



FULL RESIDENTIAL CLIENT GUIDE

Office of Regional Architecture · Architects for Regional WA

Thanks for reaching out to the Office of Regional Architecture. Starting a new project is exciting, and you probably have questions: how long will it take, what will it cost, who else do you need on the team? This guide sits alongside your quote as a fuller reference than our short version — it isn't meant to be exhaustive. Familiarise yourself with the process below, and when you're ready to talk specifics, we're only a call away.

ABOUT ORA

The Office of Regional Architecture (ORA) is a Western Australian architectural practice founded in Brookton in 2012, now led by Director Tuan Ngo. We work across residential, community and commercial projects, and are a registered architectural practice with the Architects Board of Western Australia (ABWA Reg #3315). ORA is a Carbon Neutral practice and a member of Australian Architects Declare Climate & Biodiversity Emergency — a commitment that shows up in how we design every project, residential included: working with existing site elements such as established trees rather than clearing them, and specifying efficient, healthy building systems.

WHAT CLIENTS SAY

"Our kitchen is now the hub of our house with plenty of storage space and prep space while still looking amazing. Rosalie was able to listen to what we wanted and needed from the spaces. Her fresh perspective helped us create an area that suited our needs but stayed in keeping with our 1920's farm house."

Ellen Walker, Warranine, Brookton

"We are extremely happy with the finished result and our house is now a beautiful, functional family home."

Connie Witham, Tambellup

THE PROCESS AT A GLANCE

Every project is different, but the stages are broadly the same each time. Depending on your project and budget, services can be added or removed at any stage — we'll always be clear about what's included before you sign anything.

	STAGE	WHAT HAPPENS	YOU MIGHT...
1	Concept & Feasibility	We take your brief, assess the site and explore design options against your budget.	Meet with us; share your budget, needs and ideas.
2	Design Development	The design is refined and engineers are engaged, ready for Development Approval (DA).	Make preliminary material and fixture selections; approve lodging your DA.
3	Documentation	We prepare detailed drawings and specifications for Building Permit and builder pricing.	Finalise your material and fixture selections.
4	Tender & Contract	Builders price the project; we help you choose one and finalise the contract.	Select your builder; sign the building contract.
5	Construction	We inspect progress on site, check quality and assess the builder's payment claims.	Make final selections; pay building invoices.
6	Completion	We follow up on any defects through to the end of the Defects Liability Period.	Move in, and flag anything that needs attention.

STAGE BY STAGE

1. Concept & Feasibility

We start with a Site Consult, then take your brief and explore design options that respond to your site, your budget and your lifestyle. This is also when we assess the site's opportunities and constraints, and — where useful — engage a Land Surveyor for a feature and contour survey. We quote this stage first; agreeing the concept and refining the scope here is what lets us quote confidently for Design Development and Documentation.

You might:

- Meet with us and share your brief, budget and ideas
- Consider the look, feel and function you want from the project
- Sign a Client-Architect Agreement to formally engage us

Your architect might:

- Take your brief and explore design options against your budget
- Assess the site's opportunities and constraints
- Advise on land survey, BAL and planning considerations
- Provide updates as the concept develops

2. Design Development

The concept is developed into a coordinated design, bringing in a Structural Engineer and, where relevant, an Energy Efficiency Assessor and a Bushfire Assessor (only required if your site is in a Bush Fire Prone Area). This is where you make your preliminary material and fixture selections, and where we prepare and lodge your Development Approval (DA) application with your Local Government Authority.

You might:

- Make preliminary material and fixture selections
- Provide feedback as the design is refined
- Approve lodging the DA

Your architect might:

- Develop the design and prepare DA application documents
- Engage a Structural Engineer, and an Energy Efficiency or Bushfire Assessor where needed
- Coordinate the consultant team and resolve their input into the design
- Liaise with council ahead of lodging

3. Documentation

We prepare the detailed drawings and specifications needed for your Building Permit and for builders to price the work accurately. This is when you finalise all material and fixture selections — changes become harder and more costly to make once documentation is underway.

You might:

- Finalise your material and fixture selections
- Provide feedback on the working drawings
- Approve releasing the project for costing/tender

Your architect might:

- Produce detailed drawings and specifications for Building Permit and builder pricing
- Coordinate engineers so their drawings align with the agreed design
- Liaise with your Building Certifier ahead of submission

4. Tender & Contract

We run a competitive tender, inviting builders to price the completed documentation, and help you compare the quotes and select a builder. We then assist with finalising the building contract before construction begins. If you'd like an independent view on cost at this point, a Quantity Surveyor (or a Cost Estimator, as a cheaper but non-qualified alternative) can also be engaged.

You might:

- Review tender prices and help select a builder
- Sign the building contract

Your architect might:

- Run the tender, answer builders' questions and evaluate pricing
- Assist negotiating and signing the contract
- Prepare documents for the Building Permit

5. Construction

We visit site to inspect progress, check quality against the drawings, and assess your builder's payment claims before you pay them. Most residential projects only need occasional advice from us during this stage, charged hourly — full Contract Administration is available if you'd like more hands-on oversight.

You might:

- Make final selections (tiles, paint and the like)
- Pay building invoices as they fall due
- Join site visits to check on progress

Your architect might:

- Visit site regularly to inspect progress and quality
- Assess the builder's payment claims before you pay them
- Resolve issues that arise on site
- Coordinate other consultants as needed

6. Completion

As the project nears completion we help identify any defects for the builder to rectify, and follow up through to the end of the Defects Liability Period. From there, it's over to you — we're always glad to hear how the finished home is working for you.

You might:

- Move in, and flag anything that needs attention

Your architect might:

- Help close out the contract and identify defects
- Follow up through to the end of the Defects Liability Period

YOUR PROJECT TEAM

Your architect leads the team and coordinates the specialists below as needed — not every project needs all of them, and we'll advise which apply to yours.

