

Before the Building Practitioners Board

	BPB Complaint No. C2-01736
Licensed Building Practitioner:	Mingyang Ma (the Respondent)
Licence Number:	BP 127405
Licence(s) Held:	Roofing AOP Profiled Metal Roof and/or Wall Cladding; Shingle or Slate Roof

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

Under section 315 of the Building Act 2004

Complaint or Board Inquiry	Board Inquiry
Hearing Location	Auckland
Hearing Type:	In Person
Hearing Date:	7 March 2018
Decision Date:	21 March 2018

Board Members Present:

Chris Preston (Presiding)
Robin Dunlop, Retired Professional Engineer
Catherine Taylor, Lay Member
Bob Monteith, LBP Carpentry and Site AOP 2

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 disciplinary offences under section 317(1)(b), 317(1)(d) and 317(1)(da)(ii) of the Act.

Contents

Introduction	2
Function of Disciplinary Action	2
Evidence	3
Board’s Conclusion and Reasoning	4
Negligence and/or Incompetence	4
Contrary to a Building Consent.....	5
Record of Work.....	6
Penalty, Costs and Publication	7
Penalty	7
Costs.....	8
Publication	8
Section 318 Order	9
Submissions on Penalty, Costs and Publication	9
Right of Appeal	10

Introduction

[1] The hearing resulted from a Board Inquiry into the conduct of the Respondent and a Board resolution under regulation 10 of the Complaints Regulations¹ to hold a hearing in relation to building work at [Omitted]. The alleged disciplinary offences the Board resolved to investigate were that the Respondent:

- (a) carried out or supervised building work or building inspection work in a negligent or incompetent manner (s 317(1)(b) of the Act);
- (b) carried out or supervised building work or building inspection work that does not comply with a building consent (s 317(1)(d) of the Act); and
- (c) 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).

Function of Disciplinary Action

[2] 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

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

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*² and in New Zealand in *Dentice v Valuers Registration Board*³.

- [3] 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*⁴ Collins J. noted that:

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

- [4] 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.

Evidence

- [5] The Board must be satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the disciplinary offences alleged have been committed⁵. 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.
- [6] The Board heard evidence from the Respondent and the Technical Assessor, Mr William Hursthouse.
- [7] The Technical Assessor confirmed his report and re-stated for the Board that in his opinion the building consent had not been followed with respect to the eaves flashing noting, however, that the fascia board had also not been installed correctly. While the installation of the fascia board was the responsibility of the builder, the Respondent should have instructed either the builder to fit the correct fascia board or had a flashing made that would fit.
- [8] The Respondent stated that he was under pressure from the builder to complete the work and had the flashings made in accordance with the consented plans. He then sent an employee to fit the flashings who did not report the error.
- [9] He did not supervise the employee and accepted that had he gone to site he would have ensured the error had been corrected.
- [10] The Respondent accepted that, given the error with the fascia board, the flashing as installed did not comply with the building code nor provide the minimum 35mm cover over the fascia board as required by the building consent.

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

³ [1992] 1 NZLR 720 at p 724

⁴ [2016] HZHC 2276 at para 164

⁵ *Z v Dental Complaints Assessment Committee* [2009] 1 NZLR 1

[11] The Respondent also did not demonstrate an understanding of the requirement to provide a Record of Work. He accepted that he did not provide a Record of Work for this job. The Board reminded him of his obligations under the Act to provide a Record of Work to the Territorial Authority and the home owner on the completion of the Restricted Building Work that he has done.

Board's Conclusion and Reasoning

[12] The Board has decided that the Respondent **has**:

- (a) carried out or supervised building work or building inspection work in a negligent manner (s 317(1)(b) of the Act);
- (b) carried out or supervised building work or building inspection work that does not comply with a building consent (s 317(1)(d) of the Act);
- (c) 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.

[13] The reasons for the Board's decision follows.

