



THE FOS DESIGN INTENSIVE RESOURCE LIBRARY INCLUDES:

THE RENOVATOR'S PLAYBOOK

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO GETTING YOUR PROJECT
RIGHT

MATERIALS + FINISHES

WHAT ACTUALLY WORKS (AND WHAT DOESN'T)

DESIGN DO'S + DON'TS

THE MISTAKES THAT COST YOU THOUSANDS
(AND HOW TO AVOID THEM)

ROOMS + SPACES

THE DESIGNER'S GUIDE TO CREATING FUNCTIONAL,
BEAUTIFUL & TIMELESS HOMES



THE DESIGN SELECTIONS HANDBOOK

THE PROFESSIONAL SYSTEM FOR DOCUMENTING
EVERY DECISION IN YOUR RENOVATION OR BUILD

Good design is often misunderstood.

Most people assume beautiful spaces are the result of expensive materials, unlimited budgets, or naturally having “good taste.” In reality, the success of a project comes down to something much more practical: clarity, planning, sequencing, and informed decision-making.

After more than 15 years in the design and construction industry — across residential, commercial, hospitality, and large-scale projects — I’ve seen the same challenges arise repeatedly. Projects become overwhelming not because people lack vision, but because they lack a clear framework for how everything should come together.

This resource library has been created to change that. The FOS Design Intensive Library is designed to give you insight into the professional side of design and construction — the side most people are never exposed to until they are already in the middle of a project.

Inside these guides, you’ll learn:

- *How projects should be structured*
- *How to make better decisions earlier*
- *How to avoid costly mistakes*
- *How materials and finishes actually perform*
- *How to approach your project strategically rather than emotionally*

Most importantly, these resources are designed to help you move through your project with confidence and clarity — whether you are renovating, building, furnishing, or simply refining your space.

The goal is not perfection.

The goal is a space that feels considered, cohesive, practical, and reflective of the way you actually live.

Spencer





ROOMS

+

SPACES

THE DESIGNER'S GUIDE TO
CREATING FUNCTIONAL,
BEAUTIFUL + TIMELESS HOMES

WHAT'S INSIDE.

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01 ENTRY, HALLWAYS + FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The entry is often one of the most overlooked areas of a home, yet it sets the tone for everything that follows.

A well-designed entry should feel welcoming, intuitive, and connected to the overall home. The goal is not necessarily to create a grand entrance, but rather a clear arrival experience that feels purposeful and easy to navigate.

One of the most common mistakes I see is oversized hallways and underutilised circulation spaces. While generous circulation is important, excessive hallway space often comes at the expense of rooms that could be working harder elsewhere in the home.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Is there a clear visual destination when entering?
- Is natural light being utilised?
- Is there practical storage nearby?
- Are hallways appropriately scaled?

LIGHTING CONSIDERATIONS

Entries benefit from layered lighting rather than relying solely on downlights.

Depending on the home, consider:

- Feature pendants
- Wall lights
- Recessed lighting
- Joinery lighting

The goal is to create warmth and a sense of arrival.

01

PAINT & COLOUR CONSIDERATIONS

Entries often work best with lighter, warmer tones that connect naturally to adjoining spaces.

Be mindful of:

- Natural light levels
- Ceiling heights
- The overall material palette

Dark colours can create impact but should be used strategically.

PROFESSIONAL INSIGHT

One of the easiest ways to elevate an entry is to create a visual focal point. This could be artwork, a feature wall, a beautifully detailed console, or simply a carefully framed view into another space.

The best entries don't necessarily feel expensive — they feel intentional.



01

DESIGNER TIP

For most homes, I recommend continuing the same flooring from the entry through the main living spaces wherever possible. Consistent flooring creates a greater sense of space, improves flow, and allows feature materials to shine elsewhere.

If selecting timber or hybrid flooring, opt for mid-tone natural timber colours over highly grey or heavily distressed finishes, as these tend to date more quickly.

02 LIVING ROOMS + FAMILY SPACES

Living rooms are often the most frequently used spaces within a home and should support the way your household actually lives.

A successful living space balances comfort, functionality, conversation, technology, and aesthetics.

One of the most common mistakes is arranging furniture after construction rather than planning for it during the design phase.

Furniture layouts should influence:

- Power point locations
- Lighting placement
- Window treatments
- Circulation paths

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- How many people typically use the space?
- Is the room designed around conversation or television viewing?
- Are furniture sizes appropriate?
- Is there flexibility for future needs?

LIGHTING CONSIDERATIONS

A successful living room should combine:

- Ambient lighting
- Accent lighting
- Decorative lighting

Avoid relying entirely on downlights.

