



Australian Institute of Building Submission to the Building Codes Queensland Consultation Draft Guidelines for the Inspection of Class 2 to 9 Buildings

Introduction

The Australian Institute of Building (AIB) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Building Codes Queensland *Consultation Draft Guidelines for the Inspection of Class 2 to 9 Buildings*. The AIB is keen to see more efficient and thorough building standards managed by well-developed local government regulation, and congratulates Building Codes Queensland for investigating this issue.

Moving to mandatory critical stage inspections by licenced/accredited building certifiers before the imposition of further risk based inspections would be a better means of ensuring the integrity of the building process.

Builders have usually taken the risk, and often the developers pass this risk to sub-contractors of dubious credentials. Thus, their warranties have little meaning and workmanship is often sub-standard. Developers have the means of retaining control over their developments within the time of their statutory responsibilities, and then they often dispose of their assets to Owners Corporations who take over subsequent repairs and costs.

Regarding building certification, a situation exists in some jurisdictions whereby:

- On average 20 per cent of certifiers in local government have acceptable qualifications, and the situation is only marginally better with private building surveyors who undertake certifying work. The public perception of certifiers is that they are quality inspectors and that is sometimes not the case.
- A number of developers that have “skirted around” the various Acts and have delivered sub-standard products. These actions by developers harm the reputation of the building profession.

There is a definite role for mandatory council inspections, and industry should generally not be able to self-certify for critical stages in the construction process. The risk matrix on page 8 of the consultation draft is noted, and AIB generally agrees that various risk factors should determine the number of the inspections. However, AIB would be concerned if this system was used by certifiers to justify little or no inspections because the risk factors were deemed low, when in fact the risk factors were not low. There should always be a base level inspection regime for class 2 to 9 buildings, and risk matrix in the consultation draft should not be the justification for a “she’ll be right mate” attitude to building inspection.

The choice and flexibility to use private building surveyor inspectors would be preferable, rather than just the local council, but they should be undertaken by highly-qualified individuals, who would lose

their licence if they are shown to be guilty of malpractice. Generally, a tougher regime is preferable to ensure higher standards are adhered to.

While setting approval fees based on time spent may seem logical and sensible at first glance, the benefit of a set fee is that all parties know where they stand, rather than developers and/or builders questioning whether the supposed time taken by council staff for the inspection has been well spent. A set fee can also be easily budgeted for. Whether the fees are set, or are based on time spent, there are a number of other factors that need to be taken into account.

In Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, building approvals are performed by private building surveyors, and it would be beneficial if in all jurisdictions there existed a choice between council staff and private building surveyors to perform the approvals.

The gateway approach is preferable, but standards and regulations need to be improved, as many certifiers have often never been builders. It should be mandatory for certifiers to have the appropriate qualifications, preferably at bachelor degree level, and if not diploma level as a minimum. Holding only Cert IV qualifications is unacceptable for certifiers. Furthermore, certifiers' role should be to check for faults, not suggest how they should be fixed. Generally, the standards outlined in the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) should be the widely known and accepted standard nationwide, with some separate state-specific standards allowed for differing environmental conditions.

Further Information

For further information, please contact the AIB Chief Executive Officer or Policy & Advocacy Manager on (02) 6247 7433 or ceo@aib.or.au or policy@aib.org.au

Appendix 1

About the AIB

Founded in 1951, the AIB is the leading institute for building and construction professionals, acknowledged for its ability to bring individuals together who share a common interest in improving the standing of the building profession and their career within Australia and overseas.

The AIB is incorporated by Royal Charter and is the preeminent professional body for building professionals in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

Recognised as the accrediting body for building and construction degrees at educational institutions, the AIB has a long and proud history of supporting and servicing the building profession. For more than fifty years, the Institute has worked with the building and construction industry, government, universities and allied stakeholders to promote the building profession, support the development of university courses in building and construction whilst promoting the use of innovative building techniques and a best-practice regulatory environment.

AIB is proud of its role in promoting the exchange of information amongst individuals and accomplishes this through publications including the *Construct* magazine and the Australasian Journal of Construction Economics & Building (AJCEB).

The AIB also has an extensive continuing professional development program in Australia and overseas and facilitates the annual AIB Professional Excellence in Building Awards Program.

For further information please go to www.aib.org.au