

## Before the Building Practitioners Board

	BPB Complaint No. C2-01399
Licensed Building Practitioner:	Nelson Hunt (the Respondent)
Licence Number:	BP 108405
Licence(s) Held:	Carpentry

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### Decision of the Board in Respect of the Conduct of a Licensed Building Practitioner

#### Under section 315 of the Building Act 2004

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Complaint or Board Inquiry	Complaint
Hearing Location	Auckland
Hearing Type:	On the Papers
Hearing Date:	15 August 2017
Decision Date:	21 August 2017
Board Members Present	Chris Preston (Presiding) Mel Orange Robin Dunlop Bob Monteith

#### **Procedure:**

The matter was considered by the Building Practitioners Board (the Board) under the provisions of Part 4 of the Building Act 2004 (the Act), the Building Practitioners (Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures) Regulations 2008 (the Complaints Regulations) and the Board's Complaints and Inquiry Procedures.

#### **Board Decision:**

The Respondent has committed a disciplinary offence under section 317(1)(da)(ii) of the Act.

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## Introduction

- [1] The hearing resulted from a Complaint into the conduct of the Respondent and a Board resolution under regulation 10 of the Complaints Regulations<sup>1</sup> to hold a hearing in relation to building work at [Omitted]. The alleged disciplinary offence the Board resolved to investigate was that the Respondent failed, without good reason, in respect of a building consent that relates to restricted building work that he or she is to carry out (other than as an owner-builder) or supervise, or has carried out (other than as an owner-builder) or supervised, (as the case may be), to provide the persons specified in section 88(2) with a record of work, on completion of the restricted building work, in accordance with section 88(1) (s 317(1)(da)(ii) of the Act).
- [2] The Board notes that the Registrar was unable to locate the Respondent to bring the complaint to his attention. Documents relating to the complaint were sent to the Respondent at the address provided by him on the Register of licenced building practitioners. Accordingly, prior to the Board considering the disciplinary charge, it needs to determine whether the Respondent has been provided with notice of the complaint and with an opportunity to respond to it.
- [3] Under regulation 7(2) of the Complaints Regulations the Registrar must, when compiling the Registrar’s Report, provide a copy of the complaint to the Respondent. Similarly under reg 12 if the complaint is to proceed to a hearing the Board must give notice of the hearing to the Respondent.
- [4] The Act provides for the service of notices in section 394. It provides that:

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<sup>1</sup> The resolution was made following the Board’s consideration of a report prepared by the Registrar in accordance with the Complaints Regulations.

**394 Service of notices**

- (1) Any notice or other document required to be served on, or given to, any person under this Act is sufficiently served if it is—
- (a) delivered personally to the person; or
  - (b) delivered to the person at the person's usual or last known place of residence or business; or
  - (c) sent by fax or email to the person's fax number or email address; or
  - (d) posted in a letter addressed to the person at the person's usual or last known place of residence or business.
- (5) A notice or other document sent by post to a person in accordance with subsection (1)(d) must be treated as having been received by that person at the time at which the letter would have been delivered in the ordinary course of post.

[5] Given the above provisions the Board finds that the required notices under the Regulations have been provided to the Respondent.

[6] As such the Board finds that it is appropriate that it considers the complaint.

**Function of Disciplinary Action**

[7] The common understanding of the purpose of professional discipline is to uphold the integrity of the profession. The focus is not punishment, but the protection of the public, the maintenance of public confidence and the enforcement of high standards of propriety and professional conduct. Those purposes were recently reiterated by the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom in *R v Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales*<sup>2</sup> and in New Zealand in *Dentice v Valuers Registration Board*<sup>3</sup>.

[8] Disciplinary action under the Act is not designed to redress issues or disputes between a complainant and a Respondent. In *McLanahan and Tan v The New Zealand Registered Architects Board*<sup>4</sup> Collins J. noted that:

*“... the disciplinary process does not exist to appease those who are dissatisfied with their architect. The disciplinary process for architects exists to ensure professional standards are maintained in order to protect clients, the profession and the broader community.”*

[9] The Board can only inquire into “the conduct of a licensed building practitioner” with respect to the grounds for discipline set out in section 317 of the Act. It does not have any jurisdiction over contractual matters.