02

PAINT & COLOUR CONSIDERATIONS

Living rooms generally benefit from softer, layered colour palettes.

Warm whites, natural tones, textured finishes and subtle contrast often age far better than highly trend-driven colours.

PROFESSIONAL INSIGHT

Many people focus on furniture first. Designers focus on proportions first.

A beautiful sofa won't save a poorly proportioned room.



DESIGNER TIP

Living areas should feel warm, comfortable, and layered. Timber, engineered timber, or quality hybrid flooring often create the most timeless foundation. Introduce softness through rugs, window furnishings, and textured upholstery rather than relying on multiple hard finishes competing within the same space. Where possible, avoid introducing a new flooring material unless functionally required.

03 KITCHENS

The kitchen is one of the most technical rooms in the home and one of the areas where poor decisions become noticeable very quickly.

A successful kitchen balances:

- Workflow
- Storage
- Appliances
- Circulation
- Social interaction

The best kitchens are rarely the biggest. They're simply the most efficient.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Does the kitchen support the way you cook?
- Is there adequate preparation space?
- Have appliances been selected early?
- Is storage practical rather than purely aesthetic?

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The kitchen work triangle remains one of the most useful planning tools.

The relationship between:

- Sink
- Cooktop
- Fridge

should feel connected and efficient.

03

LIGHTING CONSIDERATIONS

Every kitchen should include:

- Ambient lighting
- Task lighting
- Feature lighting

Under-cabinet lighting is often one of the most valuable additions in a kitchen.

PAINT & COLOUR CONSIDERATIONS

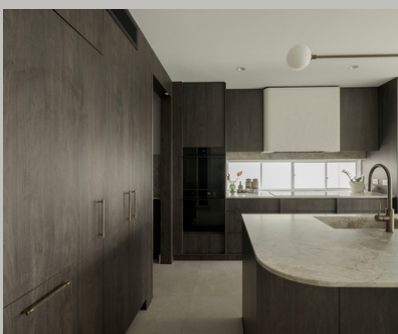
Timeless kitchens typically rely on:

- Consistent undertones
- Restrained material palettes
- Natural textures

Avoid selecting colours in isolation from stone, flooring and cabinetry finishes.

PROFESSIONAL INSIGHT

One of the greatest values of engaging a designer during kitchen planning is identifying issues before joinery is manufactured. Small decisions made early can prevent costly variations later.



03

DESIGNER TIP

The most successful kitchens generally combine no more than three primary materials.

A typical formula may include:

- *One flooring finish*
- *One joinery finish*
- *One stone finish*

Allow the stone to become the hero rather than introducing excessive colours, textures, or competing materials.

Timeless kitchens are often defined by restraint rather than complexity.

04 BATHROOMS + ENSUITES

Bathrooms are often among the most expensive spaces in a home on a square metre basis.

Good bathroom design balances:

- Functionality
- Storage
- Maintenance
- Lighting
- Material performance

One of the biggest mistakes is focusing on feature elements before resolving functionality.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Is there sufficient storage?
- Are towel locations practical?
- Have cleaning and maintenance been considered?
- Are tile selections suitable for wet areas?

LIGHTING CONSIDERATIONS

Bathrooms require a combination of:

- General lighting
- Task lighting
- Decorative lighting

Mirror lighting is often overlooked but significantly impacts functionality.

04

PAINT & COLOUR CONSIDERATIONS

Bathrooms generally benefit from softer palettes and material-led colour schemes.

Stone, tile and joinery finishes should lead the colour direction rather than paint alone.

PROFESSIONAL INSIGHT

The most luxurious bathrooms aren't necessarily the largest. They're the most resolved.

Good proportions, clever storage and thoughtful lighting often have a greater impact than expensive fixtures.



DESIGNER TIP: BATHROOMS & ENSUITES

One of the most effective ways to create a high-end bathroom is to reduce visual clutter.

*Limit tile selections where possible and focus on:
Larger format tiles, consistent grout colours, cohesive tapware finishes.*

A bathroom with two beautiful materials will often feel more luxurious than a bathroom with five competing finishes.

05 BEDROOMS, ROBES + RETREAT SPACES

Bedrooms should feel calm, restorative and uncluttered. These spaces are often overcomplicated when simplicity generally creates the most successful outcomes.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Is there adequate storage?
- Is furniture appropriately scaled?
- Is natural light being considered?
- Does the room support rest and relaxation?

LIGHTING CONSIDERATIONS

Layered lighting is particularly important in bedrooms. Consider:

- Bedside lighting
- Decorative lighting
- Dimmable ambient lighting



05

PAINT & COLOUR CONSIDERATIONS

Softer, warmer palettes typically create more restful environments. Highly contrasting colours and overly stimulating palettes should generally be used carefully.

