ADD VALUE
RENOVATIONS

THE AUCKLAND RENOVATION GUIDE — 2026 EDITION

7 Things You Must Know Before

Renovating a Home in Auckland — what every family should understand before they sign anything.

MASTER BUILDERS

GOLD AWARD 2025

LICENSED BUILDING PRACTITIONER
BUILDING CONFIDENCE

2026

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OWNER · ADD VALUE RENOVATIONS

A NOTE FROM SIMON LIU

What your builder won't tell you.

If you're reading this, you're probably about to spend somewhere between $80,000 and $800,000 on your home. That's not pocket change. And in Auckland right now, it's the single biggest investment most families will make outside of buying the house itself — so getting it right matters.

I've been on Auckland tools for over a decade through Add Value Renovations, and the renovation industry in this country for over 25 years. In that time I've seen what makes a project sing — clear scope, honest budgets, a builder who actually plans the job — and what causes the horror stories you hear at dinner parties.

The good news? Every great renovation starts the same way. Not with a builder. With a plan. And planning starts before you ring a single tradie.

This guide is the conversation I wish every family had with themselves before they started. Seven things that decide whether your project ends with you loving your home for the next twenty years. Plus a bonus chapter on how to actually pick a builder — because that's the decision that makes all the others easier.

Read it with a cup of tea. Argue with the bits you disagree with. Then, when you're ready, give us a ring.

Simon Liu

OWNER · ADD VALUE RENOVATIONS · REMUERA, AUCKLAND

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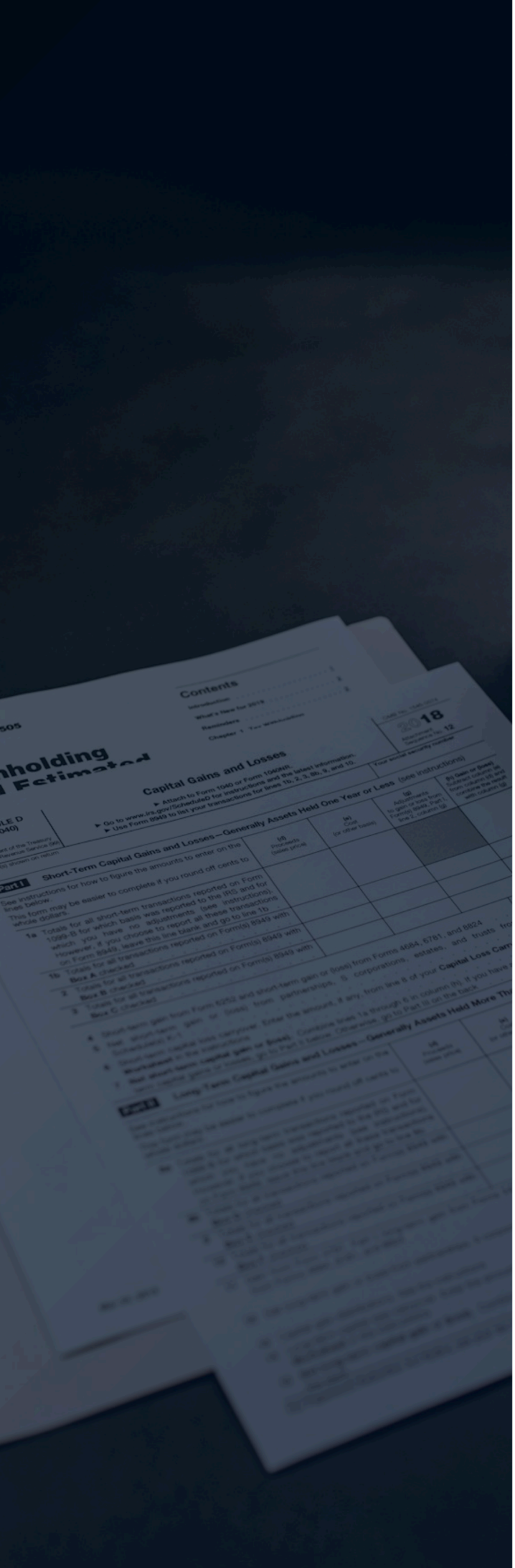
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CHAPTER ONE

01

Budget Honesty.

