

DESIGN ENHANCING LIFE



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Newsletter

Enough Is Enough

There seems to be a growing number of drafts people, who are ripping people off by under estimating construction costs and then selling them poorly thought out designs that do not meet their lifestyle needs.

This was highlighted to me by two recent incidents.

The first was when I attended a meeting where two different draftsmen told the assembled guests that *'they were looking for clients who know what they want'*.

'Looking for people who know what they want'! I have never met a client who knows **EXACTLY** what they want.

Sure you might know the outcome you're after, but do **YOU** personally know how to achieve that outcome? Do **YOU** know how to design a space that is visually pleasing **AND** lifestyle enhancing? No, of course you don't, that's why you pay someone else to design it for you. And yet these rip-off merchants clearly state that they are *'Looking for people who know what they want'*.

What they are really saying is *'We don't give a damn about you, your budget or your lifestyle, we just want to draw up YOUR design, get paid and then leave'*.

Drafts people have often claimed to be able to design homes much cheaper than architects, when in reality they can't. They don't have the skills to produce great spaces, they don't understand lifestyle design and they certainly don't have a good grasp of building costs, as highlighted by a recent conversation that I had with a cost estimator.

He explained to me that he had recently come across a number of clients that were stunned at the size of his estimates.

Why? Because the drafts person they had used had given them a rough verbal quote that was **WAY** under what the estimator was now giving them. So why was their drafts person so far off the mark with his cost estimate?

Most drafts people don't really **'design'** anything they simply draw up what you want. They seldom

get involved at the pricing or building phase of projects and therefore have no understanding of costs. Compare this to our service where you receive design options, our opinion of costs plus an independent external cost estimate before we take your project through a strict tender process that ensures the best design for the best price.

But it's not just their lack of understanding that leads to this error in costing. Many drafts people (*and builders*) understate the potential build cost just to get their clients excited about progressing. It is then sometime later that their clients find out that their budget has blown out and because nothing was put in writing they have no recourse against the drafts person or builder who misquoted them.

It's a sad state of affairs and one that makes my blood boil and yet another reason why you should choose **Dion Seminara Architecture**; a company you can trust for all your new home and renovation design needs.



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TIPS ON PASSIVE SOLAR

Passive Solar utilises building design and materials to naturally heat and cool your home. Here are some pointers on taking advantage of Passive Solar technologies.

- **Orientation:** Point living areas north with large eaves or verandahs.
- **Materials:** Concrete and bricks are good insulating materials but they also absorb heat.
- **Insulation:** In walls and ceiling assist in heating/cooling your home.
- **Air-flow:** Position windows to receiving cooling summer breezes.

For more information on this topic visit www.dsarchitecture.com.au/blog/



DO 'BUILDING DESIGNERS' REALLY DESIGN BUILDINGS?

It may seem on the surface to be a silly question, but look further and you will discover that it is in fact quite a valid one.

The title 'Building Designers' is used quite a bit by people who may or may not be a drafts person. There are many individuals and companies that call themselves 'Building Designers'; there are even a number of associations. But what qualifications do they have and how good are they at actually 'designing' a home?

QUALIFICATIONS

We all know that drafts people are less qualified than architects, but what about those that use the title – Building Designer? Well according to the Construction & Property Services Industry Skills Council website – *"The building design sector is not currently covered by any formal national competency-based qualifications"*.

Compare this to the qualifications of an architect where it takes about 5 or 6 years of study plus practical experience to become a practicing architect.

So what's the difference in a practical sense? Well let me give you an example that might highlight these differences for you, in particular the lack of 'design skills' these people offer.

THE CON JOB

Harry (*not his real name*) went to a building designer with a photo and a ROUGH plan of what he wanted, explaining that he wanted a sustainable home design. The building designer then provided him with a proposal that was EXACTLY the same as the Harry's own rough sketch with NO additional design features at all!

Not only that, the plan was in no way sustainable. The main bedroom was located on the south-west corner where it would be blasted by the summer sun with no windows in the room that you could actually look out of; the windows were located in the ensuite! There were no louvre windows to promote cross-ventilation and the internal zoning was so poor that the noise levels in the house would have been unbearable.

Where is the 'DESIGN' that the building designer was supposed to add? How could this person even call themselves a building designer and then produce such garbage? But was this simply an innocent mistake by the 'designer' and builder? No way, Harry had been blatantly misled in what can only be described as a con job.

