



## TEST BEFORE YOU INVEST'S FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS **WORKING WITH A DRAFTSPERSON / BUILDING DESIGNER**

If you're considering using a Draftsperson or Building Designer for your residential project, there are a few important things to understand from the outset. While Architects bring an unmatched level of skill, accountability and rigour to any project, we also understand there are circumstances where working with a Draftsperson or Building Designer is the more practical option — whether due to budget, project complexity, or scope.

Choosing the right Draftsperson or Building Designer matters greatly. The quality of their work, and the type of service they offer, can significantly influence your project's outcome — including how well it complies with planning regulations, how cost-effective it is to build, how it performs over time in terms of maintenance, environmental comfort and efficiency, and the overall value the investment adds to your property.

This guide offers practical tips for selecting a Draftsperson or Building Designer who's right for your project, and outlines what to look out for when assessing their suitability.

If you haven't already, we recommend reading our [FAQ on the Differences Between Design Professionals](#), which outlines how Architects, Draftspersons and Building Designers differ.

Here's what to look out for:

### ☒ **Use of the Correct Title**

Only Registered Architects can legally use the title "Architect" or describe their work as "architectural design," "architectural services," "architectural drawings," or "architectural plans." If someone is not registered, they must call themselves a Draftsperson, Designer or Building Designer. Misuse of these terms is misleading and considered unlawful under the NSW Architects Act 2003.

### ☒ **Experience with Similar Projects**

Ask whether the Draftsperson or Building Designer has worked on projects like yours — such as internal refurbishments, extensions, studios, or granny flats. Recent examples will help you assess their experience and style.



#### ☒ **Council & Compliance Knowledge**

They should be confident preparing documentation for DA (Development Application) or CDC (Complying Development Certificate) processes, and familiar with your local Council's planning controls.

#### ☒ **Good Working Drawings**

Ask to see a sample of their working drawings. A good set should be legible, clear, compliant and include enough detail for a builder to confidently quote and construct the project. Keep in mind that Draftsperson or Designer drawings may vary in complexity. While some may focus on documenting exactly what's asked without delving into detailed coordination or compliance, others might offer a more thorough approach, ensuring alignment with relevant building standards, the National Construction Code (NCC), and Australian Standards (AS). Be clear on the level of service being provided, as more basic plans may lack depth in areas like safety, sustainability, and long-term performance.

#### ☒ **Communication & Responsiveness**

Choose someone who listens well, interprets your brief accurately, communicates clearly, and keeps you regularly updated through the process.

#### ☒ **Transparent Fees**

Make sure you're provided with a clear scope and written fee proposal. Be cautious of vague or open-ended pricing.

#### ☒ **No Misleading Claims**

Be cautious of anyone who describes their drawings as "architectural plans" or claims to offer architectural services unless they are a registered architect. Such misuse of terminology indicates a lack of regard for industry standards and professional responsibility, and suggests they may be comfortable operating in a misleading way.

#### ☒ **Understand the Level of Service Offered**

Some Draftspersons and Building Designers provide a more literal drafting service — meaning they will document exactly you ask for with minimal interrogation of whether it's the best outcome. Others may take a more consultative, design-focused approach. This distinction is key. Be clear on whether you're engaging someone simply to draw up your plans, or someone who will question it, assess it against planning controls, environmental performance, cost, and long-term value. The difference in outcomes can be significant.



### ☒ **Understand the Value and What You're Paying For**

Draftspersons and Building Designers tend to be more affordable than Architects, which can make them an appealing option for budget-conscious renovations. However, this lower cost often comes with trade-offs in terms of the complexity and depth of the documentation. Be clear on what level of service you're getting and ensure the scope of work aligns with your expectations and budget. Remember, the lowest cost may not always deliver the most comprehensive or compliant solution in the long run.

At the end of the day, the biggest cost in a project is often the build itself, and engaging the wrong professional can lead to costly mistakes or delays, which can significantly affect your budget and timelines

### ☒ **You May Still Need an Architect — Especially Early**

Sometimes the best model is a hybrid one: you get access to an Architect early in the process to test ideas, set a solid design direction, and understand the planning landscape — and then you move forward with a Draftsperson or Building Designer to document and deliver the drawings. This is exactly the purpose of our upfront advisory service at *Test Before You Invest* — we give you strategic, qualified advice at the start, even if a Registered Architect isn't engaged through to the end.

### **Need Personalised Advice? We're Here to Help!**

*If you require further advice or tailored guidance for your specific situation, feel free to book a consultation with one of our experienced professionals. Our team can provide you with expert insights and practical solutions to ensure you're making the most informed decisions. **Contact us today at [www.testbeforeyouinvest.com.au](http://www.testbeforeyouinvest.com.au) to schedule a consultation.***

### **Disclaimer**

*Please note, the information provided in this document is general in nature and intended for informational purposes only. It reflects the perspective of a registered architect and is designed to help homeowners make informed decisions when engaging a draftsperson for residential projects. It is not intended as legal, financial, or individual professional advice. Every project is unique, and regulations may vary depending on your specific site, council jurisdiction, and evolving legislation. We strongly recommend seeking tailored advice from appropriately qualified professionals before making any decisions or taking action. Test Before You Invest Pty Ltd and its subsidiaries accept no liability for any loss, damages, or expenses that may arise from reliance on the information provided in this document.*