

What to Look For When Buying a Pool

Buying a pool can be a time consuming and sometimes confusing process. Below are a few tips to look out for that should help put you in control.

Is the company reputable?

- Clean BSA license
- SPASA member
- Offer SPASA warranty benefits
- Will continue contact with you even after the pool is installed
- Has a reputation for good service

Are all costs included in quote or will there be surprises?

There are a surprising amount of components to providing a completed, ready to go pool. Below are a few examples of areas that need to be clearly indicated on the quote (in writing) – if they are unclear there is a good chance you will have extras to pay after the contract is signed.

The Dig

- **Dig estimate.** Digs are generally not fixed costs due to two main factors – potential to hit rock which slows down the dig and how far the trucks need to travel to drop off the dirt. Unless you are leaving the dirt onsite most estimates should allow up to 5km travel in the price. The lowest *estimates* do not always end up as the lowest finished cost to you!
- **Fixed price dig.** True fixed price digs generally cost more to the client as the pool company carries the risk of the costs blowing out. It is important to have in writing the *nature of the fixed price*. For instance:
 - Is the price “fixed” for any extra traveling costs, but *not* if rock is hit?
 - Does “fixed” mean that there is a “fixed schedule” of extra costs if rock is hit?
 - If solid ground is not reached could the pool company charge *extra* for piercing?
 - In other words, is the company willing to put in writing that there will be *absolutely nothing more* to pay for the dig come what may?

Inclusions

If you received two prices for a new house would you want to ensure that you were comparing the same inclusions e.g. that each had same number of bedrooms, same quality of kitchen, same standard of appliances, and no hidden costs? Of course we would. It is the same with buying a pool. A reputable builder will have no problem disclosing all inclusions and exclusions. For instance:

- Are components from the most reputable manufacturers (your local pool shop can help you out here)
- Are lights included? If so what type and has labour been included?
- Is water included in the price? Will the pool be *fully filled* as is legally required?
- Are council fees included in the price? If so are they for a fixed amount? Ring your local council to find out the fixed fee for your area. Sometimes extra fees are payable to council for relaxations. Have these been included?

- Is the right size pump and filter included? Sometimes “free” pump upgrades are offered which overloads the filter and water goes green. The right size filter and pump should automatically be put in a pool without any need to upgrade.
- Is there a comprehensive start up and handover procedure which includes thoroughly cleaning pool at initial and final completion as well as training on how to get the best out of your pool and a manual provided? This is worth approximately \$300.
- Is coping and bond beam included in the price? If so, what type?
- Is a temporary fence included in the price? If so, is it for 2 weeks? 4 weeks? Generally four weeks is about right to give you time to organize a permanent fence.
- Is permanent fence, electrics and landscaping included in the price? Or, did pool builder simply offer to send his contacts around for you to deal with directly. Either scenario is fine, but it is good to know?
- If solar heating is required does the quote include enough for a separate pump, digital controls, 110% surface area? It should.
- If a water feature is required what does the quote include? Concrete footings, water blade, separate pump, block built, tiled? What size is it? Or is it low cost blue board or polystyrene? You may choose either way, but remember that quotes will vary greatly depending on these factors. PS. A separate pump is always recommended.

Warranties

- What length of warranty are you provided for? 1. Structure of pool 2. Finish of pool
- ‘Structural warranty’ is about the ability to hold water and maintain shape
- ‘Finish warranty’ is about the aesthetics, or looks, of the pool
- Perhaps more important than length of warranty is the small print of the warranty. Is this simply a brochure warranty? Is this a bonafide warranty in truth?
- Is the warranty covered by SPASA?

Comparing apples with apples

This is perhaps the hardest thing to do when comparing prices. Comparison involves at least three factors:

- Number of inclusions and exclusions
- Quality of inclusions
- Quality of service

Added Extras

- It is rare that someone will buy the bare basics and nothing else for their pool. Most people choose optional extras to customize their pool. For instance, pool blanket and roller, automatic pool cleaner, solar provision, rainwater diverters, sunpods – we could go on. This can complicate the comparing of different quotes with different extras included. If possible, try to make a list of some “must have” inclusions in advance of getting your quotes so that you can compare more easily.

A Final Piece of Advice

Ask for recent testimonials that you can speak to. Ask them how they were treated and how good the service was.

Ask to see examples of pools in the ground, especially for luxury pools e.g. ceramic composite, infloor cleaning, special finishes. We would never buy a new Mercedes without seeing it. We should never buy a pool without seeing at least one example.

Good sources of information include friends who have bought pools before, your local pool shop and SPASA.