Negligence and/or Incompetence

[14] In considering whether the Respondent has carried out or supervised building work in a negligent or incompetent manner the Board has had regard to the case of *Beattie v Far North Council*⁶. Judge McElrea provided guidance on the interpretation of those terms:

[43] Section 317 of the Act uses the phrase "in a negligent or incompetent manner", so it is clear that those adjectives cannot be treated as synonymous.

[44] In my view a "negligent" manner of working is one that exhibits a serious lack of care judged by the standards reasonably expected of such practitioners, while an "incompetent" manner of working is one that exhibits a serious lack of competence.

[46] The approach I have adopted recognises that the terms "negligent" and "incompetent" have a considerable area of overlap in their meanings, but also have a different focus - negligence referring to a manner of working that shows a lack of reasonably expected care, and incompetence referring to a demonstrated lack of the reasonably expected ability or skill level.

⁶ Judge McElrea, DC Whangarei, CIV-2011-088-313

- [15] The Board has also considered the comments of Justice Gendall in *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand*⁷ as regards the threshold for disciplinary matters:

[21] Negligence or malpractice may or may not be sufficient to constitute professional misconduct and the guide must be standards applicable by competent, ethical and responsible practitioners and there must be behaviour which falls seriously short of that which is to be considered acceptable and not mere inadvertent error, oversight or for that matter carelessness.

- [16] The Respondent did not supervise his employee and the incorrect flashing size was ordered and installed in such a manner as to risk ingress of water into the building.

- [17] Supervision in the context of the Building Act has not yet been considered by the courts. It has, however, been considered in relation to Electricity Act 1992⁸. The definition of supervision in that Act is consistent with the definition in the Building Act and as such the comments of the court are instructive. In the case Judge Tompkins stated at paragraph 24:

As is made apparent by the definition of "supervision" in the Act, that requires control and direction by the supervisor so as to ensure that the electrical work is performed competently, that appropriate safety measures are adopted, and that when completed the work complies with the requisite regulations. At the very least supervision in that context requires knowledge that work is being conducted, visual and other actual inspection of the work during its completion, assessment of safety measures undertaken by the person doing the work on the site itself, and, after completion of the work, a decision as to compliance of the work with the requisite regulations.

- [18] The Respondent's supervision did not meet the above requirements.

- [19] The Board, which includes persons with extensive experience and expertise in the building industry, considered the Respondent displayed a lack of reasonably expected care in his supervision and in failing to check the fascia size before ordering the flashing. It was a small error but one that could have serious consequences for the home owner.

Contrary to a Building Consent

- [20] The process of issuing a building consent and the subsequent inspections under it ensure independent verification that the Code has been complied with and the works will meet any required performance criteria. In doing so the building consent process provides protection for owners of works and the public at large. Any departure from the consent which is not minor (as defined in s 45A of the Act) must be submitted as a variation to the consent before any further work can be

⁷ [2001] NZAR 74

⁸ *Electrical Workers Registration Board v Gallagher* Judge Tompkins, District Court at Te Awamutu, 12 April 2011

undertaken. It is also an offence under s 40 of the Act to carry out building work other than in accordance with a building consent when one is issued.

- [21] In *Tan v Auckland Council*⁹ the High Court, whilst dealing with a situation where no building consent had been obtained, stated the importance of the consenting process as follows:

[35] The building consent application process ensures that the Council can check that any proposed building work is sufficient to meet the purposes described in s 3 (of the Act). If a person fails to obtain a building consent that deprives the Council of its ability to check any proposed building work.

- [22] The same applies to the ongoing verification of building work. A failure to notify the Council of changes to the consented documents defeats the purpose of the process. Moreover undertaking building works that vary from those that have been consented can potentially put person and property at risk of harm.
- [23] The consented plans showed a flashing providing good cover over the fascia and this was not achieved contrary to the Building Consent.

Record of Work

- [24] 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 work¹⁰.
- [25] 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.
- [26] The Board discussed issues with regard to records of work in its decision C2-01170¹¹ 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.
- [27] 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-builder). Each and every licensed building practitioner who carries out restricted building work must provide a record of work.
- [28] 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 ...”.

