



# Industry undergoes change

This fourth part of a series on the history of the Licensed Building Practitioners Scheme looks at some of the changes implemented in the building industry and the impacts these had.

**FOLLOWING THE RELEASE** of the Hunn Report and introduction of the Building Act 2004, many changes were made for the good of the industry and the workers carrying out the work. While some changes were not recognised as being the result of the leaky building saga, it all added up to a long-term goal.

## Range of changes

### Face-sealed cladding systems

Face-sealed cladding systems were removed from the Acceptable Solutions. This meant that, if someone still wished to use this form of cladding, they had to prove it would keep moisture out of the building for at least the period set out in Building Code clause B2 *Durability*.

### Focus on health risks

Health began to take more prominence in the health and safety message. There is now better understanding of the underlying health risks of working around mould uncovered in the framing during alterations and leaky building remediation and the organic solvent carrier systems that deliver the preservative compounds in LOSP-treated timber.

### Clearer responsibilities

Clear delineation of responsibilities began with the New Zealand Standards 3900 series

of construction contracts, which provided much of the definition of who was responsible for what. Gone were the days of 'just doing it the way we always had' if you didn't think the plans were correct or buildable.

Now, the person that didn't follow the plans was deemed to be taking ownership of any deviation from those plans. Why would a builder want to do that, especially when even their insurance policy wouldn't cover them for it, while the designer's insurance did cover their own building design?

### More detail in site documents

There were increased requirements for critical information to be provided in the site documents. What used to be a 5-page set of plans for a basic house suddenly became 18 pages or more!

This may not seem like a good change, especially the extra time needed at the design stage, but it took away the need for the territorial authority and the builder to assume what the designer intended.

### Plain English added

Explanatory notes in plain English were added to the Building Act and Code, and this led into other areas. A shining example is Building Performance's 230-page *Building work that does not require a building consent* guide that

provides an easy, concise and reliable look at examples of how to correctly interpret Schedule 1 of the Building Act.

### Territorial authorities

Territorial authorities had to identify instances where district plan requirements were influencing the planning and site coverage of multi-unit housing projects. This was a lesson from the Canadian leaky condo syndrome found a decade earlier than our leaky buildings.

The Canadian saga was covered in the Barrett Commission report released in 1998. It found that site coverage and boundary setbacks, which were measured from the closest point of the house to the boundary - normally the outside of the eaves or soffits - restricted the size of building footprints. The obvious design solution to maximise site use was to create parapet walls and therefore low monopitch roofs, internal gutters and a plaster system to suit the monolithic look - the Mediterranean-style house!

### Confidence in industry plummeted

The Hunn Report grossly underestimated the potential cost of the problem at \$240 million. It's not just the obvious cost of the repairs that need to be considered. There are also huge legal costs and medical and mental health

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costs from living in and owning these sub-standard houses, and we're still finding leaky buildings today that are subject to ongoing cost escalation. Who knows the real cost?

This led to public confidence in the building industry hitting new lows.

### **Introducing the Licensed Building Practitioners Scheme**

The introduction of the LBP regime was aimed at improving the skills and knowledge of those involved in residential construction. The following was stated as the intention of the enabling legislation:

'The Government's goal is a more efficient and productive sector that stands behind the quality of its work; a sector with the necessary skills and capability to build it right first time and that takes pride in its work; a sector that delivers good-quality, affordable homes and buildings and contributes to a prosperous economy; a well-informed sector

that shares information and quickly identifies and corrects problems; and a sector where everyone involved in building work knows what they are accountable for and what they rely on others for.

'We cannot make regulation more efficient without first getting accountability clear, and both depend on people having the necessary skills and knowledge. The Building Act 2004 will be amended to make it clearer that the buck stops with the people doing the work. Builders and designers must make sure their work will meet Building Code requirements; building owners must make sure they get the necessary approvals and are accountable for any decisions they make, such as substituting specified products; and building consent authorities are accountable for checking that plans will meet Building Code requirements and inspecting to make sure plans are followed.'

**For more** See the next issue for the continuation of this series.

### **Quiz:**

1. What was found to be a major health risk in the repair of leaky buildings?
  - a. Transport of LOSP treated timber to site.
  - b. Disposing of face-sealed cladding systems.
  - c. Moulds growing within the framing cavity.
2. What was the government's goal for the future of the building industry?
  - a. A more efficient and productive sector.
  - b. A sector that delivers good-quality, affordable homes and buildings.
  - c. A sector where everyone involved knows what they're accountable for.
  - d. Making it clearer that the buck stops with the people doing the work.
  - e. All of the above.
3. What is the legislation that introduced the beginnings of the LBP Scheme?
  - a. The Building Act 2004.
  - b. The Building Regulations 1991.
  - c. The Building Code.

**ANSWERS:** 1. c, 2. e, 3. a.