

 7 Key Tips for Designing Cost Effective Buildings

- 1. Minimise perimeter walls.** The perimeter walls of a home represent a high proportion of the cost in the overall cost of building a home as just about every trade possible is involved in their construction. A high ratio of perimeter walls to floor space therefore makes for a dearer build. The downside to this tip is that the most cost effective building is a boring box; so look to achieve a balance that provides interest without being too complex.
- 2. Solar passive is cost effective!** As electricity and gas prices continue to rise don't underestimate the value of solar passive design. While some solar passive concepts can be expensive, a northern orientation is one of the "freebies" that should be capitalised on. However, remember that eliminating direct sunlight in the summer months is just as important as allowing lots of sun in winter; hooray for eaves!
- 3. Brick veneer still rules...** for the time being. Visit any new housing estate and take note of what the houses are built from; mostly brick veneer. And the reason is that it is still the most cost effective form of construction. It is arguable what the "best" type of construction is but brick veneer remains the most cost effective option in most cases because builders and trades are most familiar with its construction.
- 4. Demolition - minimise, consolidate & simplify.** An extension that is consolidated into one area will be a far more cost effective project than one which adds numerous smaller additions. The more fragmented the extension elements are, the more demolition and integration work will be required and this is where many projects become expensive. By minimising demolition you will avoid many of the potential knock-on costs of demolition such as repair and make good work and the ultimate budget killer, structural changes and remediation.
- 5. Minimise expensive square metres.** Kitchens, bathrooms and laundries have a high concentration of trades, materials and fittings so each square metre in these spaces is much more expensive to build than the square metres of a bedroom; so give careful consideration to how many wet areas you need.

- 6. Staging costs extra.** If you're planning on living in your house while your extension/renovation is completed you should expect that your project will cost more than it would if you were to move out as a builder will have to break the project into stages to accommodate you. Staging projects means that builders need to allow for extra visits by many of the trades and this creates inefficiencies and a longer build time which results in a dearer building cost.
- 7. Quality documentation.** The more comprehensive and accurate your documentation is the more likely it is that builders will have the confidence to quote your project confidently and competitively. If the documentation is lacking in detail the builder will be more likely to add a higher margin as a contingency to cover costs of unspecified items. Documentation should include a 'Prospex' Inclusions Schedule which details the allowances of fittings and finishes that are going into the project. This will greatly increase the transparency and accuracy of the quotes and reduce costly surprises later on. It will also help you receive quotes that are much easier to compare.

*If you have plans for your extension or new home want to check on the quality and thoroughness of your documentation, use the **buildingquote.com.au** 'PlanCheck' service. Send us your plans and we will undertake a quality assurance check and advise how exposed you may to cost blowouts and variations.*

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