PROFESSIONAL INSIGHT

Wardrobe design is often more important than people realise. A well-designed robe can dramatically improve the functionality of an entire bedroom.



DESIGNER TIP

Bedrooms should feel softer than the main living areas. Carpet remains one of the most practical and timeless flooring choices for bedrooms due to its warmth, comfort, and acoustic benefits.

If using timber flooring throughout, consider introducing softness through oversized rugs, upholstered furniture, and layered window furnishings

06 DINING, OUTDOOR LIVING + ENTERTAINING

These spaces are ultimately about connection.

Successful entertaining spaces feel effortless because circulation, furniture placement and functionality have been carefully considered.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- How do people move through the space?
- Is there adequate clearance around furniture?
- Does the outdoor area feel connected to the home?
- Is the furniture proportionate to the space?

LIGHTING CONSIDERATIONS

Dining and entertaining spaces often benefit from:

- Decorative pendants
- Feature lighting
- Dimmable lighting controls

Lighting should help create atmosphere rather than simply provide illumination.



PAINT & COLOUR CONSIDERATIONS

These spaces generally work best when they feel connected to adjoining rooms rather than introducing completely different colour schemes.

PROFESSIONAL INSIGHT

Some of the most successful homes blur the line between indoor and outdoor living through material continuity and strong visual connections.

DESIGNER TIP

One of the easiest ways to elevate a home is to create a strong visual connection between dining, living, and outdoor spaces.

Allow key finishes such as flooring, colours, textures, and architectural details to flow naturally throughout rather than treating each space as a separate zone. This creates a greater sense of cohesion, connection, and visual space.

Where practical, continue flooring materials internally and externally, or select complementary finishes that feel connected.

When designing entertaining areas, keep material selections simple and let feature furniture, lighting, or landscaping provide interest. The most successful spaces feel effortless because the materials, furniture, and architecture work together as a single experience.

07 THE DETAILS THAT SEPARATE THE GOOD FROM THE EXCEPTIONAL

MOST PEOPLE NOTICE:

- Stone
- Furniture
- Tapware
- Lighting

DESIGNERS NOTICE:

- Proportion
- Alignment
- Consistency
- Detailing

These are often the elements that determine whether a home feels considered or unfinished.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Skirting profiles
- Architraves
- Door heights
- Hardware consistency
- Ceiling details
- Joinery alignment



07

LIGHTING CONSIDERATIONS

Lighting should support architecture, not compete with it. The most effective lighting schemes enhance the proportions, materials, and character of a space without becoming the focal point themselves. When thoughtfully integrated, lighting highlights key architectural features, adds depth and atmosphere, and improves the overall functionality and experience of a space.

PAINT & COLOUR CONSIDERATIONS

Consistency is often more important than complexity. The most successful interiors are not defined by the number of materials or colours used, but by how cohesively they work together. A consistent palette creates flow, balance, and visual harmony, while too many competing finishes can make a space feel busy and disconnected. By maintaining consistency in undertones, materials, and detailing, the result is often more refined, timeless, and sophisticated.



07

PROFESSIONAL INSIGHT

The most timeless homes are rarely the most trend-driven.

They rely on:

- Good proportions
- Functional planning
- Quality materials
- Consistent detailing

These principles remain relevant regardless of changing fashions and are often where the value of professional guidance becomes most apparent.

DESIGNER TIP

The most expensive-looking homes are often the simplest.

Rather than investing heavily in multiple feature materials, focus on consistency across:

- Skirting profiles
- Architraves
- Door hardware
- Tapware finishes
- Paint colours

Well-resolved details create a far greater sense of quality than excessive material variation.



ROOMS + SPACES

ROOM PLANNING + DESIGN REVIEW CHECKLIST

This checklist is designed to help ensure each space functions well independently while contributing to a cohesive and considered home overall.

OVERALL HOME REVIEW

Vision & Lifestyle

- ☐ Home reflects desired lifestyle
- ☐ Layout supports daily living
- ☐ Future needs considered
- ☐ Storage requirements considered
- ☐ Entertaining requirements considered
- ☐ Design direction feels cohesive
- ☐ Material palette feels consistent
- ☐ Project remains aligned with budget

ENTRY & HALLWAYS

Functionality Review

- ☐ Clear arrival experience created
- ☐ Storage considered
- ☐ Natural light considered
- ☐ Circulation feels comfortable
- ☐ Visual focal point established

Design Review

- ☐ Flooring transitions considered
- ☐ Lighting considered
- ☐ Materials align with overall home
- ☐ Entry feels welcoming and intentional



