright and other critical issues.

Site Visit

After the Initial Consultation your designer may revisit your site. To produce the best outcome, designers need to study and understand how your existing site works. A designer will analyse your site, looking at its orientation, views in and out, topography, slope, drainage, access and movement, existing features, structures or vegetation, and many other things.

Schematic Design

The Schematic Design is your designer's initial response to your Brief and the site conditions. The purpose of this phase is to establish broad-brush planning principles, confirm that all functional and amenity spaces you need are provided, and that the relationships between each of them is working properly. Your designer may present a series of options to illustrate different ways they have interrogated the project. Basic scaled drawings will be prepared, which may be coloured and accompanied by a model and other reference material to describe the design intent. Your approval is needed before the designer proceeds to the next phase.



Design Development

During Design Development your designer will develop the approved Schematic Design, adding more technical detail and resolving the design issues more thoroughly. There will be a greater focus on the materials, finishes, and plant species, and different parts of the design may be drawn at larger scales to work through the details. Some designers vary in the amount of work they include at Design Development. The Landscapology preference is to resolve all issues requiring a design decision during this phase, allowing the next phase to focus purely on the production of documents for the Contractor. Your approval is needed before the designer proceeds to the next phase.

Construction Documentation

The purpose of this phase is to prepare all the documentation required by a Contractor to enable them to set out and construct the works. Typically this would include detailed technical drawings for all aspects of the design, plus schedules and specifications of items.

Contract Administration

This phase occurs whilst your project is under construction. Your designer administers the Construction Contract, carrying out periodic inspections of the works, responding to requests for information from the Contractor, and assessing and approving claims for payment.

Approvals and Applications

Development Application

Applications need to be made to carry out certain types of developments. The application for development Approval (DA) process usually requires drawings of the proposed development that show what it will look like and how it might impact on surrounding development. The DA is assessed for compliance with state and local planning regulations. Things that trigger a DA may include extending new work into the site boundary setbacks, enclosing an open carport, raising or extending a house, or building in a character housing area. DA requirements vary from place to place. It is useful to seek advice from a Town Planner, who can advise if your project requires a DA, and lodge the application on your behalf.

Building Approval

Most buildings or developments require Building Approval (BA) to ensure buildings comply with building laws, including the Building Code of Australia. A private or council building certifier will assess the BA drawings and issue certification. This must be obtained before building work commences on site.

Budget Estimate

This is prepared by the Contractor part-way through the design and documentation process to assist you and your designer. As the Budget Estimate is not prepared using the full and final Contract Documentation, it is intended as a guide, rather than a final price. Depending on the size and scale of the project a number of Budget Estimates may be prepared.

Tendering

Tendering is the name given to the process of obtaining competitive quotes from two or more Contractors. All tenderers received the same information, theoretically ensuring that different prices can be compared 'apples with apples'.

Nominated Contractor

In the Nominated Contractor approach, only one Contractor is invited to give a price to build the project. Under this option the Nominated Contractor prepares a final costing at the end of the Construction Documentation phase. The final cost is the amount the builder works out it will take to build your project, including profit margin. The final cost becomes part of the Construction Contract between you and your Contractor.

Construction Contract

This is the legal agreement between you and the Contractor who is going to build your project works. It protects both parties by clearly defining the extent and scope of works, plus your agreed terms regarding payments, timing, unforeseen circumstances and many other issues.

Please Note

This document is intended to provide general information only. The type of work you're planning, your location, and the type of consultancy you've agreed with your designer will determine which ones apply to your project.

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