The biggest myth in renovation is that hiding your budget protects you from being overcharged. The truth is the opposite — silence costs you money, and it costs you time.

The budget conversation that protects you.

Every week we sit down with a family who tells us, "We don't want to share our budget because we want to see what you'll quote." We understand the instinct. The renovation industry has earned that scepticism the hard way.

But here's what actually happens when a good builder doesn't know your number: we design for what your house deserves, not what you can afford. Six weeks later we hand you a stunning proposal that's $180k over what you wanted to spend, and now we've both wasted six weeks. Share a **range** — "between $250k and $320k" — and we can design realistically without locking you in or pushing you to the top.

What things actually cost in Auckland — 2026.

Here are the typical ranges from our renovation cost calculator, priced on the actual 2026 Auckland trade rates we use to quote real jobs. Every figure includes GST and our P&G, contingency, and margin. These are ballparks — your final cost depends on scope, finishes, and site conditions.

RENOVATION TYPE	TYPICAL AUCKLAND RANGE
Bathroom — small ensuite	from $25,000
Bathroom — standard main	$32,000 – $50,000
Bathroom — premium	$70,000 – $100,000
Kitchen — standard family	$45,000 – $60,000
Kitchen — large premium	$100,000+
Home extension — 30m² mid-range	$135,000 – $204,000
Full home renovation — 3-bed standard	$200,000 – $360,000
Full home renovation — premium / large	$500,000 – $780,000+

These ranges assume Master Builder workmanship, proper consenting where needed, a Quantity Surveyor-led scope, and full project management. A cheaper quote isn't a better deal — it's almost always a smaller scope hiding behind the same price tag.

> **RED FLAG**
>
> If a builder gives you a single-page quote with no QS breakdown, no Provisional Sums explained, and no allowance for the unknowns — that's not a quote. That's a hostage situation. You'll be paying for everything they "forgot" later.

The hidden 10–20% nobody talks about.

Always set aside **10–20% of your build cost** for the things that only reveal themselves once walls come off. In Auckland's older housing stock — pre-1980 villas, weatherboard bungalows, plaster-clad 70s homes — this isn't optional. It's the cost of the unknown.

The families who hate their renovations are the ones who spent every dollar on the build and have nothing left when the asbestos gets found behind the laundry, the wiring needs upgrading, or the Council asks for something they didn't budget for.



CHAPTER TWO

02

Real Timelines.

Every Auckland family asks the same first question: "How long will it take?" The honest answer is longer than you think — and that's a feature, not a bug.

How long does an Auckland renovation actually take?

Most families plan their project against the timeline a builder gave them in 30 seconds at the front door. That number is almost always the construction phase only — not the weeks of design, consent and selections that come before it.

Here's the real picture for end-to-end timing, from first design conversation to handover:

PROJECT TYPE	TOTAL TIME (END TO END)
Bathroom renovation	**2 – 3 months**
Kitchen — non-structural	**3 – 4 months**
Kitchen — structural (walls moving)	**5 – 7 months**
Recladding	**4 – 6 months**
Home extension (with consent)	**8 – 12 months**
Character home / villa modernise	**6 – 12 months**
Full home renovation	**9 – 18 months**

Where the time actually goes.

About **half of any Auckland renovation is spent before a hammer swings**. People don't believe us until they live through it. Here's the typical breakdown for a consented project:



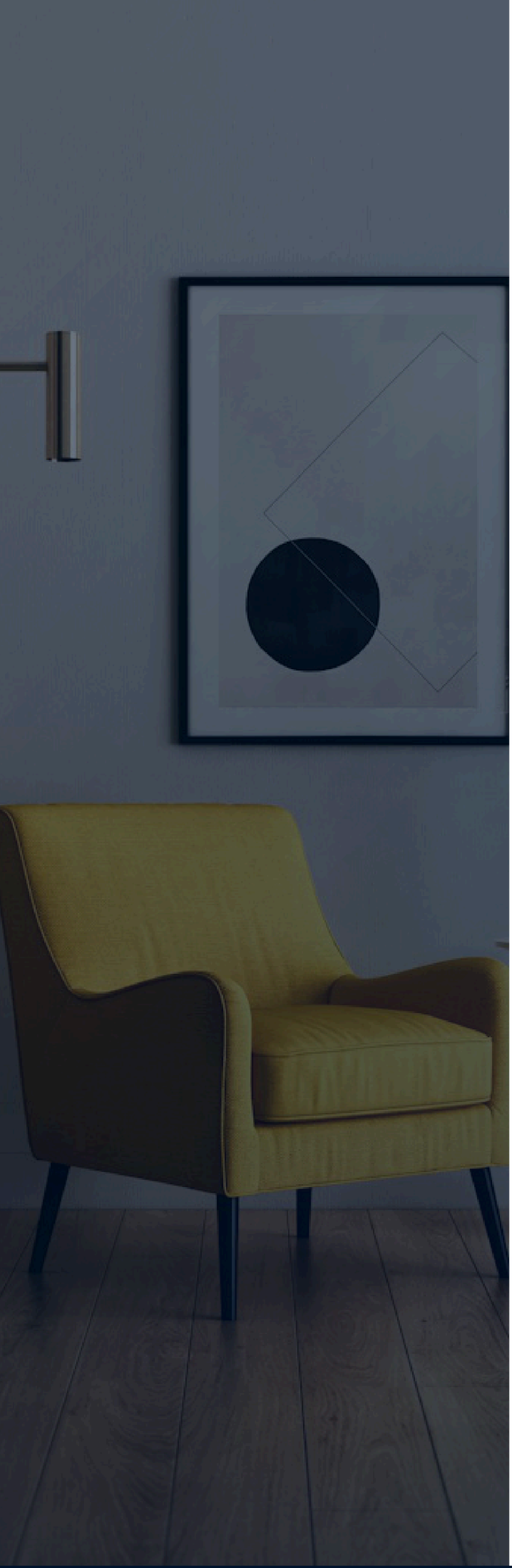
Auckland Council is the variable that surprises people most. A straightforward building consent takes around **5 weeks**. But if Council issues a Request For Information — which happens on most renovations — or if your project needs a resource consent for heritage, scale, or zoning overlays, it can stretch to 14 weeks. Major resource consents in heritage suburbs like Ponsonby, Grey Lynn or parts of Remuera can run six months to a year. Plan for the longer version.

> **AVR INSIDER TIP**
>
> If you want the kitchen finished before Christmas, you need to be signing a contract by autumn — not "starting to look around" in October. Auckland's good trades book up months ahead.

Fixed deadlines matter.

A renovation without a deadline becomes a hobby. A renovation with a fixed end date becomes a project. We build every AVR contract around a Practical Completion date — a specific Friday, written into the contract, with a Gantt chart showing every trade in sequence.

> **RED FLAG**
>
> "We'll have it done in about three months" is not a programme — it's a slogan. Ask for a written Gantt chart at the contract proposal stage. If they can't produce one, they haven't planned the job.



CHAPTER THREE

03

Live In or Move Out?

It's a financial question pretending to be a logistical one. Get this decision right and the build goes smoothly. Get it wrong and you'll be miserable for nine months.

The decision nobody wants to make.

Most families try to live in their house through the renovation. Most regret it by week four. Some power through and are fine. The difference is rarely about toughness — it's about which rooms are being touched, how long the build is, and who's living in the house.

When you can probably stay.

- Single bathroom renovation (if you have a second bathroom).
- Kitchen-only renovation under 6 weeks, with a temporary kitchen set up in the garage or laundry.
- Cosmetic-only work — painting, flooring, joinery — done one room at a time.
- Exterior work — recladding, deck, painting — where the inside of the house stays sealed.

When you should move out.

- Any renovation involving the kitchen **and** a bathroom at the same time.
- Structural work — walls moving, floors lifting, roof off.
- Full-home renovations and most extensions.
- Anything involving young children, elderly relatives, asthma, or noise-sensitive work-from-home setups.

> **THE HONEST NUMBER**
>
> Auckland short-term rentals near common renovation suburbs run roughly **$650 – $1,400 per week** for a three-bedroom house in 2026. For a 6-month build, that's $17k – $36k. Almost always worth it for a structural job.