ANOTHER CON JOB

'Brian' (*not his real name*) employed the services of a building designer to create a home design based on Brian's own rough diagram. The 'designer' then drew up Brian's plan LINE FOR LINE with NO additional design elements. Brian was then told that his project would cost \$392,000 to build. When I sat down and costed it out the project came to more than \$800,000! So how could his building designer be so far off the mark with his estimate?

THE TRUTH ABOUT BUILDING DESIGNERS

Most Building Designers don't know how to design it's as simple as that. Instead they take your ideas, or regurgitate overused and often unsuitable ideas from their previous projects, and then complete basic building application drawings at overinflated prices. So how do they get away with it you ask?

Well unlike an architect who has a professional responsibility to give accurate advice builders, drafts people and building designers do not. They are not considered to be professionals in the same way that an architect is, and they conduct themselves accordingly. They often don't have a clue about estimating costs and they don't have the ethics to care. It's simply a rort.

Unfortunately many clients buy into the myth that drafts people and building designers are cheaper than architects. They fail to question this common misconception even though the fees charged by these people are often way above what a registered architect will charge.

So if you don't mind being ripped off and paying to have someone simply redo your own design, then by all means use a 'building designer'. But if you want a truly great design that is within your budget and vastly improve your lifestyle, then you need to call Dion Seminara Architecture.

UNDERSTANDING COST EFFICIENT DESIGN

For most people who are considering renovating or building a new home, the cost of getting the project designed and built are their two main considerations.

But if your goal is to live in the property long term, then other factors need to be considered, not the least of which is the cost of upkeep and the running of your home.

For example, choosing a timber exterior might seem like a good idea initially, but painting the exterior of your home can be an expensive process, and one that needs to be factored in over the time that you will be living in your home.

The lifespan of materials that you use in your home are an important consideration, as replacing damaged or worn materials can be expensive. For example there is a material commonly called 'Blue Board' which is a cheap and nasty way to give your home the appearance of rendered brick. Unfortunately overtime the jointing system becomes very visible resulting in additional costs. It may look like a cost effective option in the short term but paying for better quality up front can save you a considerable amount of money in the long term.

The same can be said of appliances, such as hot water systems, dishwashers and air-conditioning/heating units. Buying cheap at the start does not make good economical sense in the long run. With the way prices are increasing chances are the more expensive, better built products that you can buy right now will look like a bargain in years to come.

The energy efficiency of your electric and gas appliances is an obvious cost saving area. Buying products that use less electricity, gas and water can save you thousands of dollars; dollars that can

be used to pay off your mortgage faster or put into other investments.

Installing insulation in your walls, windows that open fully and ensuring that your home design keeps the sun out in summer and lets the cooling breezes in are all worthwhile long term investments.

As an architect, I always consider the costs of maintenance, materials and home running costs when designing homes or renovations for my clients. Little things like having the hot water system as close to the kitchen/laundry as possible can save you money. Given the water challenges that Brisbane has faced in recent times it's madness to need to leave your tap running for ages just to get hot water to come through. Not only is it unnecessarily wasteful, it's also expensive as excess water charges can quickly mount up.

As part of my overall design process I spend time working out how to best take advantage of environmental factors such as air-flow and natural lighting. Not needing to constantly have your lights on, and being able to keep your home cool without needing to overuse your air-conditioner/ heater can save you significant amounts of money each year.

The advantage of working with **Dion Seminara Architecture** is that we consider all of these factors and discuss them with you in detail as part of our overall design process. Best of all, we manage to incorporate these money saving ideas whilst not compromising on the overall liveability of your home. After all, your lifestyle should come first.

So if you're thinking about building a new home, or renovating your existing home, call **Dion Seminara Architecture** today and let us help you save money, both now and into the future.

ARCHITECT'S TIPS

Working with an architect that is in no way aligned or affiliated with any builders, trades people or suppliers offers a host of benefits to you the client. Such as:

BEST DESIGN:

Your home or renovation is designed to suit you the owner, not the builder building it.

BEST BUILDING PRICE:

You can get quotes from any number of builders on the one design.

BEST MATERIALS:

You're not pushed into using materials from suppliers that give kick backs to builders.

BEST RESULT:

Your architect can manage the project on your behalf, looking after your interests, not the builders.





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Dion holds a Bachelor of Architecture with honours and is a registered architect and licensed builder. He is also a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Architects - at the most senior level - who has been recognised for his long standing involvement in the pursuit of excellence in architectural profession and service to this association.