

How to choose an electrician

What needs a certificate of electrical safety, and how to tell a real quote from a guess

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Electrical work is the trade where a bad job kills someone, usually not the person who paid for it and usually years later. That single fact should shape every question you ask.

What it should cost

Expect roughly \$90 to \$150 an hour, with a minimum call-out. Small jobs - a power point, a light fitting, a switchboard photo for a quote - have a minimum that is mostly travel and setup.

Switchboard work, rewiring and anything requiring a new circuit belong in a written quote, not an hourly estimate.

If a quote for a switchboard upgrade is dramatically below the others, ask what is excluded: the compliance certificate, the mains work, or restoring the wall.

What the law requires

All electrical work in Tasmania must be done by a licensed electrician, and most work requires a Certificate of Electrical Safety. This certificate is a legal record that the work was tested and is safe, and it matters when you insure or sell the property.

Some work is "prescribed" and needs the certificate plus notification to the regulator. Your electrician should tell you which category your job falls into without being pushed.

The certificate is not optional and is not a favour. An electrician who offers to skip it is offering to break the law on your behalf.

Red flags

No licence number, or one they are reluctant to give.

"You do not need a certificate for this."

Prices complex work over the phone without looking.

No insurance.

Asks for a large cash deposit up front.

Cannot explain why the work is needed in plain language.

What good looks like

Tells you the certificate is included before you ask.

Explains the fault in terms of what you would notice, not jargon.

Offers to photograph the switchboard or the fault so you can see it.

Gives a written quote with the scope stated.

Says when a cheaper option exists and what it costs you later.

What to ask

- "What is your licence number?"
- "Will this job need a Certificate of Electrical Safety?"
- "Is this a fixed quote? What would change it?"
- "Is the switchboard being replaced or just added to - and why?"
- "Are you insured?"
- "What is your availability, and is there a call-out fee?"

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