

Before the Building Practitioners Board

	BPB Complaint No. CB25055
Licensed Building Practitioner:	Jinshun Zheng (the Respondent)
Licence Number:	BP 130749
Licence(s) Held:	Carpentry

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	Complaint
Hearing Location	Auckland
Hearing Type:	In Person
Hearing Date:	30 July 2019
Decision Date:	15 August 2019

Board Members Present:

Richard Merrifield, LBP, Carpentry Site AOP 2 (Presiding)
Mel Orange, Legal Member
David Fabish, LBP, Carpentry Site AOP 2
Robin Dunlop, Retired Professional Engineer

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.

Contents

Introduction	2
Function of Disciplinary Action	2
Evidence	3
Board’s Conclusion and Reasoning	5
Negligence and/or Incompetence	6
Record of Work	8
Penalty, Costs and Publication	9
Penalty	10
Costs.....	10
Publication	11
Section 318 Order	12
Submissions on Penalty, Costs and Publication	12
Right of Appeal	13

Introduction

[1] The hearing resulted from a complaint 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); and
- (b) 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 public, the maintenance of public confidence and the enforcement of high standards of propriety and professional conduct. Those purposes were recently reiterated by

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

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 procedure the Board uses is inquisitorial, not adversarial. The Board examines the documentary evidence available to it prior to the hearing. The hearing is an opportunity for the Board, as the inquirer and decision maker, to call and question witnesses to further investigate aspects of the evidence and to take further evidence from key witnesses. The hearing is not a review of all of the available evidence.

- [7] In addition to the documentary evidence before the Board heard evidence at the hearing from:

Jinshun Zheng	Respondent
[Omitted]	Complainant
[Omitted]	Witness for the Complainant

- [8] The Respondent was engaged to carry out building work on three new dwellings under building consents as a subcontractor to [Omitted]. The Respondent commenced work on 1 May 2018 and his involvement in the project came to an end on or about 14 June 2018 as a result of contractual issues. The build was completed by different contractor.

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

- [9] At the time the Respondent had left site he had carried out framing on Lots 1, 2 and 3, subfloor framing on at least Lot 2⁶, and partial building wrap on all three lots. The Respondent noted that the wrap was installed to provide temporary weather protection.
- [10] The Complainant alleged the Respondent had failed to provide a record of work and that the Respondent had carried out building work in a negligent or incompetent manner. The Complainant provided photographs of the work complained about.
- [11] At the hearing the Board questioned the witnesses with regard to the photographs provided. The photographs related to Lot 1. The evidence heard in relation to each, using the complaint file page numbers as references, was:

Page	Evidence
35	Incomplete work.
36	Weatherboards were not installed by the Respondent. Complainant alleged there was a framing issue but was not able to stipulate what it was.
37	Incomplete work.
38	The photograph showed an area where stairs were to be installed. Hardware connections between building elements had not been installed. The Respondent gave evidence that the work was temporary pending the install of stairs. The Complainant noted that the sequencing made the installation of the hardware more difficult.
39	The photograph showed a missing joist hanger on a double joist. The Respondent gave the same explanation as that for 38.
40	Incomplete work.
41	A photograph was provided of nail gun nails. The Complainant stated that a Council Inspector had raised concerns with the compliance of the nails. No evidence was provided to show that they were noncompliant. The Respondent stated that he purchased them from a New Zealand hardware store, that they were a known brand and that they were compliant.
42	The photograph showed installed stairs and plasterboard. It was accepted that the Respondent did not install the plasterboard. The Complainant ordered the stairs. The Complainant stated the requirement was for the plasterboard to go down the wall behind the stairs. The Respondent stated the issue was caused by the stairs being incorrect. The

⁶ The Complainant claimed subfloor framing had been done on Lot 3 but the Respondent believed the floor was concrete.

Page	Evidence
	Complainant maintained it was the framing. No evidence was provided to substantiate the matter one way or the other.
43	The photograph showed an area where stairs had been installed. The Respondent stated the stairs were only fixed temporarily. The photograph showed a 35mm timber capping that had been roughly cut back. The Complainant also referred the Board to other evidence which showed that stairs had been installed incorrectly. The Respondent stated it was an issue with the stairs that were measured and supplied by the Complainant and that there was no set out for the stairs in the plans. The Complainant stated that the subsequent builder was able to install the stairs without issue and that the engineer's details covered the stairs.
46	The photograph showed a temporary/missing landing. The Respondent stated it was incomplete work.

