

## How You Benefit From My Love of Architecture



If you ask me what I enjoy doing most as an Architect, I'll tell you straight away... It's problem-solving.

Now, you're probably asking, why not design or drawing? Wouldn't that be any Architect's favourite part?

And while I do enjoy being creative, solving complex design challenges and creating innovative solutions for clients satisfy me the most.

That's what I love about architecture.

**Often when clients come to me, they already know what they want and think they need the solution.**

But guess what? You don't. You only need a vision of what you want to achieve.

Because I understand what can and can't be done based on budget, site conditions, council restrictions, overlays, building codes, etcetera.

I can draw what you think you want, and then I'll draw what will solve your problems.

*Need more space?*

*Disabled access?*

*A working garage?*

Well, instead of trying to come up with ideas of how to rearrange your existing home, refurb your office space, or build on a sloping block, I'll be the one to wake up in the middle of the night with an aha moment and solve it for you.

That's why I became an Architect, to begin with.

## **I love solving problems and creating a space you'll adore now and in ten years.**

Even though my personal motto is "*what you see is what you get*," I have a lesser-known motivation for being an Architect.

It started as a child when I would travel up to Sydney with my dad to see the Sydney Opera House, the Harbour Bridge and the AMP building (just to name a few).

And of all those places and structures, I would note the light, colours, shadows, and lines.

My eye would catch the surrounding natural elements like the trees and the sky and the grass and the way they framed these places synonymously—balancing the vibrancy of the natural world with the built form.

And today, my eye still catches these things when I walk past.

It is these small elements that, not only inspire me, but also infuse into my designs.

See, to me, architecture is more than just a building, a house, or a commercial or retail space.

## **It's a feeling, a state of mind and body.**

Take the QVB, for example.

When I walk through the QVB and sit for a moment in one of the many nooks, I feel peaceful.

I could sit there for hours.

Why?

The way the light filters through the leadlight windows and the intimate hues of the art deco pendants create a rich old-world charm. These elements transport me to a place of warmth and comfort.



## **Just imagine if you could create that for your own space?**

Whether it's your home, your café, or your office workspace.

These aspects aren't items or features you can pick from a catalogue; they are elements designed to work harmoniously with you and your surroundings.

And I love suggesting these creative solutions to your project, because if I can help bring your vision to life—functionally, visually and viscerally—then you're a happy client, and I'm a happy Architect.

I'll leave you to ponder the words of an Architect I admire—Frank Lloyd Wright:

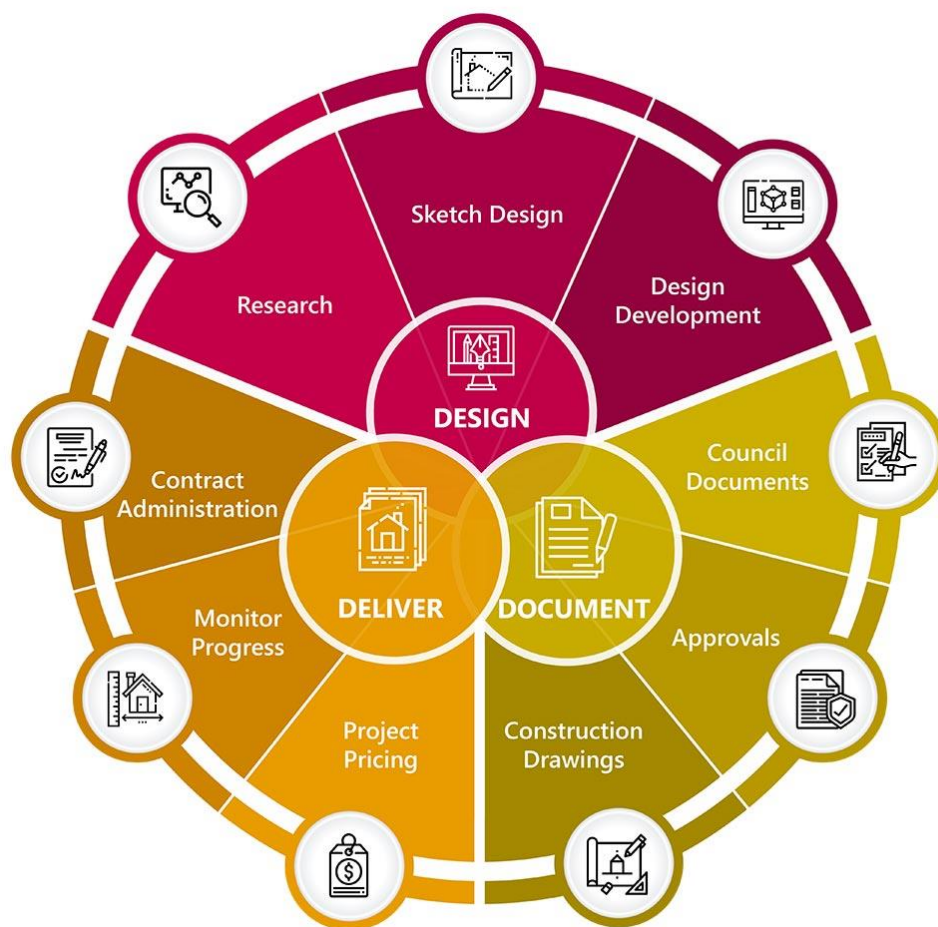
***“We create our buildings, and then they create us.”***

