



# Building Services Authority

# ***MEDIA RELEASE***

18 December 2007

## **Save yourself a nightmare: have a written contract for building work**

The Queensland Building Services Authority (BSA) in Townsville is concerned that some homeowners are leaving themselves open to dodgy contractors because they are having building or renovating work performed on their home without a written contract in place.

BSA's general manager Ian Jennings said BSA had found that some home owners in the Townsville region were undertaking considerable renovations or alterations, but had no written contracts with their tradespeople, or had signed contracts after work was completed.

"If there are variations to a plan, these changes must be written into the contract so that costs and expectations are agreed upon before work commences," he said.

"If you lodge a complaint with BSA about defective work performed by a contractor, it can be very difficult to resolve without contracts and other documentation," he said.

"BSA offers Queenslanders the Home Warranty Insurance available in Australia, which insures work valued in excess of \$3,300 performed by a BSA licensee. Making a claim for this insurance without thorough documentation can be very difficult."

"Most disputes can be resolved through mediation, while others have to go through the costly and time-consuming process of the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal. If homeowners and contractors have the proper documentation, this trouble can be avoided."

If you are engaging contractors to do work on your home, BSA offers the following advice:

### ***When choosing a contractor you should follow five simple steps.***

1. Using the Yellow Pages, newspaper ads and referrals from friends and family, find local contractors that are willing and able to do the job.
2. Make sure the contractor is licensed by asking to see their BSA licence card.
3. Write down the contractor's licence details and double-check them with BSA (call 1300 BSA BSA, or visit [www.bsa.qld.gov.au](http://www.bsa.qld.gov.au)) to make sure the licence is current and appropriate for the work you want performed.
4. Get at least three written quotes from contractors and remember that the cheapest is not always the best.
5. Ask the contractor for details of past work they have done and speak with their previous clients.

### ***Once you have chosen a contractor you should:***

- Ensure all details of your agreement with the contractor are *written down* in a contract (or in a detailed written quote if a small job) and that you have a copy.

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- Make sure the contractor gives you copies of all documents supporting the contract, including plans and specifications, soil tests etc.
- Monitor the contractor's work carefully and advise the contractor immediately of problems, both verbally and in writing.
- Never pay the full amount up front, don't pay too big a deposit, don't pre-pay or over-pay the agreed progress payments and never pay for incomplete work.
- Always check the work fully before making your final payment.
- Don't rush into a decision. Take time and seek advice. The *Domestic Building Contracts Act 2000* gives you a "cooling-off" period of five business days to consider your decision and change your mind.

"Your home is likely to be your greatest investment so be very careful who you hire to work on it as this decision can determine whether the project runs like a dream or a nightmare."

"If you have any questions about building or renovating, or find yourself in dispute with a contractor, please contact BSA on 1300 BSA BSA or visit [www.bsa.qld.gov.au](http://www.bsa.qld.gov.au)."

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