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Accredited Professionals Scheme DRAFT

Submission



MASTER BUILDERS
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Contents

1. Background: Who we are and the importance of the building and construction industry to South Australia's economy	3
2. The need for professional registration and training.....	4
3. Our proposal.....	6
4. Conculsion.....	8

1. Background: Who we are and the importance of the building and construction industry to South Australia's economy

Established in 1884 as the peak body representing South Australia's building and construction industry, Master Builders SA is committed to building a highly productive industry and a prosperous South Australian community and economy.

Master Builders South Australia is a member based organisation made up of a number of professionals who utilise our services including general builders, sub-contractors, engineers, architects and building surveyors. Having a commitment to each part of the industry ensures a balanced approach to policy making as well as accruing extensive knowledge on all things building. As a result of the information presented in the Shergold Weir report, Master Builders SA supports a continuing professional development scheme for professionals in the building industry who are heavily involved in both the decision making process and construction phase. Subsequently, in principle we support the accredited professionals scheme draft

Master Builders SA is proud of the industry it represents, the jobs it creates, the 11,000 homes it built and extended for families last year, the outstanding health, education and sporting facilities it has constructed, and the offices it has built for South Australian businesses.

2. The need for professional registration and training

Serious issues in the building industry were exposed on a national scale when, on the 25 November 2014, a fire occurred at the Lacrosse apartments situated at 673 La Trobe Street Docklands, Melbourne. A thorough investigation after the event uncovered a range of systemic problems common to multistorey buildings across Australia, including poor building practices and lack of governance. The core problem was the use of highly combustible non-conforming wall cladding systems that, if ignited, exacerbated the speed and intensity of a fire.

The most influential report on building industry reform was completed by Peter Shergold and Bronwyn Weir, known as the Shergold Weir Report. It provided a damning overview on the approval process, the auditing of buildings and the professionals who administer governance. The report stated the following

The building and construction industry needs to actively participate in lifting standards, competency and integrity if it is to produce safe and reliable buildings and continue to be an important driver of infrastructure development and economic growth.

Split into 24 recommendations, the report proposed major changes to the registration, education and monitoring of both white collar and blue collar professionals. The most critical recommendations included the following dot points

- Listing of professionals who require accreditation.

The report concludes “a nationally consistent approach to regulating building practitioners is vital. However, these expanded requirements could be implemented progressively based on categories of practitioners. Given the significance of their role, priority should be given to building surveyors”.

The registration of appropriate building surveyors, and other decision makers, is fundamental in providing a consistent approach to Development Approvals and enforcement. Professionals providing approvals are at the forefront of health and safety compliance, a topic that Master builders SA makes a high priority for its members.

- Establish a continuing professional development program for registered professionals.

The report concludes intelligence should be collected, shared nationally and fed back to the industry promptly. It should also inform compulsory topics for CPD relevant to each category of registration.

The building sector is a dynamic, ever changing industry that requires continual information sharing to ensure all professionals are working at an acceptable professional level. Because decision makers enforce building law, it is vital they maintain an appropriate data base of standards and knowledge. Providing a CPD Scheme is a proven method to ensure relevance.

- itemize mandatory audit inspections during the building construction

The report concludes a mandatory inspections process must be supported by registration of inspectors. The enforcement actions of building surveyors need to be coordinated with the regulatory powers and functions of the state or territory government and local governments.

One of the principle responsibilities of a building surveyor is the inspection of buildings in accordance with approved documentation. The report uncovered that the level of inspections undertaken by governing authorities was lacking, hence a minimum number of audit stages were proposed within the report. Master Builders SA understands the importance of compliance, not only for the health and safety of building occupants, but also as good business practice. Facilitating enough resources for this proposal will be dependent on the type of professionals regulated to enforce development compliance.

Viewing the content of the accredited professional's scheme draft, it is easy to draw comparisons with the recommendations outlined in the Shergold Weir report. Implementing the draft is essential to improve the building industry, but just as important are the guidelines used within the proposed regulations.

3. Our proposal

A. Function of the Level 3: Assistant Building Surveyor

In both the Discussion Paper (page 11) and draft regulations (under Level 3: Assistant Building Surveyor, Qualification – page 41) reference is made to the functions which a Level 3 Assistant Building Surveyor/Certifier will undertake. Class 1 and 10 buildings are specified, however Class 2-9 buildings are omitted.

Currently, under the Development Regulations 2008 – r87(2)(c), a Level 3 person is able to perform work on single storey Class 2-9 buildings up to 500 square metres in floor area, and also on two storey Class 1a or 10 buildings of unlimited floor area.

This may have been an accidental oversight and the provisions in the draft regulations should match the current provisions. Our stance is that the Level 3 functions should match current legislation.

B. Function of the Level 4: Building Inspector

Similar to above, the draft regulations specify only Class 1 & 10 buildings. We agree and believe that Level 4 building inspectors should be restricted to Class 1 & 10 buildings only and not perform inspections on Class 2-9 buildings.