If you're staying — set the ground rules early.

The families who survive an at-home renovation set expectations with their builder up front. We agree before the job starts on the following:

1. **Site hours.** Typically 7am to 4:30pm Monday to Friday. Weekend work only with your written approval.
2. **Daily clean-down.** Tools off the floor, dust contained, polite. Every day.
3. **Access route.** Where the team walks in and out, so the rest of the house isn't a tip.
4. **Dust separation.** Plastic sheeting walls and zip doors between the live zone and the work zone. Non-negotiable for any reno with sanding or demolition.
5. **Toilet access.** If a builder hasn't planned a portaloo, that's a sign they're going to use yours. Settle this on day one.

> **AVR INSIDER TIP**
>
> For any reno over 8 weeks, set aside one "non-work" room — usually a bedroom or office. Door stays closed, no tradies, no boxes, no tools. It's your sanity room. Every family that has one ends the project happier than the one that didn't.

The decision to stay or leave isn't a personality test. It's a calculation: cost of rental versus cost of a stressed marriage. Add it up honestly before the build starts — not in week six when you're already living in your kitchen-less kitchen.



CHAPTER FOUR

04

Selections. The Silent Killer.

Most renovation blow-outs don't happen on site. They happen at the tile shop, the tapware showroom, and the kitchen design appointment — months before construction starts.

Why selections cause more pain than construction.

Every fitting, finish, fixture and fitting in your renovation is a selection. A kitchen has roughly 80–120 of them. A bathroom has 40–60. A full home renovation can run to 600+ individual selections — every door handle, every light switch, every tile, every tap, every tile-trim profile.

Most families don't realise how many decisions they're about to make until they're three weeks into a build and the tiler is asking which grout colour, the painter is asking which shade of white, and the kitchen company is asking what edge profile they want on the bench. Cumulative decision fatigue is real — and it's where bad calls get made.

THE NUMBERS

Roughly **40% of all variation costs** we see on Auckland renovations stem from selection changes after the contract is signed. Almost all of them could have been resolved at the design stage — for free.

The selections rule that saves families.

Make every single selection **before** we sign the contract. Not most of them. All of them. Tile, tap, sink, vanity, toilet, bath, shower mixer, towel rail, light fitting, bathroom heater, fan, mirror, GPO colour, switch plate, paint, grout, silicone — the lot. Documented, costed, and locked in.

This is the single biggest difference between a smooth renovation and a chaotic one. Yes, it's a slog. But the slog happens at design stage when there's no clock running — not at construction stage when every delay costs you money.

THE AVR SELECTIONS CHECKLIST (BATHROOM EXAMPLE)

- ☑ Floor tile, wall tile, accent tile — with grout colour for each
- ☑ Vanity unit — finish, handles, basin, tapware
- ☑ Shower — mixer, head, rail, glass, channel drain or tile drain
- ☑ Toilet — pan, seat, cistern type, button colour
- ☑ Bath (if applicable) — model, waste, bath filler
- ☑ Heating — towel rail, underfloor, fan/heat lamp
- ☑ Lighting — primary, vanity, niche, exterior
- ☑ Mirror, shaving cabinet, accessories
- ☑ GPOs, switch plates, paint, ceiling finish

Where families typically get stuck.

1. **Tile choice.** Showrooms are designed to make every option look amazing. Bring home large samples and live with them for a week.
2. **Tapware.** Brushed brass was on-trend in 2022. By the time your project finishes in 2027, ask yourself if you'll still love it. Stick to finishes that age well — brushed nickel, matte black, polished chrome.
3. **Kitchen handles.** One of the cheapest items in a kitchen and the one families fight about the most. Order samples early.
4. **Paint colour.** Test it on the actual wall, at the actual time of day you'll see it most. Auckland's morning vs afternoon light can change a "warm white" into a "yellow nightmare".

RED FLAG



CHAPTER FIVE

05

Variations. The Real Cost.

Every renovation has variations. The question isn't whether you'll have them — it's whether your builder is honest about what each one will cost you in time, money and goodwill.