## 9 Steps to Your Dream Home

If you've visited my website recently, you'll see a model outlining our client service approach.

So, today, I will run you through your typical experience, from when you first engage my team to delivery.

*To come along on this journey, you'll need to bring two bottles of champagne (or a celebratory non-alcoholic alternative)...*



### Let's get started.

At first contact, we would generally have a chat to see if I'm the right person for you.

After all, this is a working relationship we will develop, so we need to at least connect.



## Step 1. Research.

If you've read my article on [Council controls and overlays <INSERT LINK >](#), you'll know that there are a whole bunch of potential project constraints.

So, I need to know what they are before I visit your property.

Then, you'll give me the grand tour.

I'll get a feel for your space and surroundings.

And we'll discuss what you want to do and what you can and can't do.

I'll return with all that information to the office and calculate a fee proposal.

Then I'll send it to your email, and if you wish to accept.... Go straight to step 2, do not pass go!

## Step 2. Sketch Design

After I measure your site and obtain existing drawings from Council (don't worry, they'll have them, their archives go way back), we start the fun part—drawing.

I draw what you want, and I draw different options based on my experience in applying creative solutions.

These are elements and approaches that you may not have considered.

We go back and forth a few times, working through the design process until you're satisfied.

### Step 3. Design Development

This is the fun part!

Once we have an agreed floor plan, elevations, sections and all the little details we need to bring the design to life, we start looking at pictures.

I'm talking about:

- Pinterest and Google Images
- Mood Boards
- Finishes
- Materials
- Colour.

We then create an image of your project using our computer-assisted design software.

*So, pop that first bottle of champagne you've brought along because your dream has just become a visual reality!*



### Step 4. Council Documents

Before you get too excited, it's time for hoop jumping.

You know what I'm talking about:

- Compliance
- Forms
- Development Application
- Compliant Development Certificate

But I take care of all that.

By this stage, I already know what Council needs. Just remember not all the pathways to building are the same.

Sometimes we have to take the blue pill, sometimes the red. And sometimes, the forms and deliverables are required at different stages of the job.

It's all dependent on the project.

Regardless of the sequence, we need approvals.

## **Step 5. Approvals**

This is the stage things can slow down. Don't get disheartened, and don't lose hope of your dream. Keep checking that "visual reality" I sent to your inbox.

The approval process takes roughly 40 days.

Yet, those 40 days and 40 nights do not include weekends, public holidays, the day of submission and the day of approval, and maybe even then some.

Whatever you do, don't call Council. That's my domain.

## **Step 6. Construction Drawings**

Also known as blueprints.

These drawings are highly technical illustrations that communicate building specifications.

In other words, the construction team must follow a guide to ensure the project is built to the intended design.



## Step 7. Project Pricing

Once the drawings are all set, we get the project priced by a builder, yet the materials and cost of building is an ever-changing figure.

So, in recent years, it's been dependent on supply and demand.

## Step 8. Monitor Progress

If you agree to proceed with the build, it's take-off time! Destination dream home!

You can choose to project manage the building process yourself, or we can do it for you.

Obviously, we prefer doing it for you.

The main reason is that when we deal directly with the builder, it creates a smooth process that takes the pressure and stress off you.

## Step 9. Contract Administration

We ensure the project is completed on time, within budget, and compliant with the agreed requirements, including quality and workmanship.

We also review and approve contractor invoices and change orders, and talk you through any unforeseen costs.



Although we strive for a hiccup-free process, sometimes issues or disputes arise along the way. That's just life. But we aim to resolve these for you painlessly.

*So, now to congratulations and hello dream house! Which means it's time to pop that second bottle of champagne.*



**Now you know the Ruth Newman experience and the 9 steps to your dream home.**

If you like the sound of this journey, be sure to think of me when you're looking for someone to help you take your dream from an intangible idea to a reality.

In the words of T.E. Lawrence, now you can:

***“Dream your dreams with open eyes and make them come true.”***

## **The 1 Reason Council Makes You Jump Through Hoops (And it's not what you think it is)**



The most common reason clients choose me is that I'm local to the area of Sutherland Shire.

