Newcastle Web Co

FREE GUIDE · FOR SMALL AND GROWING BUSINESSES

The Website Rebuild Cycle

Why small business websites fall apart every few years, why plugins and a fresh design never fix it, and how to make your next build the last one you need.

Build
Quick and current.

Launch
Enquiries come in.

Decay
Plugins drift, pages slow.

Rebuild
Pay again. Repeat.

01 · THE CYCLE

You will probably pay for this website again.

Most small business websites follow the same arc. It is not bad luck, and it is rarely anyone's fault. It is what happens to a site built from parts nobody is watching.

Year one

The site is quick, current and on brand. Enquiries come in and everyone is pleased with it.

Year two

Plugins update on their own schedules and start to clash. A form stops sending. Pages slow down. No one is responsible for it, so no one notices.

Year three

Now the theme looks old, the editor is awkward and everyone is nervous of the next update. The talk turns to a rebuild.

Then you pay for the rebuild, the clock resets, and the same thing starts again. Some sites last five years and some are in trouble inside eighteen months, but around three years is where it often ends.

Why it happens

WordPress sites get their features from plugins, add-ons each written by a different developer and updated whenever they decide. On the 479 Hunter business websites built on WordPress that we checked, the typical homepage loads code from four plugins, and that only counts the ones you can see from outside. The ones working behind the scenes, for backups, security, SEO and forms, add more. Every update is a small chance that something else breaks, and every plugin adds code that loads on your pages whether a visitor needs it or not.

On top of that, things only ever get added: a chat widget, a tracking script, a slider, a full-size photo straight off a phone. Nothing gets taken away. After a couple of years the site is carrying far more than it was built for, and nobody is responsible for keeping it lean.

> **The design was never the problem. What it's built on is.**

That one sentence explains why the usual fixes fail, which is the next page.

02 · THE QUICK FIXES

Why another plugin or a fresh design never fixes it.

"Another plugin should fix it."

It fixes one thing and makes every page heavier. It is also one more thing to keep updated, one more way in for an attacker, and one more piece of software that changes whenever its developer decides.

"Let's refresh the design."

A new theme changes the colours, fonts and layout. Underneath, it is the same plugins, the same database and the same weight. It is fresh paint on a cracked wall: better for a while, then the crack shows through.

03 · WHAT THE CYCLE REALLY COSTS

A worked example over ten years

Typical Australian prices, not any one business's figures. A professional small business build costs $1,500 to $3,500; WordPress care plans usually run $80 to $150 a month.

THE REBUILD CYCLE	TEN YEARS
Three builds at $3,500, one every three years or so	$10,500
WordPress care plan at $100 a month, mostly spent applying updates	$12,000
Total	**$22,500**

BUILT ONCE, LOOKED AFTER	TEN YEARS
One Growth build with Newcastle Web Co, from $3,500	$3,500
Maintain plan at $49 a month: hosting, monitoring, updates, 2 edits a month	$5,880
Total	**From $9,380**

And the invoices are only part of it. Every rebuild also costs weeks of your own time, rankings if old page addresses are not redirected, enquiries lost while the old site struggles through its final year, and the quiet reluctance to send anyone to your own website.

04 · REFRESH OR REBUILD?

Which one do you actually need?

Tick what is true of your site today. Be honest: the answer decides whether you spend a little now or a lot again in two years.

A refresh is enough if

- [ ] Pages open quickly on a phone
- [ ] Updates go through without anything breaking
- [ ] You can change words and photos yourself
- [ ] Someone already looks after it every month
- [ ] It simply looks dated

All five? New photos, new copy and a tidier layout will do. Don't let anyone sell you more.

A rebuild is the honest answer if

- [ ] Pages are slow on a phone, even after a "fix"
- [ ] Plugin or theme updates break things, or nobody dares run them
- [ ] The theme or page builder is no longer supported
- [ ] You pay someone to change a price or a photo
- [ ] You pay every month and nothing ever improves

Even one? A refresh buys a year or two. The foundation is the problem.

Check your own site in five minutes

Open Google's PageSpeed Insights (pagespeed.web.dev), enter your address and read the **mobile** result, because that is how most of your customers see you. Then log in to your site's admin and count the plugins waiting for an update. A low mobile score and a long update list together are the clearest sign the cycle has already started.

Our free SEO Readout extension for Chrome checks the SEO basics of any page as you browse it: newcastlewebco.com.au/tools/seo-readout/

05 · BEFORE YOU PAY FOR THE NEXT ONE

Ten questions to ask any web designer.

Ask them in writing. A good designer will be glad you did. Vague answers to these are how the cycle starts again.

- **What is the site built on, and how many plugins will it need?**
  Fewer moving parts means less to break and less to update.
- **How fast will the site be on a phone, and how will you show me?**
  A measured result, not just the word "fast".
- **Who applies updates after launch, how often, and what does it cost?**
  If the answer is "you can do it", it will not get done.
- **Can I edit my own words, photos and hours without calling you?**
  And what is deliberately kept out of reach, and why.
- **Is the price fixed, and what exactly is included?**
  Hourly estimates grow. Fixed prices do not.
- **Is SEO part of the build, or sold to me afterwards?**
  Keyword research belongs before design, not after launch.
- **If you are replacing my old site, how will you protect my Google rankings?**
  Listen for: every old page address mapped and redirected.
- **Whose name are the site, the hosting and the files in?**
  The right answer is yours.
- **What happens if I stop paying you?**
  A good answer: the site keeps working and you take it with you.
- **What will this site look like in year three?**
  The question that tells you whether they have thought past launch day.

06 · HOW WE BREAK THE CYCLE

We build websites that keep their speed.

A web design studio in Cameron Park, building for businesses across Newcastle and the Hunter. Here is how we build.

Custom-built on Astro, no templates. Pages are built ahead of time as finished files and served from Cloudflare. No plugin stack, no database to patch, nothing piling up on your pages. Astro itself is updated a few times a year, and we apply those updates.

Fixed price, agreed before we start. Never hourly billing.

SEO, AEO and GEO in the build price. The research comes first, in every package, so the site is planned around what your customers search, then built to be found on Google and quoted by AI answers.

A CMS in every package. Keystatic lets you change your words, photos, hours and FAQs yourself. Pages, layout, URLs and SEO stay with us, because they are what make the site rank and a slip there costs you enquiries.

Yours, in your name. The site goes onto your own Cloudflare account, which we help you set up. Whether you stay with us after launch is your choice. Most stay on Maintain, because at $49 a month it costs less than WordPress hosting and plugin licences with someone keeping them updated.

Builds

The Starter

$1,800 fixed

3 to 5 pages, live in 3 weeks, with the same research as every build.

The Growth

From **$3,500**

5 to 10 pages plus suburb pages chosen from research, and 3 launch blog posts.

The Authority

Book a call

10 to 20 pages, up to 50 researched suburb and service pages, 6 launch posts.

Looking after it

Maintain · hosting, monitoring, updates, up to 2 small edits a month	$49 a month
Momentum · Maintain plus at least 2 SEO jobs a month and a monthly report	$399 a month
Scale · Momentum plus at least 5 jobs a month and a quarterly strategy review	$799 a month

Every support plan has a 12-month minimum, then runs month to month. Prices correct at November 2026; the current figures are always on newcastlewebco.com.au/website-packages/

NEXT STEP

Make the next build the last one.

Send us your current site and we'll tell you honestly whether it needs a refresh or a rebuild, and what either would cost at a fixed price. If a refresh is enough, we'll say so.

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