What a variation actually is.

A variation is any change to the agreed scope after the contract is signed. Adding a feature wall. Moving a power point. Upgrading from a $400 tap to an $800 tap. Discovering a rotten joist and replacing it. They all go through the same process — and they all cost more than you'd think.

The four things a variation costs you.

1. **The material.** The actual cost of the new tap, the new tile, the new joist.
2. **The labour.** The hours to install, plus the hours to undo anything that's already been done. Re-pricing existing work is often more expensive than pricing it from scratch.
3. **The admin fee.** Every Master Builder contract allows the builder to charge a margin and administrative fee on variations. Expect 15–25% on top. That's not greed — it's the cost of re-ordering, re-scheduling, updating drawings, re-issuing the programme, and pricing the change.
4. **The Extension of Time (EOT).** Variations add days. A single mid-build "let's also do the laundry" can add 2–3 weeks to a programme by the time the trades, materials and inspections re-sequence.

> **THE REAL MATH**
>
> That "small" $4,000 mid-build change to upgrade the splashback tile? Once you add 20% admin fee, an extra day for the tiler to come back, and the knock-on delay to the kitchen install — the real cost is usually **$5,500–$6,500** and the job finishes a week later.

Variations you can't avoid.

Some variations are unavoidable. In Auckland's older housing stock — the villas, the bungalows, the plaster-clad 70s homes — once walls come off, things are revealed. Old wiring no longer compliant. Borer in a joist. Plumbing that should've been replaced 30 years ago. A builder who promises "no surprises" on a 1920s villa is either lying or hasn't lifted enough floors.

This is what the 10–15% contingency we mentioned in Chapter 1 is for. Don't spend it before the build starts.

Variations you absolutely can avoid.

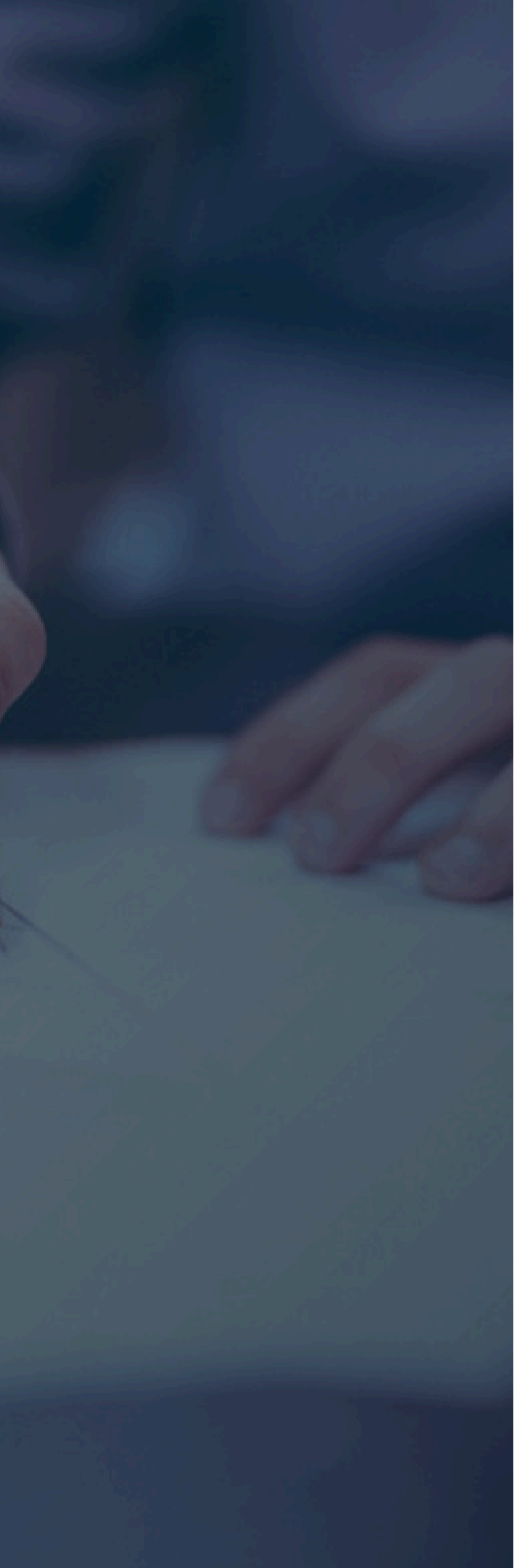
The expensive ones are nearly always voluntary: "actually, let's also do the laundry"; "while you're here, can you redo the deck?"; "I've changed my mind on the kitchen island". Every one of those is a decision that should have been made at design stage — when no clock was running and no trades were sitting idle.