I'm a part of our community.

Our office is in Gymea and has been for some time, so I know this beautiful part of the world like the back of my hand.

The Sutherland Shire is the traditional land of the Dharawal people.

And, the common thread between all of us who live here is that this place of bush, coast, and rivers is what we call home.

The land may be the terrain and natural surroundings, and the place may have personal and emotional significance, yet together they create our sense of belonging.

### **And, with land and place comes oversight.**

That oversight is Council.

A body of caretakers to ensure our home remains unspoilt and protected in a climate of rapid growth and development.

But when you think of Council, you think of rules, regulations, forms, approvals, and fees.

You think red tape.

And, you're right.

Council is a Local Government Authority, and that goes hand-in-hand with bureaucracy.

But, guess what?

They don't exist to make life difficult for you.

They exist to protect the things we love about our home.

And that's why my team and I have developed a very good relationship with the local Council.

Not only to make the compliance process smoother but because building your dreams is a team effort, and Council is just one part of that multidisciplinary team.

## **Do you live in the Sutherland Shire?**

If you want to know what zoning and controls affect your property, the Sutherland Shire Council have an easy-to-use map at:

<https://mapping.ssc.nsw.gov.au/LEP/>

Your property falls within the governance of the Sutherland Shire Development Control Plan (DCP) and the Local Environment Plan (LEP).

These two documents outline the objectives and controls used by Council when determining your development application (DA).

By the way, I don't recommend reading these documents because they're more complex than War and Peace, and you'll most likely fall asleep during the first page.

That's why it's my job to keep across them and ensure your project's DA meets these controls.

## **So, what are some of the potential controls in our area?**

The most common are:

- Land use zones

- Minimum subdivision lot size
- Height of buildings
- Floor space ratio
- Density controls
- Bushfire control
- Flood control
- Environmentally sensitive land

Then there are restrictions on:

- Setbacks
- Retaining walls & structural support
- Awnings & shade structures
- Carports & garages
- Decks & balconies
- Fences
- Swimming pools.

Really, the list could go on and on and on!

## **Navigating these controls is like navigating the stars in the night sky**

The main point I'm making here is that, like stars, there are a lot of controls, and it's impossible to make out the clear picture until you talk to someone who knows what they're looking at.



Anytime you wish to discuss ideas about your property, commercial or retail space, now you'll know the first things I'll start researching for you.

Because there's nothing worse than getting your hopes up only to find out the amount of hoops you need to jump through when submitting your application to Council.

I've called them hoops, but I'll leave you to think about the words from Mohith Agadi and what these hoops actually represent:

***“Environment is no one's property to destroy; it's everyone's responsibility to protect.”***

## How to Traverse Council Compliance and Survive



Do you remember Burke and Wills from your history lessons?

They were explorers who led an expedition to navigate Australia from south to north in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

You'll recall they traversed a dry and inhospitable environment through the outback of New South Wales and Queensland.

They also made it unknowingly to their destination of the Gulf of Carpentaria, only to perish on their return.

So, now you're refamiliarised with the history of Australian exploration, you're probably wondering...

### **What do Burke and Wills have to do with building or renovating your home or Council compliance?**

Well, friends, I'm giving you a visual comparison of what it's like navigating the world of Complying Development and Development Applications in the Sutherland Shire.

It's dry, difficult and inhospitable!

And yes, unlike poor Burke and Wills, you'll survive the journey, but you may not have much hair left when I see you on the other side.

So, to get you started in the right direction, here is my dehydrating list of consent (approval) and certificate requirements to simulate the Council experience.

## **Pathways to gaining consent from Council (Approval)**

### **Development Application or a Complying Development Certificate?**

Regardless of either pathway, you'll still need to provide a copious amount of plans and documents ([click here for my article on Council drawings](#)).

These can include:

- cost assessment
- scaled site plans
- floor/roof plans and elevations
- survey plan
- landscape plan
- drainage plan
- site analysis plan
- A4-sized site plan and elevations for neighbour notifications
- construction management plan
- subdivision plan
- shadow diagrams
- details of materials and finishes
- site assets
- concept drainage plans
- site and context analysis

You might also need a BASIX certificate, Heritage Items, Bushfire Assessment Report, and Statement of Environment Effects.

### **Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) Certificate**

You should apply for a BAL Certificate before designing your proposal or seeking a Complying Development Certificate in order to consider bushfire requirements during the design process.

If your level is BAL-40 or BAL-FZ, you must lodge a Development Application rather than a Complying Development Certificate.

### **BASIX Certificate**



If you're building a new home, undertaking renovations of \$50,000 or more, or installing a pool or spa of more than 40,000 litres, you'll need a BASIX certificate.



