Checklists

Before You Engage a Professional: Questions to Ask

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A residential project can involve several specialists, each responsible for a different part of the process. The right professional depends on the question you need answered. Before engaging an architect, building designer, planner, engineer, surveyor or builder, consider these questions.

Use these questions to organise your enquiries. Checking every box does not establish suitability or feasibility.

Professional engagement questions

- ☐ Is this professional appropriately qualified and registered or licensed where required?
- ☐ What exactly is included in the proposed service?
- ☐ What information or documents must I provide before work can begin?
- ☐ What decisions or deliverables should I expect from this engagement?
- ☐ What is explicitly excluded from the service?
- ☐ Which other professionals or authorities may need to be involved?
- ☐ Who is responsible for coordinating work between different parties?
- ☐ Which risks or uncertainties remain unresolved after this service?
- ☐ How are fees, additional work and variations handled?
- ☐ What happens if investigations reveal the original proposal is not feasible?

Sources: Consumer Affairs Victoria — Seek expert advice on property; Building and Plumbing Commission — Agreements and contracts

Why these questions matter

A professional appointment should have a clear purpose, scope and expected outcome.

For example, a building inspection, a property title review, a planning assessment and a structural investigation answer different questions. One service should not automatically be assumed to cover the others.

Similarly, engaging a designer does not necessarily mean every approval, authority enquiry or specialist investigation is included.

Ask for the scope, exclusions and responsibilities to be documented. Where relevant, verify professional registrations and insurance.

Discuss the answers before accepting an engagement.

The central lesson: Understand what advice you are purchasing, what decisions it will support and what it will not establish.

References & Further Reading

Consumer Affairs Victoria — Seek expert advice on property

Building and Plumbing Commission — Agreements and contracts

General information

This resource provides general educational information, not a property-specific assessment or legal, architectural, engineering, building inspection or planning approval advice. Circumstances differ and requirements can change. It does not establish development feasibility or complete due diligence; seek appropriate specialist advice for your circumstances.

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