

IN SEARCH OF QUALITY AIR CONDITIONING WORK?

AIR CONDITIONING CONSUMERS GUIDE

The air conditioning industry is full of complexities, which means that it requires more than just a business card and basic installation tools to become a professional provider.

The truth is it takes thorough knowledge, trained experience, proper certification, and the right equipment to become an expert in air conditioning installation and maintenance. Unfortunately, in Australia, there are a number of incorrectly guided, inexperienced and untrained technicians, and businesses using deceptive or unethical practices (which can be difficult to spot).

The aim of this short guide (and the vetting process we provide through our expertise) is to help you find the best local air conditioning companies and avoid the operators who may not have your best interests at heart.

This guide will show you how to find an air conditioning company who:

- Will install and maintain your system professionally
- Takes pride in their work
- Provides a full guarantee
- Invests in training and development to stay updated with the latest industry standards
- Uses quality materials that are proven to last

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5 Questions You Must Ask Yourself Before Contacting Any Air Conditioning Installers

1. Do I really need air conditioning?

For some temperatures, climate types and conditions it's essential for air conditioning to be installed – such as escaping the humidity. But have you considered more than just saying you live in a hot or cold home?

Four investments to look at:

- **Insulation:** Roof or floor insulation will help drastically. Old or non-existent insulation can help keep the temperature inside the home at a more acceptable level.
- **Window tinting:** Reflecting away the heat before it can penetrate the glass is the most effective way to reduce the heat wave effects.
- **Blinds:** A high quality and thick set of blinds make it a quick and flexible heat blocking method.
- **Roof air extraction:** Powered roof extraction fans can be installed with a thermostat to only turn on at a specified temperature, circulating the hot air out of your roof space to minimise the heat through your ceiling. The second best option to this is the classic whirly bird design.

The best part about these? If you try these investments first and realise you do still need air conditioning, these will also yield great benefits when combined with a good air conditioning installation.

2. What are My Exact Needs and Preferences?

Rooms and Layout: One of the initial steps a quality installer would do when assessing your home for an installation is to determine the exact areas to air condition. Spend time considering these points beforehand:

- Once you have used the air conditioning and have become accustomed to having the perfect temperature control in those areas, how likely is it you would want that elsewhere in the home. It is quite common for installers to return the following year to install more air conditioning.
- Are the areas going to be closed off or open? You may only want to air condition a living room but with the door constantly opening and closing it could be more beneficial also air conditioning the adjoining room, too. This could also mean installing a door where one isn't currently present.

Size: The size of the air conditioner is not only determined by how many areas it needs to serve, but you need to also factor how many areas at the same time.

Start by thinking of a time your household will become the most filled and the rooms that would be occupied, such as a holiday event. Then, note down your normal household occupancy and the rooms – the size is going to be large enough to condition somewhere between these two extremes.

Do you want the air conditioning to be large enough easily cool while everyone is there, quickly? Or would you rather save on the initial installation cost and on-going running costs by choosing a smaller air conditioner which may take longer to cool down whilst the home is full?

4. What Expectations Do I Have for After-installation Service, Warranty, and Ongoing Support?

- **Research and define your expectations for warranty terms:** Roof or floor insulation will help drastically. Old or non-existent insulation can help keep the temperature inside the home at a more acceptable level.
- **Extended terms:** Is there piece of mind offered through an extension of warranty above the standard market period?
- **Timing:** If a repair is needed at the beginning of a heat wave, how will the timing of the warranty come into play? To tackle this issue, some quality installers can offer their extended warranty through a regular maintenance proposal – this would only be the case if they were sure their process greatly reduces the chance of there being a warranty in the first place.

5. Do I Know The Possibilities of What Is Available?

Engaging a quality installer to design a plan for an air conditioning installation is essential for tapping into their expertise. However, having a preliminary understanding of different types of air conditioning systems will empower you during the discussion, allowing you to articulate preferences and potential locations for installation.

Some installers may be limited in their expertise or may not be licensed to install certain models that might be best suited for your property. Knowing this beforehand could significantly impact the overall footprint, performance, and serviceability of the installation.

For example, if you desire a more concealed look, bulkhead systems might be an optimal choice, though they are often more complex to install and service.

Here are some systems to consider:

- **Wall-Hung Split Systems:** These are the most common systems installed in residential homes.
- **Ducted Split Systems:** A centralised system installed in the roof space, connecting to various areas through ductwork.
- **Bulkhead Split Systems:** Installed in an enclosed bulkhead, where the outlet is adjacent to the grille location on the wall.
- **Floor Console Split Systems:** Useful when the only available space is low down or on the floor (e.g., a wall with windows along its length).
- **Cassette Split Systems:** Ideal for areas with limited wall space or where air must be spread in multiple directions.
- **Multi-Split Systems:** When installing multiple indoor units, a single outdoor unit can be utilised to minimise space.

Understanding these options will not only enable you to have a more informed conversation with your installer but also ensure that the chosen system meets your specific needs and aesthetic preferences. Awareness of these possibilities may also lead you to an option that decreases the system's footprint while enhancing its performance and ease of maintenance.

