



The Cabinet Makers Association of WA (CMA) was set up in 1979 as a not for profit organisation to represent the interests of the cabinet making industry and consumers across the state. Its membership operates in all aspects of cabinet making including, kitchens (new and renovations), custom built furniture, shop fitting and commercial fit out work, and also includes suppliers to the industry. Whether you are after a simple kitchen or bathroom renovation, or looking for specialised work you can be sure that amongst the members there will be a business that can meet your needs. The CMA website at [www.cmawa.com.au](http://www.cmawa.com.au) has a complete list of members and if you can't find what you're after you can contact the CMA office on 1300 768 016.

## **WHY CHOOSE A MEMBER OF THE CABINET MAKERS ASSOCIATION?**

- When you choose a CMA member you are choosing a cabinet maker which undertakes to uphold the rules of the Association and provide value for money for their customers.
- All members are expected to comply with the legislation governing the industry.
- CMA members are regularly informed about technology and trade information from within Australia and overseas.
- CMA members are expected to comply with the relevant Australian Standards.
- By using a CMA member you are dealing with an industry professional, not a backyard assembler.
- When you choose a member of the CMA you can be secure in the knowledge that in the unlikely event of a problem with workmanship or dispute over any aspect of the contract you can turn to the CMA for assistance. If required, a qualified cabinet maker will be assigned to inspect the work and provide you with a comprehensive written report. This service is provided free of charge. The CMA takes its responsibility to consumers seriously and will, if necessary, take action against any members who fail to uphold their responsibilities, including removal from the Association.

## **BUYING A NEW KITCHEN OR BATHROOM?**

Installing a new kitchen or bathroom, or getting furniture custom built is a significant expense. However, a well-designed and constructed kitchen, bathroom or piece of furniture adds value to your property and will provide you with years of pleasurable

use. It is therefore important that the design is suited to your needs. Equally you want to be sure that you are receiving value for money.

Unfortunately, in Western Australia cabinet making, as with many other building trades, is not regulated and individuals can easily set themselves up as cabinet makers and all too often the customer suffers the consequence of poor workmanship. In addition, the end products can look very similar leading consumers to believe that price is the only significant variable when choosing between cabinet makers. However significant variation in construction methods and components exist and of course these factors can impact greatly on the quality of the end product.

It is always wise to get two to three quotes for your project, but bear in mind that reputable cabinet makers quoting the same work, to the same specifications will generally be within plus or minus 5% on their quotes. If a quote is significantly lower than others it will pay to exercise caution and find out if the cabinet maker is quoting to the same specifications. Some of the more 'unscrupulous' cabinet makers will deliberately omit items in their quote and once you have signed a contract will add these as extras or variations.

Similarly, some consumers see 'flat packs' as a good alternative to custom built cabinetry. But as with custom built there are differences in quality and functionality between products and while flat packs provide a useful option in some circumstances, they do have their limitations (see below for more about this). The proof of the 'differences' mentioned above is reflected in the large number people who contact the Cabinet Makers Association because they are experiencing problems with their cabinet maker.

## **WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RENOVATING MY KITCHEN?**

1. Any building renovation work between \$7,500 and \$500,000 in value falls under the jurisdiction of the Home Building Contracts Act (1991). This includes built-in cabinet work such as kitchens, bathrooms and laundries. Under the Act, your cabinet maker must provide you with a written contract and a "Notice for the Home Owner". The "Notice for the Home Owner" provides information about the Home Building Contracts Act (1991) and outlines the responsibilities of each party to the contract.



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2. Under the Home Building Contracts Act the maximum deposit that the cabinet maker can ask for is 6.5% on signing of the contract.
3. In the event of a dispute with a non-member business the WA Building Commission may require you to provide an expert report on the work before proceeding with your complaint (if the contract value of the work is between \$7,500 and \$500,000). This may also apply with disputes in the Local Court (under \$7,500 in value).

## WHAT IF I AM BUILDING A NEW HOME?

Some builders are happy for customers to source their own cabinet work on new homes or renovation projects. Other builders will try to discourage you from contracting your own work. Whichever way you go the CMA strongly urges you to use a CMA member, or contract a builder whose cabinet maker is a CMA member. This way all the cabinet work is covered by the CMA's dispute resolution process.

## FLAT PACK KITCHENS

Flat pack kitchens appealing to consumers on a tight budget, as the base price is generally cheaper than custom built and retailers tend to convey the impression that they are easy to install. Several CMA members manufacture and retail flat pack kitchens to the WA public and if this is the product for you then you are urged to use these businesses. The reality is however that with all things you generally end up getting what you pay for and before deciding to purchase flat packs it is suggested you consider the following;

1. **Flat packs aren't generally made to fit the space they are going in to.** In order to keep costs down flat pack some manufacturers build modular units, with little choice in dimensions. This can mean that available space isn't always fully utilised (critical in smaller areas) and that dummy cabinets or unusable cabinets are installed to fill gaps.
2. **Flexibility of design.** Flat pack kitchens don't offer the flexibility of design that custom built allows for. Modern kitchen design allows for the easy incorporation of space saving and functional componentry. Your kitchen is designed and manufactured with your specific needs in mind. Qualities which aren't always available with flat pack manufacturing.
3. **Australian Standards.** Local manufacturers must comply with the Australian Standards for kitchen manufacture and

installation. While there is a legal requirement in Australia for imported product to meet standards in order to be sold, this is seldom enforced. It is up to the consumer to prove that the products purchased aren't compliant and getting the evidence is a very expensive exercise.

4. **Warranty.** Custom builders are required to provide a full six year warranty on work that comes under the jurisdiction of the Home Building Contracts Act, which includes most kitchens. Most flat packs come with a limited warranty (usually 12 months).
5. **Installation.** Although many flat pack suppliers will tell you fitting is simple and only requires a portable drill and a screwdriver or two, this is not the case. Kitchen installation is a specialised craft as walls and floors are seldom square or level and there are complex Australian Standards that should be complied with.
6. **Solid surface tops.** If you are looking to purchase a flat pack kitchen make sure it is strong enough to carry the bench tops of your choice. There have been a number of instances where flat pack kitchens have been removed before completion because the consumer has discovered that it won't carry their choice of bench tops.
7. **Replacement parts.** Damage something and it can be very expensive. Many importers and some chain stores won't sell you a single door for example. So damaging a door (easy to do) can result in you having to buy the entire unit to get a replacement. It is important to remember that if the product has been imported you would be very unlikely to find a replacement part locally.
8. **Removal of existing kitchen.** In most cases with custom built, the cabinet maker's quote will include the removal of the existing kitchen and preparation of the space for the installation of the new kitchen. This will often include carrying out minor building alterations and coordination of other trades, making for a seamless project.
9. **Resale value of flat pack kitchens.** If you consider property values in WA (Perth median house price exceeded \$537,000 in 2013) saving a little on your cabinetry may prove to be false economy. Not only will custom built cabinetry look better and provide better functionality, it will add value to your investment and at the very least will make your home easier to sell.



**10. The value factor.** Factor in the design element, the hassle free installation, the six year warranty and the fact that your cabinetry will fit the space that you have it's really more cost effective to go for custom built.

Please note that some flat pack kitchens are manufactured on a 'custom' basis, using locally sourced products. These are generally of superior quality to the modular systems marketed by chain stores and are priced accordingly. The moral of the story in the cabinet making industry, like all retail is 'if it's too good to be true' there is usually a catch.

**CMAWA**  
CABINET MAKERS ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

For further information, or to locate  
Cabinet Makers Association  
members in your area, see our web site at  
[www.cmawa.com.au](http://www.cmawa.com.au)

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