

Care & Support

Hiring Private Care Services and Tradespeople



If you plan to hire a private contractor for personal care, home care or home maintenance services, here are some suggestions you might like to consider.

Private personal care services

Personal care services could include nursing, showering, dressing, shopping, banking or cleaning. The following questions might be useful when choosing a service provider.

Ask a friend or family member to be with you during the initial interview to provide support, if needed.

At the initial interview:

1. Are you being listened to? Are your questions being answered? Are you being pressured into accepting the service? Are you being treated with respect?
2. Are there any pamphlets or fact sheets, which tell you about the services provided by the agency?
3. Are the agency staff police checked or security checked?
4. Does the agency hold public liability insurance?
5. Who is assessing your needs? Are they qualified to do so?
6. Are the staff trained/qualified in the necessary skills to fulfil your needs?
7. Will the agency staff co-operate with other health professionals, i.e. doctor, Royal District Nursing Service, or medical specialists if necessary?
8. Does the agency offer pensioner or Seniors Card discount?
9. Is the agency prepared to provide a contract of service, and does that contract clearly indicate:
 - Precisely which services you will receive and how often
 - How much time the agency sets aside for providing each service
 - What is the cost for each service? Are there hidden extras?
 - Under what conditions can any cost increases be passed on to you?

- What opportunity do you have to seek variation or termination of services being offered if your needs or preferences change?

10. Can you select, within reason, the staff that will care for you, or will it be whoever is on the roster?
11. Who will have access to the keys to your house (if necessary), and where will the keys be kept?

When the service commences:

1. Ask to see agency staff members' identification.
2. Insist on itemised receipts that show the agency's name for all payments to the agency.
3. Make sure all valuables/money are out of sight.
4. Close the doors to all rooms the agency staff are not required to enter.

Home maintenance/building services

Home maintenance services include gardening, plumbing, tiling, concreting, changing tap washers, changing light bulbs or cleaning gutters.

Check to see if your local council has a trade services register and/or ask family or friends to recommend agencies or tradespeople they have used.

Ask a friend or family member to be present when conducting business and when having work done if you feel uncomfortable about having a stranger in your home.

Stay at Home, an initiative of the ACH Group, helps elderly citizens and younger people with disabilities by providing advice and support on home modifications and general maintenance that will help people to go on living in their home, assisting clients to obtain quotes and select contractors. They have a register of skilled and experienced tradespeople who can provide quotes for the work required. Stay at home will provide free home assessments to help determine what work is needed. At times they will oversee and undertake final inspections in order to ensure all work meets agreed outcomes and quality standards. **Tel. 8159 3499.**

Any person who carries out plumbing, electrical, gas fitting or building work must be licensed and/or registered. Building work includes painting and decorating, erecting carports, verandas, pergolas, garages, fencing and construction of swimming

pools. Ask to see their license/registration as this will tell you what they are licensed to do. The licensing system is there to protect you from unsafe work and poor business practices.

If you are having gas or electrical work done, a licensed electrician or gas fitter is required to give you a Certificate of Compliance. This is your safeguard that the work has been carried out properly and checked to comply with Australian Standards and Codes. If you do not receive a Certificate of Compliance, or the electrical or gas contractor refuses to issue one, contact the **Office of the Technical Regulator, tel. 8226 5500.**

The **Consumer and Business Services'** website (www.cbs.sa.gov.au) (formerly Office of Consumer and Business Affairs) includes a search facility that allows you to find a licensed person in your local area. The list includes builders, plumbers, gas fitters and electricians.

If the building work costs \$12,000 or more, the building contractor is required to sign a written contract with you that complies with the Building Work Contractors Act 1995. For work costing less than \$12,000, ask the contractor for copies of all documents relating to the work e.g. quotes, plans and material schedules.

Here are some tips for hiring tradespeople to do work around your home:

1. Make sure all valuables/money are out of sight if the tradesperson has to enter your home.
2. Obtain several detailed, itemised and legible quotes – a minimum of three for a large job. Ensure quotes contain a breakdown of costs for comparison with other quotes. Is there a charge for getting a quote?
3. Is there a 'call out fee'? - that is a set charge for just turning up on your doorstep.
4. Is there an 'inspection fee'? There could be an hourly charge for determining the cause of the problem and what needs to be done to fix it.
5. Ask the tradesperson for references and check these out.
6. Does the tradesperson have public liability insurance?
7. Do the tradesperson and his/her staff have police clearances?

8. Ask about terms of payment. You should not have to pay until the work is completed. Do they offer pensioner or Seniors Card discount?
9. Will the licensed tradesperson supply a statement of compliance (builder) or certificate of compliance (plumber, gas fitter, electrician) on completion of the job?
10. After the work is completed make sure you get a detailed and signed receipt. It should show the business or company name. Keep the receipt for your records.

Consumer and Business Services publishes *Building Extending Renovating a Home? – A Consumer's Guide*. Printed copies can be obtained from **CBS**. It is also available online at: http://www.ocba.sa.gov.au/assets/files/Building_extending_renovatingahome_web.pdf

For further information on building and renovation issues contact the **Consumer Products and Services** section of **Consumer and Business Services Tel.131 882.**

What do I do if things go wrong?

If you are not satisfied or you feel you have been misled in relation to the services provided – by either personal care services or by tradespeople – then you are entitled to make a complaint.

First try to resolve the issue by talking directly to the provider/contractor. Have relevant documents handy, such as quotes and receipts. Discuss solutions that will satisfy you.

If you are still not satisfied put your complaint in writing. Your letter should give the details of your complaint and ask for a written response within a reasonable timeframe. Keep the original letter and send a copy. Keep a record of events and note what is said in telephone calls. Give the contractor opportunity to fix the problem.

If you are still not happy with the situation contact the Consumer and Business Services. They have a free information service and may be able to advise you on how you can negotiate with the provider. They also offer a dispute resolution or conciliation process.

For further advice about your consumer rights contact the **Consumer and Business Services Tel. 131 882, (www.cbs.sa.gov.au)**

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