- [12] The Complainant also raised an issue of incorrect flooring that was installed. The Respondent accepted that he had made a mistake. He gave evidence that he had fixed the issue at his own cost.
- [13] The Complainant's submitted that they had an issue with the Respondent's communications and his failure to inform them of temporary work.
- [14] The Respondent was questioned as to his supervision procedures. He stated that he was on site almost every day. The Complainant stated he was seldom on site and that he relied on unskilled workers.
- [15] With regard to the Respondent's record of work he stated that he had not done one as the work was not complete and he had not been able to assess what had been done under his licence. Evidence was heard of a period between when the Respondent finished and a new licensed building practitioner started when work may have been completed and inspections carried out with his licence being noted as the licensed building practitioner.
- [16] The Respondent did, following the complaint being made, provide a record of work dated 22 November 2018. He noted on it that work was not finished.

Board's Conclusion and Reasoning

- [17] The Board has decided that the Respondent **has not** carried out or supervised building work or building inspection work in a negligent or incompetent manner (s 317(1)(b) of the Act).
- [18] 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).

[19] The reasons for the Board's decision follow.

Negligence and/or Incompetence

[20] Negligence and incompetence are not the same. In *Beattie v Far North Council*⁷ Judge McElrea noted:

[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.

[21] Negligence is the departure by a licensed building practitioner, whilst carrying out or supervising building work, from an accepted standard of conduct. It is judged against those of the same class of licence as the person whose conduct is being inquired into. This is described as the *Bolam*⁸ test of negligence which has been adopted by the New Zealand Courts⁹.

[22] Incompetence is a lack of ability, skill or knowledge to carry out or supervise building work to an acceptable standard. *Beattie* put it as "*a demonstrated lack of the reasonably expected ability or skill level*". In *Ali v Kumar and Others*¹⁰ it was stated as "*an inability to do the job*".

[23] There was no evidence of incompetence. There was some evidence that the Respondent may have been negligent.

[24] The New Zealand Courts have stated that assessment of negligence and/or incompetence in a disciplinary context is a two-stage test¹¹. The first is for the Board to consider whether the practitioner has departed from the acceptable standard of conduct of a professional. The second is to consider whether the departure is significant enough to warrant a disciplinary sanction.

[25] When considering what an acceptable standard is the Board must have reference to the conduct of other competent and responsible practitioners and the Board's own assessment of what is appropriate conduct, bearing in mind the purpose of the Act¹². The test is an objective one and in this respect it has been noted that the purpose of discipline is the protection of the public by the maintenance of professional

⁷ Judge McElrea, DC Whangarei, CIV-2011-088-313

⁸ *Bolam v Friern Hospital Management Committee* [1957] 1 WLR 582

⁹ *Martin v Director of Proceedings* [2010] NZAR 333 (HC), *F v Medical Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal* [2005] 3 NZLR 774 (CA)

¹⁰ *Ali v Kumar and Others* [2017] NZDC 23582 at [30]

¹¹ *Martin v Director of Proceedings* [2010] NZAR 333 (HC), *F v Medical Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal* [2005] 3 NZLR 774 (CA)

¹² *Martin v Director of Proceedings* [2010] NZAR 333 at p.33

standards and that this could not be met if, in every case, the Board was required to take into account subjective considerations relating to the practitioner¹³.

[26] The Board notes that the purposes of the Act are:

3 Purposes

This Act has the following purposes:

- (a) *to provide for the regulation of building work, the establishment of a licensing regime for building practitioners, and the setting of performance standards for buildings to ensure that—*
 - (i) *people who use buildings can do so safely and without endangering their health; and*
 - (ii) *buildings have attributes that contribute appropriately to the health, physical independence, and well-being of the people who use them; and*
 - (iii) *people who use a building can escape from the building if it is on fire; and*
 - (iv) *buildings are designed, constructed, and able to be used in ways that promote sustainable development:*
- (b) *to promote the accountability of owners, designers, builders, and building consent authorities who have responsibilities for ensuring that building work complies with the building code.*

[27] The Board also notes, as regards acceptable standards, that all building work must comply with the Building Code¹⁴ and be carried out in accordance with a building consent¹⁵. As such, when considering what is and is not an acceptable standard, the Building Code and any building consent issued must be taken into account.