Your Architect (ORA)

Leads the design, coordinates your consultant team, and administers the building contract on your behalf from first sketch to final handover.

Structural Engineer

Designs the structure — engaged for most projects to size beams, footings and framing.

Geotechnical Consultant

Determines the site's soil classification if the Structural Engineer can't, and carries out soil permeability (drainage) testing where an on-site septic system is needed.

Energy Efficiency Assessor

Verifies the design meets the National Construction Code's energy efficiency requirements.

Quantity Surveyor (QS)

Provides an independent cost estimate based on market rates, as a benchmark alongside your builder's costing — engaged if you'd like that extra perspective. A Cost Estimator can offer a cheaper alternative, though without the QS's formal qualification.

Your Builder

Engaged after Development Approval to construct the project, typically through a competitive tender we run on your behalf.

Land Surveyor

Provides a feature and contour survey of your site early in the design process.

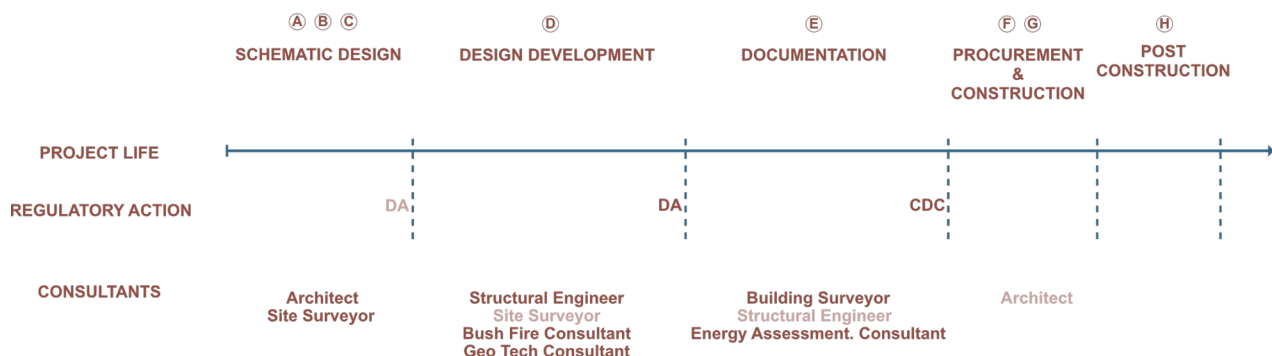
Building Certifier

Assesses the design against the National Construction Code for your Building Permit.

Bushfire Assessor

Assesses bushfire risk and any required construction measures — only needed if your site is in a Bush Fire Prone Area.

PROJECT TIMELINE



APPROVALS, IN BRIEF

- Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) — if your site sits within a designated Bush Fire Prone Area, DFES mapping determines its BAL based on factors like vegetation density and slope. Your BAL rating can affect the materials, and window and vent screening, your design needs to use, and may be a condition of your DA or Building Permit.
- Development Approval (DA) — your Local Government Authority checks the project against its Town Planning Scheme (setbacks, height, neighbour impacts). Usually 60–90 calendar days.
- Building Permit (BP) — required for works over \$20,000, assessed against the National Construction Code. A Certified assessment (via an independent Building Certifier) is typically approved within 10 days; an Uncertified assessment can take up to five weeks.

COMMON QUESTIONS

How do I get started?

The best first step is a Site Consult. We normally meet at your own site — for country clients, that's most often at your own place or property. A cafe meet is the exception: for Perth-based clients, or if you're a country client travelling in to Perth. We'll talk through your project, budget and ideas, then follow up with a clear written proposal.

How is your fee worked out?

We quote in stages, based on the scope of work, rather than a flat percentage or hourly rate for the whole project. After our initial meeting we quote Concept & Feasibility first, which lets us refine the scope before quoting for Design Development and Documentation. Tender & Contract is quoted once documentation is complete, as either a fixed fee or an hourly rate.

Do I need a separate feasibility or options study before I start?

For most residential projects, no — we explore options and feasibility as part of the Concept & Feasibility stage, which is the most cost-effective way to do it. For larger or more complex projects, a standalone Feasibility / Options Planning stage can be worthwhile: a lower-commitment first step covering site opportunities and constraints, budget advice and an options report, before you commit to the full design process.

When do I need to choose my materials and fixtures?

Design Development is where you make preliminary selections; Documentation is where these are finalised, ahead of Building Permit and builder pricing.

Do I need a Quantity Surveyor?

Not always — it's optional. A QS gives you an independent, market-rate cost estimate as a benchmark alongside your builder's costing. A Cost Estimator can provide a cheaper alternative, though without the QS's formal qualification.

What is a Bushfire Assessor, and do I need one?

A Bushfire Assessor assesses bushfire risk and any construction measures the National Construction Code requires as a result — only needed if your site sits within a designated Bush Fire Prone Area.

Will you manage the builder during construction?

We inspect progress on site and check quality throughout. Most residential projects don't need full Contract Administration from us — just occasional advice or enquiries, which we're happy to provide hourly. Full Contract Administration is available if you'd like more hands-on oversight.

A NOTE ON FEES

We quote our fee in stages, based on the scope of work. After our initial meeting, we start by quoting the Concept & Feasibility stage — this lets us refine the scope with you before quoting for Design Development and Documentation. Tender & Contract is quoted once documentation is complete, as either a fixed fee or an hourly rate; most residential clients only need occasional advice from us during construction, which we're happy to provide hourly. We'll always agree the fee basis with you in writing before any chargeable work begins.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

A Site Consult is the best place to start — we'll walk your site, talk through your project, and follow up with a clear written proposal, including our fee. Get in touch any time.

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