7 Warning Signs That Your Air Conditioning Needs Servicing

WARNING SIGN #1:

Strange Noises Coming from the Unit. This could be a sign of a mechanical problem, and ignoring it may lead to more costly repairs. Noises such as banging, crunching or scraping are generally not a good sign. Although air conditioning systems contain gas, a hissing or whooshing sound can often be part of a normal operation, however if the noise is new it is best to have the system inspected.

WARNING SIGN #2:

Unpleasant Odours Emanating from the air outlet. A foul or strange smell coming from your air conditioning system could be a sign of mould growth or a burnt-out wire. Mould may form due to moisture build-up, while a burnt-out wire could indicate electrical issues.

WARNING SIGN #3:

Poor Air Flow. This issue may indicate a blocked filter, crushed ductwork, or a failing motor. Any of these problems can significantly reduce the efficiency of your air conditioning system and may even lead to more serious damage if left unattended.

WARNING SIGN #4:

High Energy Bills. A sudden spike, or even a more accelerated increase in your energy bills may mean that the system is working harder than it should. Although systems can become less efficient over time, it should not be an overly noticeable increase.

WARNING SIGN #5:

Inconsistent Temperatures Throughout Your Home. Your air conditioning system should provide consistent, evenly spread cooling and heating. If the issue of evenly spread air has appeared overnight, this is a more urgent warning sign. If the air has always been mediocre from installation, it is still a problem that needs to be resolved but may be an issue you can fix at the time of your maintenance

WARNING SIGN #6:

Moisture or Leakage Near the System. Water leaks found in a spot other than exiting the normal drain line is generally not a good sign. Areas these leaks could appear are through gyprock ceilings, eaves or from the indoor covers of a wall hung split system.

WARNING SIGN #7:

Longer Cooling & Heating Cycles. This might be a sign of an underlying issue that affects its efficiency, and although the air conditioning system is operating, the main components could be under a lot of stress. Be mindful that systems will take longer to cool on extreme temperatures.

4 Costly Misconceptions About Air Conditioning Systems

MISCONCEPTION #1:

The Bigger the System, the Better. Choosing an oversized air conditioning unit won't necessarily cool your home faster or better. In fact, it may lead to higher energy bills and reduced comfort. Proper sizing is essential, and a certified technician should perform a heat load calculation to determine the right size for your home.

MISCONCEPTION #2:

You Only Need to Clean the Filter Once a Year. Neglecting regular filter changes can reduce efficiency and air quality. To ensure optimal performance, it's best to clean the filter more regularly. Depending on your location and usage, cleaning every 3-6 months would be ideal, and a replacement filter should be installed every few years. Different types of systems require different methods of filter cleaning, so considering accessibility to the filter is important when choosing the right system.

MISCONCEPTION #3:

Air Conditioning Systems Only Cool the Air. Air conditioning systems do more than just cool the air; they also dehumidify and filter it. Understanding the full functionality of what a system can offer you will help to make informed decisions and choose the right features for your needs.

MISCONCEPTION #4:

All Technicians Provide the Same Level of Service. Not all technicians are created equal. Make sure to hire a technician who is certified by both the Australian Refrigeration Council and Fair Trading, whilst also having a track record of providing excellent and guaranteed service.

The licence type is important, too. There are air conditioning installers who are only licensed for the bare minimum and may not be suitable for your installation. If you do not see any visible licence numbers on their documents or vehicles, ask for proof of certification to ensure you're hiring a competent professional.

3 Sales Deceptions to Beware When Purchasing an Air Conditioner

DECEPTION #1:

Claiming to Be Certified According to Local Standards. Make sure your technician is fully certified according to the Australian Refrigeration Council and Fair Trading. Restricted licence can mislead consumers into believing the technician is authorised to complete all air conditioning work. The truth is that they may only have met the qualifications to install limited types of systems and will not be able to perform work beyond a simple installation.

DECEPTION #2:

The 'Too Good to Be True' Bargain. Beware of offers that seem too good to be true, such as extremely low prices for high-end models. These may be bait to attract your attention, only to require you to have additional services to bring the installation to a proper standard. Other possibilities for low priced services are the potential lowering of hours, rushing or completely skipping tasks to complete the work - Although you have a system installed, the implications of these can be extreme and are potentially invisible to the naked eye.

DECEPTION #3 :

Offering One-Size-Fits-All Solutions. Some technicians might try to offer you a generic air conditioning brand, claiming it's suitable for all homes. However, every home has unique requirements based on its size, layout and climate. Even though a quality brand may have a wide range of models, it could potentially be limited in the exact requirements another brand could offer from their model list.