⁹ [2015] NZHC 3299 [18 December 2015]

¹⁰ Restricted Building Work is defined by the Building (Definition of Restricted Building Work) Order 2011

¹¹ *Licensed Building Practitioners Board Case Decision C2-01170* 15 December 2015

- [29] 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. Completion occurred in March 2017. A record of work has not been provided and the Respondent accepted he did not complete and provide a record of work as required under the Act. On this basis the Board finds that the record of work was not provided on completion as required and the disciplinary offence has been committed.
- [30] 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 were put forward.

Penalty, Costs and Publication

- [31] Having found that one or more of the grounds in section 317 applies the Board must, under section 318 of the Act¹, consider the appropriate disciplinary penalty, whether the Respondent should be ordered to pay any costs and whether the decision should be published.
- [32] The Board heard evidence during the hearing relevant to penalty, costs and publication and has decided to make indicative orders and give the Respondent an opportunity to provide further evidence or submissions relevant to the indicative orders.

Penalty

- [33] 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*¹² commented on the role of "punishment" 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.

- [34] The Board also notes that in *Lochhead v Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment*¹³ 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

¹² HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818, 13 August 2007 at p 27

¹³ 3 November 2016, CIV-2016-070-000492, [2016] NZDC 21288

starting point for penalty based on the seriousness of the disciplinary offending prior to considering any aggravating and/or mitigating factors.

- [35] The Board notes that there are three disciplinary offences but that the negligence and contrary to a consent matters related to the same conduct and as such they will be treated as a single matter for the purposes of penalty.
- [36] In terms of a starting point the Board normally has a starting point for record of work matters alone of \$1,500. Whilst there has been disciplinary offending over and above the record of work matter it considers that the overall offending is at the lower end of the scale and as such, a fine of \$1,500 is sufficient penalty.

Costs

- [37] Under section 318(4) the Board may require the Respondent “to pay the costs and expenses of, and incidental to, the inquiry by the Board.”
- [38] 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 case¹⁴.
- [39] In *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand*¹⁵ 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.

- [40] Based on the above the Board’s order is that the Respondent is to pay the sum of \$1,000 toward the costs of and incidental to the Board’s inquiry.

Publication

- [41] 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 Act¹⁶. The Board is also able, under section 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.

- [42] 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

¹⁴ *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.

¹⁵ [2001] NZAR 74

¹⁶ Refer sections 298, 299 and 301 of the Act

of a disciplinary hearing. This is in addition to the Respondent being named in this decision.

- [43] Within New Zealand there is a principle of open justice and open reporting which is enshrined in the Bill of Rights Act 1990¹⁷. The Criminal Procedure Act 2011 sets out grounds for suppression within the criminal jurisdiction¹⁸. Within the disciplinary hearing jurisdiction the courts have stated that the provisions in the Criminal Procedure Act do not apply but can be instructive¹⁹. 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*²⁰.
- [44] 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 interest²¹. 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.
- [45] Based on the above the Board will not order further publication.

Section 318 Order

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

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

Costs: Pursuant to section 318(4) of the Act, the Respondent is ordered to pay costs of \$1,000. (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 section 301(1)(iii) of the Act.

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.

- [47] 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

- [48] The Board invites the Respondent to make written submissions on the matters of disciplinary penalty, costs and publication up until close of business on **16 April 2018**. The submissions should focus on mitigating matters as they relate to the penalty,

¹⁷ Section 14 of the Act

¹⁸ Refer sections 200 and 202 of the Criminal Procedure Act

¹⁹ *N v Professional Conduct Committee of Medical Council* [2014] NZAR 350

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ *Kewene v Professional Conduct Committee of the Dental Council* [2013] NZAR 1055

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

[49] The right to appeal Board decisions is provided for in section 330(2) of the Actⁱⁱ.

Signed and dated this 21st day of March 2018



Chris Preston
Presiding Member

ⁱ **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.*
- (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.*