

BUILDING A SWIMMING POOL – HOW TO GET STARTED

A swimming pool can be a great addition to your home and increase its value; however the construction and maintenance process can be complex. This guide includes a few tips to help you along the way.

Recommendations from family and friends who own pools are a good starting point. Discuss their experiences involving size, location, finishes, landscaping, building time, upkeep and any issues they faced during or after construction.

What's the best way to choose a pool builder?

Arrange several pool builders to inspect your site, provide written quotations and details of their warranties. Before you accept a quote or sign a contract, check with QBCC that the pool builder is licensed.

It's also a good idea to ask the pool builders for the contact details of at least three past clients so you can check their past work and performance.

What should be included in the quote?

Discuss with the pool builders your requirements in relation to:

- Shape, location on site, interior lining, size and depth of the pool
- Number and type of inlets, skimmer boxes and drains required
- Filtration equipment required – type, capacity and positioning
- Accessories such as underwater lights, cleaners, ladders and handrails

Also, confirm the builder's responsibilities and exactly what work will be included, such as pool surrounds and landscaping.

What should be in the contract?

A range of contracts can be used for swimming pool construction. The Swimming Pool and Spa Association, SPASA, provides contract documentation specifically tailored for this purpose.

All domestic pool contracts for work valued at more than \$3,300 must comply with certain legal requirements:

- A 5-business day “cooling-off” period and the requirement for the contractor to provide the homeowner with a written contract and a QBCC-approved Contract Information Statement.
- The deposit paid must not exceed 10% for work up to \$20,000 in value, or 5% for projects over \$20,000.

Whichever contract you use, read it carefully and seek legal advice about any concerns you may have before signing.

Make sure your contract documentation is supported by appropriate drawings and details of all aspects of your pool, including the physical dimensions, shape, size, water depth, interior finish, type of filtration and access. Your contract should also clearly identify the amount and timing of progress payments.

Check the contract for provisions about unforeseen events, such as encountering rock in the course of excavation and wet weather. You should also obtain in writing any details regarding warranties on the pool and the associated equipment.

What about insurance?

If you have an insurance policy covering your house and contents, let your insurance company know that you are building a pool and make sure it will be covered by your house policy. You may have to increase your coverage or arrange an extension to your existing house and contents policy.

What approvals are needed for pool construction?

Sewerage and water supply approval

Approval from your local government is required in sewered areas and in most cases your pool builder will arrange this.

Building approval

Swimming pools require building approval. After entering into a contract to build your pool, your pool builder will draw up plans and specifications for your approval. Your pool builder is also responsible for the lodging of the documents with your local government, a private certifier and the relevant statutory authorities. After all these essential approvals are granted, the pool builder can then commence work.

Structural stability

Before approval, your local government or private certifier will require information from the pool builder to ensure that the pool will be structurally sound. For difficult sites, structural advice may be required from a qualified engineer.

What are the fencing requirements?

In Queensland, we have specific fencing requirements in order to keep our pools safe.

Your local government or private certifier should let you know of the fencing systems that will meet these requirements. Only your local government can give you an exemption.

If your local government does not have a specific statement regarding fencing, you should still talk to them to ensure you are making your pool safe.

What happens when the pool is completed?

A comprehensive 'handover' by the builder is essential. It is important that everyone who will be responsible for your pool's care and maintenance learns about:

- Sanitising the water
- Operating and maintaining the filtration equipment
- Operating and maintaining the chlorination equipment (if applicable).

Need more information?

Visit www.qbcc.qld.gov.au or SPASA www.spasaqld.com.au. You can also call QBCC (on 139 333), QBCC-licensed pool builders, or your local government or private certifier for more information on pool construction.