**Background to the Complaint**

[10] The allegation was that the Respondent failed to provide a record of work on completion of restricted building work.

<sup>2</sup> *R v Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales* [2011] UKSC 1, 19 January 2011.

<sup>3</sup> [1992] 1 NZLR 720 at p 724

<sup>4</sup> [2016] HZHC 2276 at para 164

## Evidence

- [11] The Board must be satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the disciplinary offences alleged have been committed<sup>5</sup>. Under section 322 of the Act the Board has relaxed rules of evidence which allow it to receive evidence that may not be admissible in a court of law.
- [12] The Complainant stated she engaged the Respondent to construct a new dwelling under a building consent. The Respondent started work on 3 April 2014 and finished in December 2014. The intended work was not complete and the Complainant alleged the Respondent refused to complete the house. He also refused to provide a record of work for the restricted building work he had completed. The Complainant stated the Respondent had been asked multiple times for a record of work by both her and the building consent authority but he refused to provide one. There was no response from the Respondent to the complaint.

## Board's Conclusion and Reasoning

- [13] The Board has decided that the Respondent has failed, without good reason, in respect of a building consent that relates to restricted building work that he or she is to carry out (other than as an owner-builder) or supervise, or has carried out (other than as an owner-builder) or supervised, (as the case may be), to provide the persons specified in section 88(2) with a record of work, on completion of the restricted building work, in accordance with section 88(1) (s 317(1)(da)(ii) of the Act) and should be disciplined.
- [14] There is a statutory requirement under section 88(1) of the Building Act 2004 for a licensed building practitioner to provide a record of work to the owner and the territorial authority on completion of restricted building work<sup>6</sup>.
- [15] Failing to provide a record of work is a ground for discipline under section 317(1)(da)(ii) of the Act. In order to find that ground for discipline proven, the Board need only consider whether the Respondent had "good reason" for not providing a record of work on "completion" of the restricted building work.
- [16] The Board discussed issues with regard to records of work in its decision C2-01170<sup>7</sup> and gave guidelines to the profession as to who must provide a record of work, what a record of work is for, when it is to be provided, the level of detail that must be provided, who a record of work must be provided to and what might constitute a good reason for not providing a record of work.
- [17] The starting point with a record of work is that it is a mandatory statutory requirement whenever restricted building work under a building consent is carried out or supervised by a licensed building practitioner (other than as an owner-

<sup>5</sup> *Z v Dental Complaints Assessment Committee* [2009] 1 NZLR 1

<sup>6</sup> Restricted Building Work is defined by the Building (Definition of Restricted Building Work) Order 2011

<sup>7</sup> *Licensed Building Practitioners Board Case Decision C2-01170* 15 December 2015

builder). Each and every licensed building practitioner who carries out restricted building work must provide a record of work.

- [18] The statutory provisions do not stipulate a timeframe for the licenced person to provide a record of work. The provisions in section 88(1) simply states “on completion of the restricted building work ...”.
- [19] In most situations issues with the provision of a record of work do not arise. The work progresses and records of work are provided in a timely fashion. Contractual disputes or intervening events can, however, lead to situations where the licensed building practitioner will have to provide a record of work even though all of the intended restricted building work has not been completed.
- [20] This is what has occurred in the present case. The contractual relationship came to an end in or about December 2014 and it was clear that the Respondent had no intention of returning to carry out any further restricted building work. Given these circumstances the Respondent’s restricted building work had, in effect, been completed and a record of work was then due.
- [21] A record of work has still not been provided. On this basis the disciplinary offence has been committed.
- [22] Section 317(1)(da)(ii) of the Act provides for a defence of the licenced building practitioner having a “good reason” for failing to provide a record of work. If they can, on the balance of probabilities, prove to the Board that one exists then it is open to the Board to find that a disciplinary offence has not been committed. Each case will be decided by the Board on its own merits but the threshold for a good reason is high. No good reasons have been advanced.