ROOMS + SPACES

ROOM PLANNING + DESIGN REVIEW CHECKLIST

LIVING & FAMILY SPACES

Layout Review

- ☐ Furniture layout planned
- ☐ TV location resolved
- ☐ Conversation zones considered
- ☐ Circulation maintained
- ☐ Power points considered
- ☐ Storage requirements considered

Design Review

- ☐ Rug sizing appropriate
- ☐ Window furnishings considered
- ☐ Lighting layered effectively
- ☐ Materials and finishes cohesive
- ☐ Room feels balanced and proportionate

KITCHEN

Planning Review

- ☐ Kitchen work triangle considered
- ☐ Sink location resolved
- ☐ Cooktop location resolved
- ☐ Fridge location resolved
- ☐ Power points considered
- ☐ Adequate preparation space provided
- ☐ Pantry requirements considered



ROOMS + SPACES

ROOM PLANNING + DESIGN REVIEW CHECKLIST

Technical Review

- ☐ Appliances selected
- ☐ Appliance dimensions confirmed
- ☐ Rangehood clearances reviewed
- ☐ Joinery functionality considered
- ☐ Lighting integrated into design

Finish Review

- ☐ Stone selected
- ☐ Joinery finishes selected
- ☐ Splashback selected
- ☐ Tapware selected
- ☐ Palette feels cohesive

DINING SPACES

Layout Review

- ☐ Dining table size appropriate
- ☐ Chair circulation maintained
- ☐ Relationship to kitchen considered
- ☐ Entertaining requirements considered

Design Review

- ☐ Pendant location considered
- ☐ Furniture proportions appropriate
- ☐ Styling opportunities identified
- ☐ Space feels connected to adjoining rooms



ROOMS + SPACES

ROOM PLANNING + DESIGN REVIEW CHECKLIST

BATHROOMS & ENSUITES

Functionality Review

- ☐ Vanity storage adequate
- ☐ Shower layout practical
- ☐ Towel storage considered
- ☐ Mirror sizing appropriate
- ☐ Power points considered
- ☐ Cleaning and maintenance considered

Technical Review

- ☐ Floor-rated tiles selected
- ☐ Slip rating reviewed
- ☐ Waterproofing requirements understood
- ☐ Sanitaryware (i.e. toilet) selections completed
- ☐ Tapware selections completed

Design Review

- ☐ Tile selections cohesive
- ☐ Lighting considered
- ☐ Materials suit intended use
- ☐ Space feels balanced and functional



ROOMS + SPACES

ROOM PLANNING + DESIGN REVIEW CHECKLIST

BEDROOMS & ROBES

Functionality Review

- ☐ Furniture layout planned
- ☐ Storage requirements considered
- ☐ Wardrobe functionality reviewed
- ☐ Power points considered
- ☐ Window furnishings considered

Design Review

- ☐ Lighting suitable for relaxation
- ☐ Palette feels calm and cohesive
- ☐ Furniture appropriately scaled
- ☐ Room supports intended use

OUTDOOR LIVING

Functionality Review

- ☐ Indoor-outdoor connection considered
- ☐ Furniture layout planned
- ☐ BBQ / entertaining requirements considered
- ☐ Weather exposure considered
- ☐ Power points considered
- ☐ Storage considered
- ☐ Low-maintenance materials selected
- ☐ Pet-friendly finishes selected (if required)

Design Review

- ☐ Lighting considered
- ☐ Material continuity maintained
- ☐ Furniture suitable for environment
- ☐ Space feels integrated with the home



ROOMS + SPACES

ROOM PLANNING + DESIGN REVIEW CHECKLIST

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

Detailing Review

- ☐ Skirting profile selected
- ☐ Architrave profile selected
- ☐ Door style selected
- ☐ Door hardware selected
- ☐ Ceiling details selected
- ☐ Window furnishings selected

Consistency Review

- ☐ Hardware consistent throughout
- ☐ Material palette cohesive
- ☐ Lighting selections coordinated
- ☐ Architectural details aligned
- ☐ Home feels resolved as a whole

FINAL PROJECT REVIEW

Before construction begins:

- ☐ Layouts finalised
- ☐ Furniture planning considered
- ☐ Storage resolved
- ☐ Materials selected
- ☐ Fixtures selected
- ☐ Lighting planned



ROOMS + SPACES

ROOM PLANNING + DESIGN REVIEW CHECKLIST

- ☐ Window furnishings considered
- ☐ Architectural details selected
- ☐ Styling direction established
- ☐ Decisions documented within The Design Selections Handbook

PROFESSIONAL NOTE

The most successful homes are not created through individual selections alone. They are created when every room is considered as part of a larger story.