> **AVR INSIDER TIP**
>
> Before approving any mid-build variation, ask three questions: *Does this need to be decided today? Can it wait until the next stage? Is there a cheaper way to achieve the same outcome?* Half the variations we see disappear under that little bit of pressure.

How AVR handles variations — every time.

Every variation on an AVR job is documented in writing, costed in advance, has any EOT spelled out clearly, and is signed off by you before any work happens. No verbal "she'll be right" agreements. No surprises on the final invoice. If you say no, we don't do it. If you say yes, you know exactly what you're approving.

> **RED FLAG**
>
> "We'll sort the paperwork at the end" is the most expensive sentence in renovation. By the end, you've forgotten what was agreed verbally, and you'll be arguing about a $14k bill with someone who heard a



CHAPTER SIX

06

The Contract Proposal Test.

A contract proposal isn't paperwork. It's the single most reliable signal that a builder has actually planned your job — or hasn't. If you can't see these 21 sections, you don't have a proposal. You have a price tag.

The proposal is the audition.

When you compare three builders, you're not comparing prices. You're comparing how each one has thought about your job. The proposal tells you everything: how organised they are, whether they understand your house, whether they've actually priced the work or just rough-cut a number.

At Add Value Renovations we use a Quantity Surveyor-led 21-section scope of work for every project. It's not because we like spreadsheets. It's because every line we leave out becomes a variation later — and every variation becomes an argument.

What a real proposal contains.

If you only check one thing on a builder's proposal, check whether it has these 21 sections. Most don't. The ones that do are the ones you should be talking to.

SECTIONS 01 – 11

- ☑ Preliminaries & site setup
- ☑ Demolition & strip-out
- ☑ Excavation & ground works
- ☑ Concrete & foundations
- ☑ Framing & structural timber
- ☑ Roofing & weathertightness
- ☑ Exterior cladding
- ☑ Windows & exterior doors
- ☑ Insulation & air-sealing
- ☑ Plumbing rough-in & fit-off
- ☑ Electrical rough-in & fit-off

