

How to choose a roofer

When you need a full replacement rather than a repair, what a re-roof should cost, and the licence and permit that go with it

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A roof quote is easy to make look cheap and hard to make honest, because most of the cost is hidden in what you cannot see - the battens, the sarking, the flashings, and whether the old roof was stripped or simply covered over. The difference between two quotes is rarely the sheet; it is whether the structure underneath was actually checked before the new roof went on.

What it should cost

For a standard 180 to 200 square metre house roof, a budget overlay (new sheet over existing battens, no structural work) is roughly \$7,000 to \$15,000; a full tear-off and replacement commonly runs \$15,000 to \$35,000, and can pass \$50,000 with premium materials, new battens or rafters, or heritage work. Steel roofing material runs from about \$18 to \$40 per square metre, with installation labour on top, and terracotta and slate are multiples of that.

A repair is a different scale entirely: a leaking valley or flashing is often \$200 to \$600, and a small section of sheet a few hundred to a few thousand. Ask the roofer to assess the age and condition of the whole roof, not just the leak, because the leak is usually a symptom. Get at least three quotes and ask each one what is excluded - gutters, fascia, insulation, removal and disposal of the old roof, and whether scaffolding or edge protection is in the price, which on the cheapest quote it usually is not.

What the law requires

Roofing is licensed building services work in Tasmania and must be done by a licensed roofer, while roof plumbing - gutters, downpipes and flashings - is licensed plumbing work. Those are two separate licences, and a job that includes gutters and flashings needs someone who actually holds the plumbing side, not just a roofer who says they do that too.

Some re-roofs require a building permit, or at least a check against the National Construction Code, particularly where the roof structure, fixings or sarking change, or where the property sits in a heritage or bushfire-prone overlay; your council as permit authority decides. Insist on the insurance figure in writing - building services providers must hold public liability cover, currently at least \$5 million per occurrence - and see a certificate of currency for the business named on the quote, not a parent company.

Red flags

Quotes a re-roof without establishing whether a permit is needed.

Offers to overlay a 30-year-old roof "to save money" without inspecting the structure.

Cannot say who holds the plumbing licence on a job that includes gutters and flashings.

Leaves scaffolding, edge protection, or removal and disposal of the old roof out of the price.

Asks for a large cash deposit up front, or a deposit above the limit for domestic building work.

Cannot show a certificate of currency for public liability insurance.

What good looks like

Tells you whether the job needs a permit before you ask.

Prices the strip, the structural check, the sarking, the flashings and the gutters as separate lines.

Names who holds which licence for each part of the job.

Says honestly when a repair will buy a few more years and a replacement is not yet worth it.

Shows public liability cover for the trading entity that is actually quoting.

What to ask

- "What licence do you hold - a roofing licence, a roof plumbing licence, or both?"
- "Will you strip the old roof, and will you check and replace any rotten battens or rafters you find?"
- "Does this job need a building permit, and who is lodging it?"
- "Is scaffolding or edge protection in this price, and does it meet the safety requirements?"
- "Will I get a Certificate of Plumbing Compliance for the gutters, downpipes and flashings?"
- "What is your public liability insurance, and can I see the certificate of currency?"
- "What happens if you find asbestos, or if the price changes once the roof is opened up?"

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