PIXEL

What custom software costs in Australia

Three real builds, our floor, our running costs, and what moves a quote.

September 2026

CONTENTS

What you will find inside

THE SHORT ANSWER

Most fresh builds land between $50,000 and $100,000, whatever the sector

A FRESH BUILD OF ANY TYPE

$50,000 to $100,000

THE FLOOR UNDER ANY PIECE OF WORK WE TAKE ON

$20,000

Unless we can see a long-term play in it.

These are **our numbers, not a survey of the market**. They are what we quote, what our clients paid, and what they go on to spend once the platform is running. **Nothing has been smoothed.**

Every figure is in Australian dollars, ranges are printed as we quote them, and where a price carries **GST on top** we say so. The three builds in this guide are **described rather than named**: a client's spend is their commercial information, and publishing it is their decision.

We write everything from scratch. No template, and no old code carried across from another project, only the lessons from it. That costs more up front, and what you get is a codebase that is **entirely yours**.

The pages that follow show three builds with their numbers, what moves a quote, how long a build takes, and what it costs to keep a platform running once it is live.

Two of our three recent builds sat inside the usual range, and compliance took the third well above it

The chart shows what each build cost. The **usual fresh-build range** sits behind them for comparison. Costs are what the client paid for the build itself; running costs come later in this guide.

A **red bar** is the price range a build landed in. A **dot** is a fixed price. The shaded band is our usual range for a fresh build. Source: Pixel project ledger, 2026.

AN AUSTRALIAN FOOD BUSINESS

A food business outgrew Shopify and WordPress, and now runs on a platform that has never been more stable

COST

$80,000 to $100,000

BUILT IN

4 months

ONGOING

$8,000 to $12,000 a month

It replaced **Shopify**, where a badly developed custom app fell short, and **WordPress**, which became too slow past a few hundred visitors and orders.

It still throws up a bug now and then. The business has **never had a more stable platform**.

WHAT THE PLATFORM CARRIES NOW

2,500 automated tests

Zero downtime deployments

Stock that reorders itself
from supplier emails

An AI assistant
that can act on customer accounts and orders

Custom reporting sits underneath all four.

AN AUSTRALIAN DIGITAL HEALTH PLATFORM

Compliance is what took a digital health platform from the usual four to six months to eight

COST

$170,000 to $200,000

BUILT IN

8 months

THEN

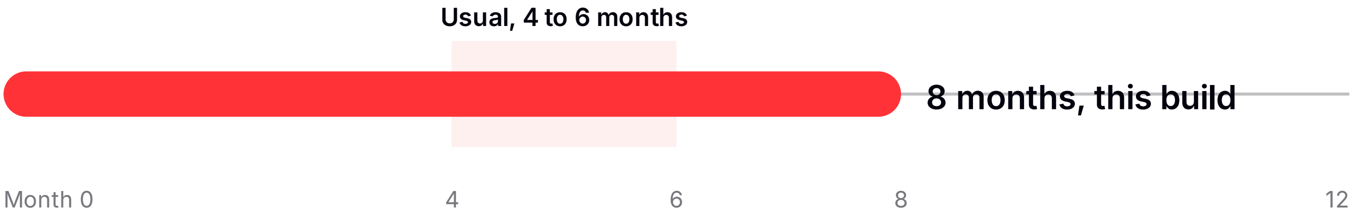
$10,000 a month on retainer

The platform is **fully confirmed and certified with the Australian Digital Health Agency**, and **we handled most of that work**.

If your platform has to meet a standard, that work is real and it **cannot be trimmed later**. Check whether the quote in front of you includes it or assumes somebody else will do it.

The retainer that followed turned the platform into a **SaaS product**.

MONTHS TO BUILD, AGAINST THE USUAL FOUR TO SIX



A WHOLESALE PLATFORM FOR A NATIONAL PHARMACY GROUP

A build being ready and a platform being in front of users are two different dates

COST

$85,000

OUR SIDE COMPLETE IN

3 months

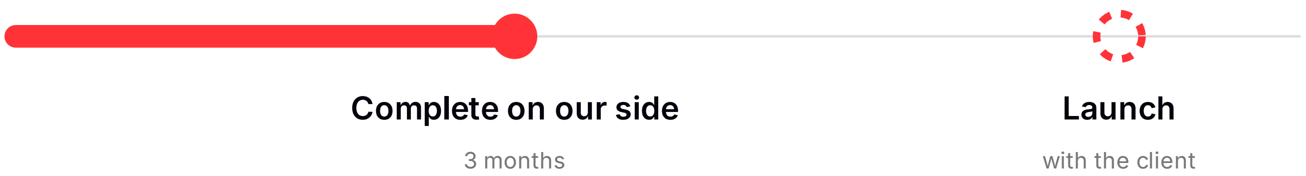
LIVE

Not yet

Our part finished in three months and the **launch date sits with the client.** **Both dates are worth planning for at the start.**

The client is moving on to a sizeable retainer as the platform integrates further into the pharmacy backbone of Australia.

TWO MILESTONES, ONE BUILD



PART TWO

What moves a quote

Risk, the feature set, the size of the platform, and what you already run.

