

DESIGN SOLUTIONS FROM THE EXPERTS



MM+J Architects in Manly tell COVERED what they bring to the building and renovating minefield facing homeowners.

PRINCIPAL LUISA MANFREDINI GIVES HER EXPERT ADVICE ON JUST WHY HER PROFESSION IS AN ESSENTIAL LINK IN THE BUILDING CHAIN.

Why do you think it's important to bring an architect on board?

An architect can provide quality, long term solutions, adding value to your re-sale price.

At what point in the process should you get an architect involved? As soon as you start thinking about renovating or building. You can even contact us before you purchase your home! We are available to come to

an open house with you to advise whether the property can be renovated to accommodate your needs.

How do your services differ from a draughtsman?

Architects offer a complete service from Sketch Design and Council approvals, to documentation for construction, builder selection, building contract administration services beyond occupation.

What happens – do you discuss the client's ideas and put forward your own?

We get an understanding of the client's needs spatially, also what their focus is, generally by meeting them at their home. For instance, is it important to be able to monitor the indoor and outdoor living areas due to small children? Do you prefer a separate living area for the kids or adults? Do you do a lot of entertaining? Etc. The client may have their own ideas. However with our experience, we see opportunities the clients don't and once we present our ideas, the benefits are obvious.

Is it your job to ensure these are realistic and how do you do that?

The most common issue is that people want the most amount of quantity and quality for the lowest price. It's human nature! So yes, it is our job to point out that their wishlist and their budget may not be compatible. Also to assist to come to a compromise somewhere.

Do you only work on builds that have a certain price tag attached? No. We work across the range of project types and sizes.

Do you really believe your services will help save money for the project in the long run? Yes. The process provides the best way to get the most streamlined price for the best quality. Architects provide actual deliverables such as drawings, documents, meetings for their fee.

Do you believe you can find solutions homeowners can't?

Absolutely. We have decades of experience and expertise. I worked with a client who was a project manager and thought he had come up with a great design. I saw an opportunity to extend in a particular corner, which then opened up the design to be far more efficient and flexible, and we were able to retain more of the existing building, saving him money.

Do you take a project through from start to finish?

Our firm really prefers to do that so that the initial design is seen through to the very end, with the quality and detail kept throughout. This is called 'Full Services' under the Australian Institute of Architects' Client Architect Agreement.

Do you liaise with the builder and tradespeople?

Yes, we liaise primarily with the builder. They price and build from our drawings and documents, and we work together to get the project built to client expectations.

The tradespeople are the 'craftsmen' so we like to deal directly with them via the builder.

Do you pick fixtures and fittings on a client brief or are you just responsible for the structural issues?

We prefer to assist the client to select everything that is fixed such as bathroom fittings, tiles, taps etc. because we enjoy the interior as well as the exterior design. We visit showrooms with clients to go through the products available so you can compare the style, cost, function etc. We prepare a schedule of all items selected so the builder just has to order when he needs it and there aren't delays with the building. We see it as a holistic process.

Does having an architect mean high end/high cost – some people seem to think this?

Not necessarily, we enjoy working with people to achieve the best design they can. They may only be able to afford some sketch design options, or maybe just drawings to DA stage, but at least we are contributing to a better design where we can. ■

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Luisa Manfredini Experience:

Bachelor of Architecture Degree from UNSW (1993); Started as a Sole Practitioner at Easter 2000 in the Lower North Shore working on residential projects. David McCrae joined the practice in 2011 and we relocated to Manly, and still going strong!

David McCrae experience:

Bachelor of Architecture from Deakin University (1986); worked at several residential and commercial firms in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

mm+j
architects

ARCHITECTURAL INSIGHT

Luisa Manfredini from MM+J Architects in Manly believes renovating and building is very rewarding.

She looks at the various stages from the initial concept to the completed and tested build.

The Sketch Design & Drawing Up Plans.

A crucial part of the process. Here is where decisions are made about the layout and form of the building. The architect's skill is to discuss your needs, and provide your dream home. Clever planning, a knowledge of the particular characteristics of your site, a knowledge of the building process, council controls and budget restraints come together. Consideration of neighbours including overshadowing and overlooking. We use three dimensional modelling to help you visualise the design.

Gaining Necessary Approval for Plans

Once the vision is confirmed in the drawings, approval from Authorities is required. A Complying Development Certificate process is required for some projects. Development Application is the alternative next step and needs to be lodged to your local Council. This requires many documents and generally takes around three to 12 months. You might have

more restrictions than usual depending on where you live. Some restrictions include Heritage Conservation areas; Bushfire zones; Biodiversity zones; Landslip zones or Acid Soils zones. Reports from consultants may be required, plus other documentation.

Liaising with Interested Parties.

Once all the documents are lodged, your neighbours are notified and can comment on your plans. This can be a very tricky phase of the project. We can meet and explain the impacts to neighbours, and they may adjust their objection, or we can work together to adjust the design, coming to a compromise between the parties. Council may also request changes, and we can work with them to resolve the issues. We can help you lodge an application to Land and Environment Court - a last resort.

Engaging a Builder and the Build.

Once you have approval, architects provide more drawings and documents to describe the project to the builder. We provide them more detailed drawings with the layout of the kitchen, bathroom/laundry, the layout of the electrical wiring and lighting, which materials are used where and how they join together, staircases, pools and so on.

Sourcing Fittings, Systems & Materials.

We come with you to showrooms to select all fixtures. These are itemised and correlated with the

drawings so the builder knows what goes where and can order items well in advance.

We also organise any external consultants required – like a structural engineer, a hydraulic engineer, heritage consultants, etc.

We organise a pack of information and issue this to several builders. The preferred method is to have them all quote a fixed cost for all the work. Some builders prefer to use a 'pay as you go' method, and we can work with this too.

Construction.

We like to make regular weekly site visits to check on progress, answer questions and resolve any unforeseen issues.

We review payments to the builder and check the build progress. This is 'administering the contract' and is a little like project management of the building. It means a Project Manager is not required.

After Build Service.

You can move in. We come back to check any issues and rectify them. After a final inspection the builder is paid. ■

The project is complete!

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