SECTIONS 12 – 21

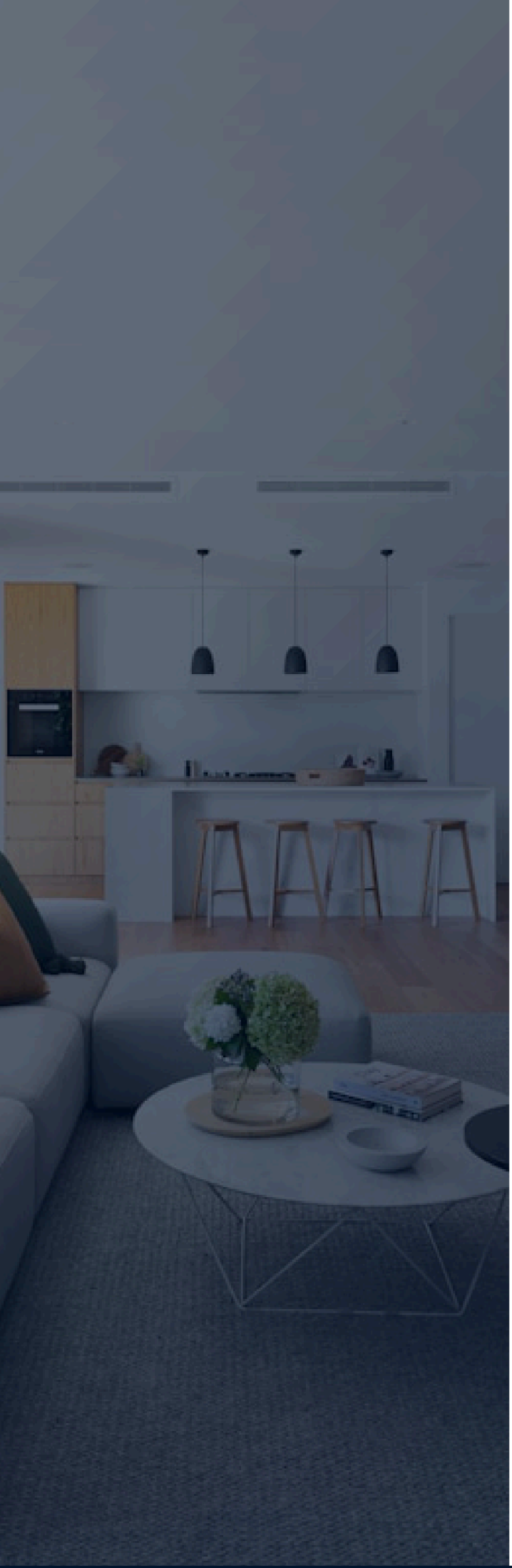
- ☑ Heating, ventilation & HVAC
- ☑ Plasterboard & interior lining
- ☑ Painting (interior & exterior)
- ☑ Tiling & waterproofing
- ☑ Joinery — kitchen & bathroom
- ☑ Internal doors & hardware
- ☑ Flooring (timber, tile, carpet)
- ☑ Decking & outdoor structures
- ☑ Council inspections & CCC
- ☑ Final clean & handover

AVR INSIDER TIP

Ask every builder you're considering to give you their scope of work breakdown **before** the quote. If they can't, it means they're going to make it up as they go. That's the moment to walk.

What else should be in the proposal.

- **A Gantt chart.** Visual programme showing every trade in sequence with a fixed end date.
- **Provisional Sums.** Honest labels on the things that can't be priced exactly yet — and a sensible allowance for each.
- **Prime Cost items.** Tap, tile, light fitting allowances clearly labelled so you know what's included.
- **Payment schedule.** Tied to physical milestones, not calendar dates. Never pay for work that hasn't happened.
- **Master Builder contract.** The Alterations & Additions contract — not a builder's home-made one-pager.
- **Insurance certificate.** Public liability $2M minimum, contract works cover for the build value.



CHAPTER SEVEN

07

The 10-Year Guarantee.

Anyone can promise good work for the next three months. Real builders back their work for a decade. The Master Builder 10-Year Guarantee is the single most important contract you'll sign — and most families don't understand what's in it.

Why association membership matters.

The Registered Master Builders Association of New Zealand was founded in 1891. It's the oldest construction industry body in the country, and being a member isn't automatic — builders apply, are vetted on financials, track record, qualifications, and have to maintain those standards every year.

That's the floor. The 10-Year Master Builder Guarantee is what sits on top of it.

What the 10-Year Guarantee actually covers.

Most families think the guarantee is just "they'll fix it if it falls apart". It's far more specific than that — and far more protective.

- **Structural defects** for 10 years from the date of practical completion.
- **Loss of deposit** protection — up to $50,000 — if a Master Builder member becomes insolvent before starting your job.
- **Non-completion cover** if a Master Builder member becomes insolvent mid-build, up to 20% of the contract value.
- **Materials & workmanship** defects for 2 years.
- **Weathertightness** for 10 years on relevant scope.
- **Independent dispute resolution** through the Master Builders Association — not a court case at your cost.

WHY IT MATTERS

If a non-Master-Builder goes broke halfway through your renovation, your only recourse is litigation. With a Master Builder Guarantee in place, you're covered — and someone else finishes the job. That's the difference between an inconvenience and a catastrophe.

What the Master Builder process actually means for you.

1. **Vetted financials.** Members are reviewed annually. If a builder's books are wobbly, they're out.
2. **Trained tradespeople.** Members commit to apprenticeships and ongoing training. Your build isn't being done by whoever showed up that morning.
3. **Code of ethics.** Members can be removed for unethical conduct. There's a complaint pathway that isn't "ring your lawyer".
4. **Up-to-date methods.** Members get continuing-education on building code changes, new materials, modern weathertightness practice.
5. **House of the Year.** The premier renovation award in NZ, judged by industry peers. AVR was awarded **House of the Year Gold in 2025**.

