

How to choose a cleaner

What a fair hourly rate buys, when a bond clean is worth paying for, and the insurance question almost nobody asks

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Cleaning looks like the easiest trade to hire and it is one of the easiest to get wrong, because the difference between two quotes for the same house is rarely the cleaning. It is whether the person is insured, whether they are an employee or a contractor in name only, and whether anyone has checked who is in your house while you are at work. A very cheap hourly rate with no paperwork is not a saving; it is your risk, moved across to your side of the ledger.

What it should cost

Domestic cleaning in Australia generally runs about \$35 to \$80 an hour, and a sole trader with real insurance and equipment sits higher, commonly \$55 to \$90. Per visit, expect roughly \$80 to \$180 for a one-bedroom home, \$120 to \$240 for two bedrooms and \$200 to \$420 for four. A fortnightly clean is normally cheaper per visit than a one-off, because the cleaner is maintaining a standard rather than restoring one.

End-of-lease and bond cleans are a different job and a different price: roughly \$200 to \$850 depending on size and whether the oven, windows, blinds and carpets are included. Carpet steam cleaning is usually a separate provider and a separate charge. Most cleaners have a two to three hour minimum, and regional Tasmanian cleaners may add a travel component. Anything under about \$35 an hour is either a two-hour minimum with travel on top, or a sign someone is being paid under the Cleaning Services Award 2020 minimum, which is a problem for them and eventually for you.

What the law requires

There is no cleaner licence in Tasmania, so the protection you would get from a licence has to come from somewhere else. Ask for their ABN and check it on ABN Lookup. If the person cleaning your house has no ABN, works only for you and works your hours, that can be an employment relationship rather than a contracting one, and the tax, super and insurance obligations can land on you as the householder. If they do employ people, Tasmanian employers must hold workers compensation insurance under the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act, and it is fair to ask for the certificate of currency.

Two other things matter. Public liability insurance is standard in the industry, commonly \$5 million to \$20 million, and it is what covers a broken benchtop or a scratched floor; ask for the certificate and check the expiry date. If the work is a regulated activity, for example cleaning in a childcare service or an NDIS participant's home, the cleaner needs Registration to Work with Vulnerable People, and you can ask to see the card. Australian Consumer Law guaranteed protections apply to the service: it must be

done with due care and skill and be fit for the purpose you stated. A cleaning contract sold at your door or over the phone is an unsolicited consumer agreement with a 10 business day cooling-off period.

Red flags

Cannot provide an ABN, or cannot produce a certificate of currency for public liability insurance.

Quotes over the phone without seeing the house, then adds charges on the day.

Wants cash only, up front, with no receipt or invoice.

Sends a different, unnamed person every week, or will not say who attends.

Advertises a low flat rate per bedroom that turns out to exclude the oven, the bathrooms and the window tracks.

Pushes a 12-month contract or a direct debit after a door knock or a cold call.

What good looks like

Walks the house and gives a written quote that itemises what is included and what is not.

Volunteers their insurance, their ABN and whether they have staff before you have to ask.

Sends the same cleaner each visit, or tells you in advance when that changes.

Has a stated policy for coming back to fix anything missed, in writing.

Tells you honestly when part of the job needs someone else, such as a carpet steam cleaner or a window cleaner at height.

What to ask

- "What is your hourly rate, and is there a minimum charge or a travel fee?"
- "Are you insured for public liability, and can you send me a certificate of currency?"
- "Are you the business owner, a subcontractor with an ABN, or an employee - and who do I pay?"
- "If you have staff, are they covered by workers compensation insurance?"
- "What is included in a regular clean, and what costs extra - oven, windows, blinds, carpets, balcony?"
- "Do you use your own products, and are they safe on stone benchtops, timber floors and aluminium?"
- "Who will actually be in my house each visit, and can it be the same person?"

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