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Architects
Registration Board
of Victoria

CONTACTING THE ARBV

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Some frequently asked questions

Is it important to use a 'registered architect'?

The use of the title 'architect' is protected by law. Only people or firms registered with the Architects Registration Board may use the title.

If you choose a registered architect, you know that person has attained the necessary qualifications, completed the practical experience and has passed the Board's examination before registration. Architects are subject to the Professional Conduct Regulations governing their service to clients. The Board is charged with upholding these standards on behalf of the public.

What level of fees can I expect to pay for the services of an architect?

Architects' fees are subject to open market competition. There is no central fee control system. Fees may be based on a percentage of the cost of the works or as a lump sum. Don't hesitate to ask for clarification of fees and look for this information in the Terms of Engagement or Client/Architect Agreement that should be provided before your architect undertakes any work for you.

Do I have to use the full range of services or can I request services up to a particular stage?

Be sure to discuss this with your architect at the beginning of your project and clarify together what you need. Check the stages of service listed in this pamphlet and the cost associated with them.

Does the architect retain copyright on his drawings, plans and documentation?

Yes. Your architect retains copyright on this work. The drawings and documents may be used only for the purpose and on the site for which they are produced.

When am I expected to pay for work done?

You will be expected to pay for work produced at the stages defined in your client/architect agreement. It is therefore important to clearly understand the terms of your agreement to avoid confusion later.

Can I ask the architect to supervise the work of the builder and other contractors?

It is important to clarify the difference between supervision and contract administration. Your architect will check that the builder is completing the project according to the contract. The builder will supervise the on-going works. Your architect will periodically inspect the works, check the quality and deal with the builder regarding any defects and their rectification.

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Working with your Architect

MANAGING THE DESIGN AND COMMUNICATION PROCESS
contractual dealings

A guide to maintaining
a successful working partnership
between architect and client

The client/architect relationship is only one of a number required to achieve a successful project. This brochure specifically focuses on the client/architect relationship.

As the client, you are entitled to rely on the skills of your architect; but you do have an important role to play alongside the architect. Depending on your agreement, your architect has a number of obligations and services to provide.

You might not engage an architect for 'full service', however, the range of services is outlined here:

What can you as client do to assist realisation of your project?

DESIGN information and communication pro MANAGEMENT

Your Architect's role and obligations

Architects are obliged by their professional conduct regulations to make their client's needs a priority above their own interests.

Your architect will:

- Provide written terms of engagement or a client/architect agreement before any work is done for you.
- Develop a design solution appropriate to your needs and budget.
- Communicate with you to ensure that you understand important steps in the project and important decisions taken.
- Act as your independent advisor on contractual matters.
- Liaise with builders, consultants and suppliers to complete the project according to your agreement and within the terms of the contract.
- Inspect the building works and issue progress payment certificates at regular intervals.
- Issue the notice of practical completion when satisfied that all work has been completed by the builder in accordance with the contract, and the project is fit for occupation.
- Undertake a final certificate inspection during the defects liability period, when any unsatisfactory items are drawn to the builder's attention. Under the terms of the contract, the builder remains liable to remedy defects in workmanship and materials which become apparent during this period.
- Issue a final certificate at the satisfactory completion of any required work, formally completing the contract between you and the builder.
- Provide advice to you regarding maintenance contracts which may be necessary for the ongoing use of the building and operation of machinery and equipment.

Typical Architectural services

Before the design phase your architect can advise on feasibility, selection of a site, planning and scheduling if required.

The design phase typically moves through three stages:

- Briefing discussions to clarify your requirements.
- Sketch designs to explore possibilities; usually including some cost options.
- Design development to produce detailed drawings and selection of materials, fittings etc and associated cost.

Contract documentation produces technical drawings and specifications to obtain a building permit, invite tenders, and for use in construction.

Contract administration. Your architect can advise on suitable contracts for the project and on a process of tender or negotiation to select a builder.

Your architect does not supervise the building works. That is the role of the builder. Your architect will

- Liaise with the builder to assess quality of work at key stages and ensure that contract and specifications are complied with.
- Keep you informed of progress
- Approve, with you, any variations
- Certify progress payments
- Identify defects and administer their rectification
- Decide when practical completion occurs for occupancy.

While your registered architect has the qualifications and expertise to provide the range of services described here, and you both have the motivation to complete a successful project, good communication and clear documentation help to achieve a successful outcome.

Your role as client

- Be as clear as possible about what you want to achieve, what you need and what you can afford.
- How many of the service phases do you want your architect to provide? How many can you afford? Discuss these questions with your architect before you proceed.
- Don't hesitate to ask about the client/architect agreement before actual engagement begins and clarify what will be done for what cost to avoid later confusion.
- Try to avoid changes to preferences once you reach the detailed drawing stage otherwise the costs may increase.
- Make sure you understand the drawings and costs. A site meeting to review the drawings might help before you proceed.
- Be clear about the different roles of architect and builder or contractors.
- Avoid three-way confusion by dealing with all queries through your architect who will deal with the builder.
- Keep your own notes of meetings, either in the office or on site.
- Talk about timelines, be aware that many factors can affect them.
- Don't hesitate to ask questions, be involved, but allow your architect to do their job.
- Be aware of your rights as a consumer of architectural services. Professional conduct of architects is governed by legislation and a professional code of conduct. You can get this information from the ARBV directly or via its web site.

Assistance from key organisations

The Architects Registration Board of Victoria

The Architects Registration Board of Victoria (ARBV) is a statutory authority charged with registering architects, approving architectural education and conducting inquiries into the conduct of architects and misuse of the title Architect. The Board acts on behalf of clients of registered architects and the community.

You can contact us to:

- check registration of an architect
- obtain general advice about engaging an architect
- enquire about making a complaint about an architect
- notify possible misuse of the title Architect by persons not registered.

You can check our website for information about these matters and for copies of this brochure.

It is important to note the difference between the ARBV and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA). The RAIA exists to promote architecture and the interests of its members and their clients. If your architect is a member, you can get assistance regarding a range of matters, including publications.

There are other commercial groups or organisations that offer assistance in these areas. All are available under the Building Information Centres entry in the Yellow Pages phone book.