For professionals who wish to become building surveyors, the pathway appears suited for a progression from level 4 to level 1. We feel that a level 4 professional, being the least experienced, should have duties and functions restricted to buildings of lower risk, compared to commercial buildings that may have higher occupancy rates.

C. Qualifications of the Level 4: Building Inspector

The draft regulations includes a table (page 45) for the recognised qualifications for both Level 3 and Level 4 building certifiers. The recognised qualifications are the same for both levels of accreditation. We believe the functions and responsibilities of the Level 4 are primarily suited to inspection of building work to ascertain compliance with approved documentation.

Our position is that the qualifications necessary to become a Level 4 Building Inspector should be broader than that specified for a level 3. By separating the two qualification levels, a wider range of skilled professionals may be utilised to perform the duties of a Level 4 building inspector. This is critical in relation to resource allocation for Councils who administer inspection policies (especially in country areas). We feel that the current qualification requirements are too restrictive for a level 4 professional and may exclude people capable of performing the role. Hence we suggest the following dot points should be included as part of the recognised qualifications for a Level 4: Building Inspector

- Building Work Supervisor Registration under the Building Work Contractors Act 1995 with the minimum registration condition: Residential building work limited to National Construction Code Class 1 & 10 not exceeding two storey - as issued by Consumer & Business Services SA (CBS);

Obtaining a site supervisors registration is an onerous task that requires the applicant to have proven references, work history (experience) and technical knowledge in the area of

building construction. This makes them ideally suited for an inspector's role. Furthermore, should the state adopt the recommendations listed in the Shergold & Weir Report (Recommendation 18), resourcing audit inspections will become problematic for councils. By broadening the required qualifications of a level 4, the number of people fit for the role also broadens, potentially alleviating internal pressures and creating employment opportunities for Councils who enforce inspection policies.

- Recognised training specific to AS 4349.0-2007 Inspection of buildings.

**NOTE: recognised training for AS 4349.0 – 2007 may be a unit completed within a recognised qualification.*

A level 4 is to be colloquially known as a building inspector. For a professional to be referred to as a building inspector, there is an obligation that any works associated with the role is performed in accordance with Australian Standards.

AS 4349.0-2007 : inspection of buildings outlines the general (minimum) requirements for building inspectors to abide by including access provisions, reporting methods and inspection criteria. While the purpose of the standard precludes technical aspects of a building inspection i.e. how a structure should be assessed against the building regulations, it does provide a format and reporting criteria building inspectors must adhere to.

We propose that all Level 4 Building Inspectors perform their functions with consistency and in accordance with standards that governs them, including AS 4349.0. Therefore, any education recognised as suitable for a level 4 building inspector should also make reference to AS 4349.0.

D. Qualification Hierarchy

The recognised qualification tables (pages 44-45) do not appear to acknowledge that a recognised qualification from a higher level will automatically be recognised for a lower level i.e. a Level 1 qualification such as a Bachelor of Construction Management and Economics from the University of South Australia currently is not recognised as a qualification for a Level 2, 3 or 4 applicant.

We would like the department to ensure qualifications from a higher level are also recognised for a lower level.

4. Conclusion

The accredited professional's scheme draft is a great opportunity to make improvements within the building industry as we transition to the new DPI Act and Regulations. Our proposal above is aimed at taking advantage of this opportunity.

Master Builders SA places a high importance on ensuring appropriately qualified people register as Level 4 building inspectors. Our proposal to broadening the recognised qualifications for level 4 is made in the belief that persons who have extensive experience on site, such as site supervisors, are just as capable as those who have received tertiary education. In conjunction with this philosophy, our concern is that should mandatory inspection levels increase, local government's ability to cover the additional work load will be hindered by the availability (or lack thereof) of recognised people capable of performing the role. This will be most evident for councils located outside metropolitan Adelaide.

Indeed, our proposal to include licenced individuals to operate in the role of a limited building surveyor has previously occurred in South Australia and proven to be successful. Under s18 of the Development Act 1993 and r 87(2) (e) of the Development Regulations 2008, a council may apply through the Minister to recognise a person's ability at performing building surveyor duties. Alexandrina Council is a case in point, employing people with a trade background to perform the tasks of a building surveyor.

In addition to prescribed qualifications, we suggest that AS 4349.0 be recognised as a key part of a building inspector's responsibility. The standard sets a minimum criteria for administering inspections. Some of the criteria are met through common regulatory practices performed by relevant authorities. Other criteria, such as report writing, are the responsibility of the building surveyor to administer correctly. We also propose any applicant applying for a level 4 accreditation who has not received formal training on this standard through a recognised qualification, should receive additional training on the standard before they become accredited as a level 4 building inspector.

Our submission listed above is written in good faith; we hope that you make time to give due consideration to our proposals and read them as best intentions for the building industry as a whole.