



15 December 2004

Mr Neil Cocks
Director
Building Professionals' Board
DIPNR

Dear Neil

Response to “Collaborative model for the assessment of applications”

I had seen the proposed model and then read about the proposal in the Herald last week. I apologise that we have not responded. I thought it was a joke.

Fundamental to consideration of this issue is the legitimately held skepticism in the community to a system of compliance where the person certifying compliance is paid for by the developer. This has always been the Achilles' heel of the private certification model. It's hard to accept that a certifier, effectively in the employ of the developer, will do anything other than what is required by the developer paying their fee.

At morning tea on (insert date here), prior to giving our evidence to the Campbell Inquiry, The Hon David Campbell asked us if we had anything to say apart from “I told you so”. The subsequent recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee, including the establishment of your Board, have not allayed concerns about the fundamental and unavoidable conflict of interest in having a developer buy their own certifier.

The Campbell Inquiry was accompanied by the Minister's dramatic removal from BSAP (ie the AIBS) their power to accredit. This was done because the accreditation process was in disarray but more importantly in recognition of the conflict that existed for the AIBS/BSAP in accrediting people using their own training courses and cpd programs. Even with a system so flawed in logic as private certification, there has to be a limit.

That's why it's hard to accept that the proposal to contract this role out to the professional bodies is a serious suggestion.

How can there be any integrity in a system where the AIBS (or its equivalent for the other building professionals) sells and makes money from training courses, runs and makes money from cpd programs requiring attendance at their own courses and accredits based on these income-generating activities?

How can there be any consumer confidence?

How can there be any confidence that any professional body will decline accreditation for one of their members?

We support the idea that the BPB carry out this function, and be resourced properly to allow it, and that it draw upon the expertise available from professionals in the industry but not official representatives of the professional bodies.

Without a proper arm's length process there can be no integrity in the system, the recommendations of the Campbell Inquiry cannot be delivered and there can be no industry or consumer confidence.

For this to be done properly, the BPB must be funded sufficient to pay properly trained assessors. Ideally, these should be employees but, failing that, they need to be properly accredited people in their own right and they need to be at arm's length from the professional bodies that have already lost the right to accredit their own members and mates. They lost that right because it was recognized to be a sham and nothing, within the hands of the BPB, will change that perception for any future activity.

A two-step process where they BPB assesses core competencies and then the appropriate professional bodies the speciality statements, will also add cost and delay to the process.

You will also hand to the critics of the system an unprecedented opportunity for criticism and point-scoring.

Please note our formal advice that this would be an opportunity that we would welcome with both hands.

Regards



Ian Robertson
Secretary

PS Any news on our great idea to have private certifiers pay a bond into a fund, that you could manage, and that could be claimed upon by Councils to cover their costs in fixing problems created by private certifiers? I understand that the LGA and SA also think it a great idea.