Four things move a quote more than anything else, and two of them are underestimated

Risk

The feature set

The size of the platform

Complex API integration

Conformance

If your platform has to meet a standard, that work is real and it **cannot be trimmed later**. Compliance is what took the digital health platform to **eight months.**

The MVP that stops being minimum

A minimum viable product that gains feature after feature before it launches, each one reasonable on its own, is the **most reliable way to watch a quote climb**. It is also the **most common reason a project runs long**.

We do not quote a fixed price to rescue an inherited platform, and we do not print a price for an integration

A quote of the shape "we will spend $100,000 and bring this up to a maintainable standard" is set **before anyone has opened the code**, and it is **never financially viable for the client**. So we take rescues **on a retainer**, following **three principles in order**. We are quoting on one now, three Laravel applications for the same client, and every complaint they had fell into one of those three. Without all three, a business cannot grow on its platform.

A RESCUE, IN ORDER

Stability
FIRST

Security
THEN

Scalability
THEN

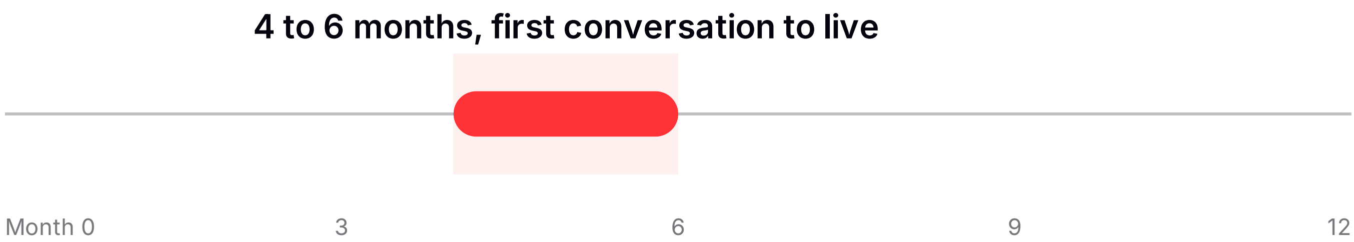
What an integration costs depends on what is already in place and on the technologies those systems use, and complex APIs are one of the things that push a quote up the most. **Any figure printed here would be invented.** Ask us about the specific systems and you will get a real answer.

We recently took a **$7,000** project to build a small piece of automation inside a larger platform. That does not make commercial sense on its own, but it put us inside a system the client cares about, and they have since asked us to quote on more. If you are being quoted well under $20,000 for something business critical, **ask what the agency expects to happen next**.

THE EXCEPTION THAT PROVES THE FLOOR

$7,000 for a long-term play

Four to six months from first conversation to live is typical, and the hours that decide the date are mostly yours



WHERE THE TIME GOES, ON THE CLIENT'S SIDE

Testing

A large platform takes real hours to test properly, and those hours come from people who already have full-time jobs.

Feedback

Decisions waiting on someone who is travelling, or on a meeting weeks away.

Late scope

Functionality that turns out to be needed for launch and that nobody thought about beforehand. This is the biggest one by a distance.

We are rarely the thing holding a build up. **The testing and sign-off time you can commit** is the biggest lever you hold on that timeline.

WHAT IT COSTS TO RUN ONCE IT IS LIVE

Budget $36,000 a year plus GST to keep a platform running, and it is cheaper than most people expect

BUDGET

$36,000

a year plus GST

- 15 to 20 hours of development each month
- 24/7 monitoring
- Security patches

READ THAT AGAINST

$2,000 to $3,000

a month

- 10 to 20 hours a month
- Keeps the platform secure
- Room to add functionality slowly

The platform keeps moving, and somebody is watching it when you are not. Maintaining a custom build is what people assume is expensive and is not: the monthly range keeps the platform secure and leaves room to add functionality slowly rather than in expensive bursts every couple of years. The annual figure **sits at the top of that range** and is the one we would give a business that **cannot afford for its platform to go quiet**.

Everything nobody thinks to ask about is inside our price, and four questions decide what the years after launch cost you

1. What happens when the build is done?

Ask what the arrangement is the day after launch. Ours is the **running cost on page 12**, printed here rather than **held back for a proposal**.

2. Who owns the code, the hosting, and the bill?

We write everything from scratch and **what we write is entirely yours**. The server sits **under your own accounts**, so the hosting invoice comes to you, from your provider, at your provider's price, and nobody can add to it.

3. How do we get code access?

The code lives on **GitHub**. We host it on our account while the build is running, and at the end of the project it is **transferred to you or opened up with full, transparent access**.

4. How do we know what work is being done each month?

You can see the work in **GitHub** as the changes land, or on the site itself, and it is **itemised on the retainer invoice**.

INSIDE OUR PRICE

- The server, under your own accounts
- Staging and production, so there is somewhere to test that is not your live site
- DNS
- Taking it live
- Importing your data

All of it has to happen before anyone can use what you paid for, so check whether it sits **inside your quote or beside it**.

If you ask an agency these four and the answers come back vague, that is your answer.

WHERE TO START

If you have a platform question of your own, you may not want to open it with a sales call. So do not.

There is a readiness quiz on our site. It is short, it asks about what you are running now, and it gives you an honest read on what your platform actually needs. **No call, no proposal, nothing scheduled.**

wearepixel.com.au/quiz

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