

Master Builders House of the Year 2026 Homeowner Frequently Asked Questions

Master Builders House of the Year is New Zealand's most prestigious building competition. If your Master Builder is considering entering your home, this FAQ explains what that means for you and what to expect.

Thank you for choosing to build or renovate with a Master Builder. Your support helps showcase building excellence across the industry.

ABOUT THE COMPETITION

Who can enter House of the Year?

Only Master Builders members can enter homes into the competition.

Why can't non-members enter?

House of the Year is a membership benefit, designed to promote and recognise the work of Master Builders.

If a builder joins Master Builders, can they enter straight away?

New members may only enter homes that were completed after they officially became a member. Homes completed before membership are not eligible.

Why has my home been selected?

Your Master Builder believes your home is an excellent example of their work and meets the competition criteria.

Do I need to enter my home myself?

No. Your builder enters the competition. You are only asked to give consent and access.

Does it cost me anything?

No. Your builder will cover all entry and competition costs.

Am I responsible for anything during judging or photography?

No special responsibilities beyond providing reasonable access and preparing the home as advised.

CONSENT AND WHAT IT MEANS

Why do you need my consent?

Your builder needs your permission to:

- Enter your home into the competition
- Arrange judging and professional photography
- Use photos of the home for competition promotion

What happens if I don't give consent?

The entry cannot go ahead.

Is there a deadline?

Yes. Homeowner consent must be completed by **9 March 2026**.

What am I agreeing to when I accept?

You'll be asked to:

- Accept the Homeowner Terms and Conditions
- Approve how your home may be described on certificates
- Choose your confidentiality preferences

Can I withdraw later if I change my mind?

If you have concerns after giving consent, contact your builder or the House of the Year team as soon as possible. Some stages (such as judging or photography) may already have taken place.

GUARANTEES AND DOCUMENTATION

Do I need a Master Build Guarantee?

Yes. If you did not take out a Master Build Guarantee at the time of your build, one of the following is required:

- A copy of the signed waiver, or
- A signed letter (dated at contract confirmation) confirming you were offered a guarantee and chose not to take one, or
- A letter from Master Build Services confirming a guarantee was declined at the time

Guarantees or **waivers cannot be arranged retrospectively**.

Guarantees from alternative providers are not accepted.

Note: A guarantee or waiver is not required for homes in the over \$4 million category.

PRIVACY AND MEDIA

How is my privacy protected?

Your privacy is very important to us. House of the Year focuses on promoting the builder's workmanship — not homeowners. Access to your home is only required only for judging and professional photography.

You are not required to:

- Be photographed
- Be interviewed
- Participate in publicity

Photos may be used across:

- House of the Year magazines
- The House of the Year website.
- Display screens and competition materials
- Media coverage
- Sponsor-related promotions

Will my home appear in the media?

Homes may be featured in print, online, or television media, but:

- Homeowners' names are never shared
- Addresses are not published
- Media are instructed not to reveal identifiable location details

If your home wins at a regional or national level, or has standout features, media may request a visit. **Participation is entirely optional.**

Homeowners are never obligated to be interviewed. If you choose to take part, our media team can help prepare you.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Will my home be photographed?

Yes. Professional photography is arranged for all entries.

How are the photos used?

Photos may appear in:

- House of the Year magazines
- Websites and social media
- Event presentations
- Media coverage
- Sponsor promotions

Will I receive the photos?

Your builder receives copies after the regional event and can share these with you.

How can I prepare my home?

You'll receive a Homeowner Photography Guide with simple preparation tips.

Can I ask for certain areas not to be photographed?

If you have privacy concerns, discuss them with your builder ahead of time.

JUDGING AND AWARDS PROCESS

How are homes judged?

Judging occurs in two stages:

- Regional judging by a panel (a builder and an architect)
- National judging for Top 100 finalists, conducted by a new national panel

When does judging take place?

Regional judging: April to June / early July

National judging: Late August to early November

How long will judges be at my home?

Judges usually spend 1-2 hours onsite.

Who will be there?

Judging panels include a builder and an architect. Your builder (or their representative) must also attend.

Do I need to be home?

Not necessarily. Your builder will organise access with you.

What are judges looking for?

Judges assess overall build quality, workmanship, design, functionality, and how well the home suits its site.

What awards could my home receive?

Read about all the available awards on the [House of the Year website](#).

What is the Top 100?

The Top 100 finalists are the highest-scoring homes nationally. These homes are then re-judged for national awards.

Will my home be judged again if it makes the Top 100?

Yes. National judging takes place between late August and early November 2026.

CHANGES TO THE HOME

Can I make changes to my home after completion?

Minor cosmetic changes are usually fine. However, changes that affect safety or compliance (for example, removing handrails or pool fencing) could affect eligibility.

What if I renovate or redecorate after entry?

Talk to your builder first to ensure changes don't impact judging or compliance.

QUESTIONS & CONCERNS

Who should I contact first?

Your builder is your first point of contact for any questions relating to House of the Year.

Can I contact Master Builders directly?

Yes. The House of the Year team can be reached at hoy@masterbuilder.org.nz or 0800 762 3285.