### **Penalty, Costs and Publication**

- [23] Having found that one or more of the grounds in section 317 applies the Board must, under section 318 of the Act<sup>i</sup>, consider the appropriate disciplinary penalty, whether the Respondent should be ordered to pay any costs and whether the decision should be published.
- [24] The matter was dealt with on the papers. It has decided to make indicative orders and give the Respondent an opportunity to provide further evidence or submissions relevant to the indicative orders.

### **Penalty**

- [25] The purpose of professional discipline is to uphold the integrity of the profession; the focus is not punishment, but the enforcement of a high standard of propriety and professional conduct. The Board does note, however, that the High Court in *Patel v Complaints Assessment Committee*<sup>8</sup> commented on the role of "punishment"

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<sup>8</sup> HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818, 13 August 2007 at p 27

in giving penalty orders stating that punitive orders are, at times, necessary to provide a deterrent and to uphold professional standards. The Court noted:

*[28] I therefore propose to proceed on the basis that, although the protection of the public is a very important consideration, nevertheless the issues of punishment and deterrence must also be taken into account in selecting the appropriate penalty to be imposed.*

- [26] The Board also notes that in *Lochhead v Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment*<sup>9</sup> the court noted that whilst the statutory principles of sentencing set out in the Sentencing Act 2002 do not apply to the Building Act they have the advantage of simplicity and transparency. The court recommended adopting a starting point for penalty based on the seriousness of the disciplinary offending prior to considering any aggravating and/or mitigating factors.
- [27] Record of work matters are at the lower end of the disciplinary scale. Countering this is the Respondent's failure to maintain his details on the Register and to deal with the complaint.
- [28] The Board's normal starting point for a failure to provide a record of work is a fine of \$1,500. There are no mitigating factors present and as such the fine will not be reduced from that starting point.

#### Costs

- [29] Under s 318(4) the Board may require the Respondent "to pay the costs and expenses of, and incidental to, the inquiry by the Board."
- [30] The Respondent should note that the High Court has held that 50% of total reasonable costs should be taken as a starting point in disciplinary proceedings and that the percentage can then be adjusted up or down having regard to the particular circumstances of each case<sup>10</sup>.
- [31] In *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand*<sup>11</sup> where the order for costs in the tribunal was 50% of actual costs and expenses the High Court noted that:
- But for an order for costs made against a practitioner, the profession is left to carry the financial burden of the disciplinary proceedings, and as a matter of policy that is not appropriate.*
- [32] The Board notes the matter was dealt with on the papers. Ordinarily costs for a hearing would be in the order of \$1,000 but the Board has reduced this to \$500 being an amount the Board considers is reasonable for the Respondent to pay toward the costs and expenses of, and incidental to, the inquiry by the Board.

<sup>9</sup> 3 November 2016, CIV-2016-070-000492, [2016] NZDC 21288

<sup>10</sup> *Cooray v The Preliminary Proceedings Committee* HC, Wellington, AP23/94, 14 September 1995, *Macdonald v Professional Conduct Committee*, HC, Auckland, CIV 2009-404-1516, 10 July 2009, *Owen v Wynyard* HC, Auckland, CIV-2009-404-005245, 25 February 2010.

<sup>11</sup> [2001] NZAR 74

## Publication

[33] As a consequence of its decision the Respondent's name and the disciplinary outcomes will be recorded in the public register maintained as part of the Licensed Building Practitioners' scheme as is required by the Act<sup>12</sup>. The Board is also able, under s 318(5) of the Act, to order publication over and above the public register:

*In addition to requiring the Registrar to notify in the register an action taken by the Board under this section, the Board may publicly notify the action in any other way it thinks fit.*

[34] As a general principle such further public notification may be required where the Board perceives a need for the public and/or the profession to know of the findings of a disciplinary hearing. This is in addition to the Respondent being named in this decision.

[35] Within New Zealand there is a principle of open justice and open reporting which is enshrined in the Bill of Rights Act 1990<sup>13</sup>. The Criminal Procedure Act 2011 sets out grounds for suppression within the criminal jurisdiction<sup>14</sup>. Within the disciplinary hearing jurisdiction the courts have stated that the provisions in the Criminal Procedure Act do not apply but can be instructive<sup>15</sup>. The High Court provided guidance as to the types of factors to be taken into consideration in *N v Professional Conduct Committee of Medical Council*<sup>16</sup>.