AVR INSIDER TIP

Ask any builder you're considering for their Master Builder membership number. Then go to **masterbuilder.org.nz** and check it. It's a 30-second check that has saved Auckland families millions of dollars over the years.

REGISTERED MASTER BUILDER

HOUSE OF THE YEAR GOLD 2025

TOP 100 MASTER BUILDERS

LICENSED BUILDING PRACTITIONER



BONUS CHAPTER

Choosing the Right Builder.

Every decision in this guide depends on this one. Get the builder right and the rest sorts itself out. Get it wrong and no amount of planning will save you.

The 10-step process that filters out cowboys.

This isn't the order most families follow. They ring three builders, get three quotes, pick the middle one. That's how Auckland ends up with the renovation horror stories you hear at every dinner party. Here's the order that works.

1. **Shortlist 3-5 builders.** Word of mouth from people who actually lived through their renovation. Google reviews with photos, not just star counts. Master Builder member directory.
2. **Make first contact and time the response.** A good builder gets back to you within 24 hours. Ghosts and slow responders rarely improve once they have your money.
3. **Have a real phone call.** 15-20 minutes. A good builder asks more questions than you do. If they're already pitching you on the first call, that's a sign they're chasing the sale, not the right fit.
4. **Visit the showroom or office.** A real builder has a real address. Newmarket, Parnell, Penrose, somewhere physical. If their entire operation lives in a ute, that tells you something.
5. **Check the portfolio in detail.** Not glossy renders — actual finished Auckland renovations. Ask for the address suburb (not the street) and a recent date. Look for projects similar to yours.
6. **Speak to two previous clients.** Not the ones the builder picks — ask if you can ring two who finished in the last 12 months. A good builder will say yes immediately.
7. **Verify credentials properly.** Master Builder membership number — verified on the MB site. Licensed Building Practitioner number — verified on lbp.govt.nz. Insurance certificate — actual document, not a verbal promise.
8. **Compare proposals — not prices.** Use Chapter 6's 21-section checklist. The cheapest proposal almost always becomes the most expensive job once variations land.
9. **Walk a previous job site.** If a builder has an active site you can visit (with client permission), do it. The state of a site mid-build tells you everything you need to know about how your build will run.
10. **Trust the gut.** If something feels off, listen to it. You'll be living next to this person for 6-18 months. The chemistry matters more than the spreadsheet.

> **THREE COWBOYS, THREE TELLS**
>
> **The Lowball.** Quote is 30% under everyone else. They'll make it back in variations or skip the things they didn't price.
>
> **The Ghost.** Takes a week to reply to your email. They're juggling too many leads. The job will be the same.
>
> **The Yes-Man.** Agrees to everything you ask without ever pushing back. A good builder will tell you when you're wrong — that's what you're paying for.

One last thing.

If you've read this whole guide, you're already in the top 5% of Auckland families starting a renovation. You're not winging it. You're thinking about budget, time, selections, contracts and risk before any of them can hurt you. That's the foundation of every renovation that turns out well.

When you're ready to start that conversation properly — we'd love to be one of the three builders on your shortlist.

READY WHEN YOU ARE

Let's talk about your Auckland renovation.

Free 30-minute consultation. No obligation. You leave with a clear sense of what your project will cost, how long it will take, and whether AVR is the right fit. That's a useful 30 minutes whether you book with us or not.

01

Free Consultation

30 minutes. We listen to your project, share honest feedback, and tell you what's realistic.

02

QS-Led Scope

A 21-section proposal so you know exactly what you're getting before any money changes hands.

03

Build & Handover

Fixed dates. Weekly updates. A renovation that ends with you loving your home — not exhausted.

Speak to a renovation specialist today.

Average response time under 4 hours, Mon–Fri.

09 393 5658

VISIT

415 Remuera Road
Remuera, Auckland 1050

By appointment only

OFFICE

09 393 5658

Mon–Fri 8am–5pm

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