The Importance of Value and Price in Choosing an Air Conditioning System

1. Balancing Value and Price: A Comprehensive Approach.

Striking the right balance between value and price when choosing an air conditioning system is essential, given the varied options available. To navigate this complex decision, consider the following insider strategies:

- **Compare Multiple Options:** Seek quotes for various options to understand the air conditioning market and what different brands can offer. These include features, efficiency ratings, and after-installation support. This will help you understand the broader air conditioning market and what different manufacturers and installers offer.
- **Investigate Quality and Reputation:** Priced higher does not always equal better quality in the air conditioning market. A little insider tip: often, local air conditioning technicians have deep insights into which brands tend to have the fewest service calls or the best parts availability (hint - some repair technicians know to avoid even the larger brands)
- **Consider Short-term Costs and Benefits:** You need to consider the benefit of going with a more economically priced brand vs the more premium versions. Is this installation only for the short term before you sell the property? A quality installation is needed to know it will work properly but a system with a lower expected lifetime value may fit perfectly into your needs - and keep more money in your back pocket.
- **Consider Short-term Costs and Benefits:**
 - **Energy Efficiency:** Analyse the efficiency ratings of different systems. An efficient model can pay for itself over time through energy savings. For an inside perspective, ask technicians about real-world efficiency, not just the ratings.
 - **Maintenance and Repair Costs:** Investigate the maintenance requirements and common repair issues. Some systems are known within the industry to be more robust and require less frequent servicing.
 - **Warranty and Support:** Delve into the warranty coverage and the manufacturer's reputation for honouring those warranties. In the air conditioning industry, different installers and brands may reflect similar warranty periods but what is their reputation for following through on their promise?

2. Recognising Value: What You Get in Return.

Assessing what the system offers you over its entire lifetime. Here's what value truly entails:

- **Long-Term Energy Savings:** An efficient air conditioning system may cost more initially but can lead to substantial energy savings over time. Considering the energy rating and matching the system's capacity to your space's needs can optimise these savings.
- **Reliability and Lifespan of the Unit:** A quality air conditioning system from a reputable brand often translates into fewer repairs and a longer lifespan. Investing in a reliable unit that suits your climate and usage patterns can result in long-term peace of mind.
- **Customer Service and Ongoing Support:** The value of an air conditioning system also lies in the support provided by the manufacturer and installer. This includes warranty coverage, ease of accessing replacement parts, and availability of qualified technicians for servicing. Comprehensive customer support enhances the ownership experience and can save both time and money in the future.

3. Understanding Price: What You Pay Upfront.

Often an installation isn't an expected expense and can come out of the blue. It is all good and well to know that you may get more value out of a different system, however you still must align with your budget.

When considering your budget with the type of system, consider payment plan options if the installer has the ability to do so.

Most payment plans are flexible, with a potential approach to getting the system which surpasses an original budget is to pay an upfront payment, say 80% as an example, with the remaining 20% paid via a payment plan.

Why You Need a Good Air Conditioning System and GREAT Service

1. Comfort and Efficiency: The Foundation of a Good Air Conditioning System

- **Temperature Control:** A high-quality air conditioning system ensures consistent temperature regulation, providing comfort during extreme weather.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Modern units are designed to reduce energy consumption without compromising on performance. A well-chosen system can save you significant amounts on energy bills.
- **Advanced Features:** From wifi to upgraded zone controls, a good system offers features that enhance convenience and control.

2. Reliability and Longevity: More Than Just a Machine

- **Robust Build:** Quality air conditioning systems are engineered to last, often outperforming their warranties when well-maintained.
- **Warranty Support:** A reputable brand typically offers solid warranty terms, reflecting confidence in their product's durability.

3. GREAT Service: The Heart of an Optimal Experience

- **Expert Installation:** A great service begins with a professional installation, ensuring that the system is set up to operate at peak efficiency. Importance is put on tasks during an installation that are almost invisible to see once complete. A majority of these tasks are irreversible without a complete new installation but have a large impact on performance, such as a properly documented evacuation method.
- **Regular Maintenance:** Scheduled maintenance and inspections extend the life of the unit, preventing minor issues from becoming major problems.
- **Client Education:** Great service providers take the time to educate you on how to use the system efficiently and understand its features.
- **Transparent Communication:** Clear, honest communication about pricing, scheduling, and the work being performed builds trust and satisfaction.

4. The Fusion of Quality and Service: A Partnership for Success

- **Tailored Solutions:** Combining a quality system with great service ensures that the installation is customised to your specific needs and preferences.
- **Lifetime Support:** Ongoing relationship with a service provider means continuous support throughout the life of the system, from regular maintenance to potential upgrades or replacements.
- **Value Maximisation:** The true value of an air conditioning system is unlocked when paired with a service that understands the product, your needs, and commits to your satisfaction.

The Importance of 100% No-Risk Guarantees in Air Conditioning Work

1. Building Customer Confidence and Protecting Your Investment

- **Trust and Assurance:** A 100% no-risk guarantee shows the provider's confidence in their work and commitment to quality, building trust with customers.
- **Financial Security:** The guarantee ensures that the customer's investment in the system is secure, demonstrating that the provider stands behind their product and service.

2. Enhancing Provider Reputation and Facilitating Informed Decisions

- **Company Image and Clarity:** Offering guarantees enhances the company's reputation and sets them apart, while also providing transparency, so customers know exactly what to expect.
- **Continuous Improvement and Flexibility:** Such guarantees push the provider to remain at the forefront of the industry and offer flexible options that best suit the customers' needs and budget.