[36] The courts have also stated that an adverse finding in a disciplinary case usually requires that the name of the practitioner be published in the public interest<sup>17</sup>. It is, however, common practice in disciplinary proceedings to protect the names of other persons involved as naming them does not assist the public interest.

[37] Based on the above the Board will not order further publication.

## **Section 318 Order**

[38] For the reasons set out above, the Board directs that:

**Penalty:** Pursuant to s 318(1)(f) of the Building Act 2004, the Respondent is ordered to pay a fine of \$1,500.

**Costs:** Pursuant to s 318(4) of the Act, the Respondent is ordered to pay costs of \$500 (GST included) towards the costs of, and incidental to, the inquiry of the Board.

**Publication:** The Registrar shall record the Board's action in the Register of Licensed Building Practitioners in accordance with s 301(1)(iii) of the Act.

<sup>12</sup> Refer sections 298, 299 and 301 of the Act

<sup>13</sup> Section 14 of the Act

<sup>14</sup> Refer sections 200 and 202 of the Criminal Procedure Act

<sup>15</sup> *N v Professional Conduct Committee of Medical Council* [2014] NZAR 350

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*

<sup>17</sup> *Kewene v Professional Conduct Committee of the Dental Council* [2013] NZAR 1055

**In terms of section 318(5) of the Act, there will not be action taken to publicly notify the Board's action, except for the note in the Register and the Respondent being named in this decision.**

- [39] The Respondent should note that the Board may, under section 319 of the Act, suspend or cancel a licensed building practitioner's licence if fines or costs imposed as a result of disciplinary action are not paid.

#### **Submissions on Penalty, Costs and Publication**

- [40] The Board invites the Respondent to make written submissions on the matters of disciplinary penalty, costs and publication up until close of business on **12 September 2017**. The submissions should focus on mitigating matters as they relate to the penalty, costs and publication orders. If no submissions are received then this decision will become final. If submissions are received then the Board will meet and consider those submissions prior to coming to a final decision on penalty, costs and publication.

#### **Right of Appeal**

- [41] The right to appeal Board decisions is provided for in s 330(2) of the Act<sup>ii</sup>.

Signed and dated this 21<sup>ST</sup> day of August 2017



**Chris Preston**  
Presiding Member

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#### <sup>i</sup> **Section 318 of the Act**

- (1) *In any case to which section 317 applies, the Board may*
- (a) *do both of the following things:*
    - (i) *cancel the person's licensing, and direct the Registrar to remove the person's name from the register; and*
    - (ii) *order that the person may not apply to be relicensed before the expiry of a specified period:*
  - (b) *suspend the person's licensing for a period of no more than 12 months or until the person meets specified conditions relating to the licensing (but, in any case, not for a period of more than 12 months) and direct the Registrar to record the suspension in the register:*
  - (c) *restrict the type of building work or building inspection work that the person may carry out or supervise under the person's licensing class or classes and direct the Registrar to record the restriction in the register:*
  - (d) *order that the person be censured:*
  - (e) *order that the person undertake training specified in the order:*
  - (f) *order that the person pay a fine not exceeding \$10,000.*

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- (2) *The Board may take only one type of action in subsection 1(a) to (d) in relation to a case, except that it may impose a fine under subsection (1)(f) in addition to taking the action under subsection (1)(b) or (d).*
  - (3) *No fine may be imposed under subsection (1)(f) in relation to an act or omission that constitutes an offence for which the person has been convicted by a court.*
  - (4) *In any case to which section 317 applies, the Board may order that the person must pay the costs and expenses of, and incidental to, the inquiry by the Board.*
  - (5) *In addition to requiring the Registrar to notify in the register an action taken by the Board under this section, the Board may publicly notify the action in any other way it thinks fit.”*

ii **Section 330 Right of appeal**

- (2) *A person may appeal to a District Court against any decision of the Board—*
  - (b) *to take any action referred to in section 318.*

**Section 331 Time in which appeal must be brought**

*An appeal must be lodged—*

- (a) *within 20 working days after notice of the decision or action is communicated to the appellant; or*
- (b) *within any further time that the appeal authority allows on application made before or after the period expires.*