

essential renovation

You can quote me on that

Going into the project in detail saves you – and your builder – time and money.

Words Julia Richardson

YOU'VE got to get three quotes. Everyone knows that. If two or more of them are similar in price, you can reasonably assume they represent the going market value of the work that needs doing.

That may be true but if you intend to go any further – if, for example, you plan to sign a contract with a builder based on one of those quotes – then you should look more closely at how those quotes have been put together.

“We always say that you must get written quotes and you must ask for the quotes to be specific, so that you can compare apples and apples,” says Christian Fanker, a spokesman for the Office Of Fair Trading.

A specific quote will note not only how many bricks are to be used but what type, not only how many windows are to be installed but what kind of glass will be fitted. According to Fanker, if a home owner can see that level of detail in a quote, then they can assess whether one builder's “cheaper”

quote actually relates to the use of “cheaper” building materials.

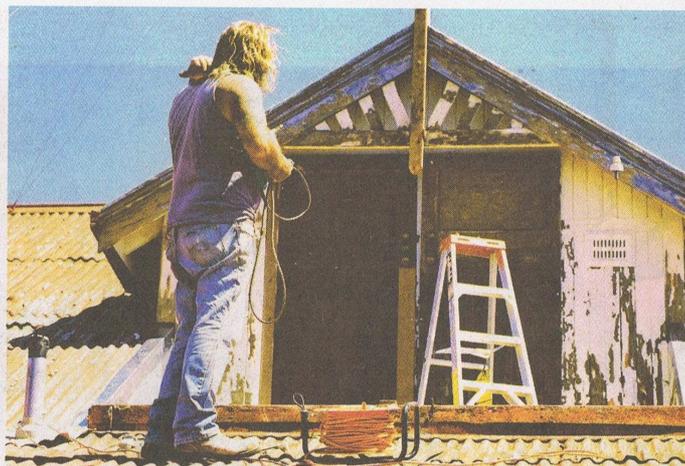
Long-time builder Ricardo Fioravanti, of Unique Constructions, agrees that a good quote is a thorough quote.

“I go through every trade and every item that I'm going to require to do the job and then I note the rates and the quantities next to them,” he says. As a result, his quotes can be five or six pages long. Indeed, he would advise home owners to be wary of quotes that run to only a page or two.

“I've come across some [situations] where the builder has given the home owner a single page of letterhead with a price on it,” he says.

Fioravanti also advises home owners to take special notice of the exclusions listed. It is common practice, for example, for builders to exclude the cost of decorative items such as light fittings and window dressings.

As important as the exclusions are the inclusions. Fanker reminds home owners that if they have their heart set on a slick



stainless steel cooker or if they insist on having eight power points in every room, then they must advise the builder so that the expense can be incorporated into the quote.

“It makes my job easier if the home owner does their research and [knows] what it is they're after before they approach me,” Fioravanti says.

But builders are neither mind readers nor fortune tellers. They cannot reasonably be expected to know that a home owner wants recycled kauri boards and not plantation pine, or be expected to know that they will strike a layer of rock half a metre below the fence line or that the bathroom due to be demolished is lined with asbestos.

“Renovations are difficult to price accurately,” says Brian Seidler, the executive director of the Master Builders Association

of NSW. “Once the builders break into the old part of the house to feed in the new [building work], they might discover problems like white ants or rot.”

“That's where you need to look at the terms and conditions, the things the quote is subject to,” Fanker says. He says the most comprehensive quotes will alert home owners to the potential difficulties.

The final step in assessing building quotes is to make a check of each builder's licence. “It's simple but a lot of people don't do it,” Fanker says.

Contacts

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