## **Post-consent (approval) certificates**

### **Planning Certificates**

Do you need a Section 10.7(2) certificate or a Section 10.7(2) AND 10.7(5) certificate?

Choose carefully because the first one cannot be upgraded to the second.

### **Construction Certificate**

After you've received Development Consent, you need to apply for a Construction Certificate before building works can commence.

### **Subdivision Works Certificate (SWC)**

If you're subdividing in connection with a Development Consent, you'll need the SWC before construction commences.

Then, on completion, you'll need a Completion Certificate.

### **Occupation Certificate**



You cannot legally occupy a building upon completion of works until an Occupation Certificate is issued.

## **Fire Safety Certificate**

These confirm that a qualified person has installed and checked fire safety measures. A certificate is issued upon completion of new building work.



**Okay, you can breathe now.**

Are you exhausted? Thirsty? Ready to rip your hair out?

I completely understand your pain.

And, when it comes to making the journey in reality, I'll not only be your guide, I'll just drive you there and do everything for you.

After all, in this particular instance and regardless of what Emerson said:

***It's all about the destination, not the journey.***

## How Your Budget is Affected by Who's Who in the Construction Zoo



When you're considering building or renovating, it's common not to know who does what in the construction zoo.

And, you'll be surprised to hear there are a lot of players behind the scenes who are involved in the whole process from go to whoa.

Some are required, while others are optional, and you must know who to involve and when in order to budget for them.

Yet, this is one thing clients forget to consider when budgeting.

So, here's my quick list of everyone who might be involved in your project and what they do.

### Architect

That's me! Read more about what I'll do for you here. [<INSERT LINK TO CLIENT JOURNEY ARTICLE>](#)

### Principal Building Certifier

Very Necessary!

Usually a registered building surveyor, they're responsible for ensuring the project complies with State and Local Government laws, regulations and building code standards.

They oversee the development and conduct mandatory 'critical-stage' inspections.

Once the works are completed, they conduct a final inspection and issue an Occupation Certificate (mandatory).

Certifiers can be sourced privately, or you can use a Council-appointed Certifier.

## **Town Planner**

Optional, depending on the extent of your project and the extent of constraints on your property.

They help you with development approval and the planning laws and overlays that affect your property.

If you use an Architect, you don't need to engage a Town Planner, as the Architect will seek advice during the design process.

## **Structural Engineer**

Necessary!

They provide consultancy services to architects and builders to ensure the design and building works are structurally sound, such as foundations, walls, roofs, retaining walls, and supporting structures.

In a nutshell, they ensure your house stays upright for years to come!



## **Landscape Designer**

Assists with natural beautification and amenity, which in some cases, is necessary to gain approval for specific projects.

They design entrances, gardens, alfresco areas, poolsapes, outdoor lighting, fencing, hardscapes and retaining walls.

## **Energy Efficiency Consultant**

Checks the design against the standards that determine energy efficiency.

To commence construction, you must meet a star rating to gain approval.

## **Interior Designer**

Working with a professional who brings out your personality and taste through colour consultancy, finishes, space utilisation, art, and more is optional.

## **Geotechnical and Civil/Hydraulic Engineer**

They carry out soil testing and advise structural requirements based on soil results and conditions of the property.

Using these professionals depends on the makeup of your property's soil (indicative of the Soil Infiltration Potential overlay).

For example, if you live south of President Avenue and Kingsway, your land might have a medium soil infiltration potential.

If you live along the coast between Kurnell and Bundeena, you'll most likely have a high infiltration potential.

This means you'll need a Civil Engineer to design adequate stormwater, sewage and runoff infrastructure to support your building works.

## **The Bushfire Consultant**

Necessary for bushfire-prone properties rated BAL-40 or BAL-Flame Zone.

They evaluate your property and project proposal and advise what you need to incorporate into your design for bushfire protection and the cost implications of these measures.

## Surveyor

Necessary.

The building surveyors will provide you with the dimensions of your property, boundary lines, right of way, easements and encumbrances.

## Quantity Surveyor

Also known as a building estimator, who is the accountant of the building industry, and will assess and estimate the cost of your building project.

[Click here for my article on using a Quantity Surveyor.](#)

## The Builder

You know what they do.

They construct your house and subcontract professionals for all the specialist trades, such as plastering, painting, tiling, electrical, joinery, glazing, balustrading, waterproofing, gasfitting, and more.



Although I've outlined the whole team potentially involved in your project, if you use an Architect who manages your project to delivery (like me), you won't need to hunt for any of these professionals.

And a significant benefit to this is, with over twenty years in the industry, I've partnered with the most reliable, most professional specialists for our local area.

Remember, in the words of John Maxwell:

***“Teamwork Makes the Dream Work.”***