[28] Turning to seriousness in *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand*¹⁶ the Court's noted, as regards the threshold for disciplinary matters, that:

[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.

[29] In *Pillai v Messiter (No 2)*¹⁷ the Court of Appeal stated:

... the statutory test is not met by mere professional incompetence or by deficiencies in the practice of the profession. Something more is required. It includes a deliberate departure from accepted standards or such serious negligence as, although not deliberate, to portray indifference and an abuse.

¹³ *McKenzie v Medical Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal* [2004] NZAR 47 at p.71

¹⁴ Section 17 of the Building Act 2004

¹⁵ Section 40(1) of the Building Act 2004

¹⁶ [2001] NZAR 74

¹⁷ (1989) 16 NSWLR 197 (CA) at 200

- [30] The majority of the matters complained about related to incomplete work. There was contradictory evidence on matters relating to the installation of stairs. The evidence before the Board was, in respect of those matters, insufficient for it to make a finding. A mistake was made with regard to flooring. It was fixed at the Respondent's cost. Items relating to hardware could be described as sequencing issues and were minor in nature.
- [31] Overall the Board decided that the matters before it were either not proven or were, on the basis of the above judicial comment, not serious enough to warrant a disciplinary outcome.

Record of Work

- [32] 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 work¹⁸.
- [33] 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.
- [34] The Board discussed issues with regard to records of work in its decision C2-01170¹⁹ 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.
- [35] 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.
- [36] 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 ...".
- [37] 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.
- [38] In this instance circumstances intervened. The work came to a premature end as a result of payment issues on 14 June 2018. The work was completed by another contractor.

¹⁸ Restricted Building Work is defined by the Building (Definition of Restricted Building Work) Order 2011

¹⁹ *Licensed Building Practitioners Board Case Decision C2-01170* 15 December 2015

- [39] The Respondent has submitted that the work was not complete and as such he could not do a record of work. The submission is rejected. If the Board was to accept the submission the record of work would never fall due. That would then defeat the purpose of the legislative provision which is to create a complete record of all of the licensed building practitioners who have carried out or supervised restricted building work.
- [40] The Board finds that Completion occurred on 14 June 2018 or soon thereafter as this is the date when the Respondent would not be returning to carry out or supervise any further restricted building work.
- [41] The Respondent also submitted that he could not do a record of work as he needed to verify what he had done. The Board does not accept that this was an impediment. The Respondent should have known from his own record what he did and did not do. Moreover, a record of work is only a record of who did what, it is not a statement as to quality and compliance. The Board also notes that the record of work that was eventually provided by the Respondent stated that the work was not finished. This was an option that was always open to him.
- [42] The record of work when provided was not given until 11 November 2018 and then only after a complaint had been made. As it was some five months after completion the Board finds that the record of work was not provided on completion as required and the disciplinary offence has been committed.
- [43] 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.
- [44] In this instance there was an ongoing payment dispute. Whilst it was not stated as a reason for not providing the record of work the Board has repeatedly stated that a record of work is a statutory requirement, not a negotiable term of a contract. The requirement for it is not affected by the terms of a contract, nor by contractual disputes. Licensed building practitioners should now be aware of their obligations to provide them and their provision should be a matter of routine.
- [45] The Respondent has also noted in his response to the complaint that he had not received a demand letter in writing requiring the record of work. The requirement is on the licensed building practitioner to provide a record of work, not on the owner or territorial authority to demand one. They must act of their own accord and not wait for others to remind them of their obligations.

Penalty, Costs and Publication

- [46] Having found that one or more of the grounds in section 317 applies the Board must, under section 318 of the Actⁱ, consider the appropriate disciplinary penalty, whether

the Respondent should be ordered to pay any costs and whether the decision should be published.

- [47] 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

- [48] 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*²⁰ 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.

- [49] The Board also notes that in *Lochhead v Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment*²¹ 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.
- [50] Record of work matters are at the lower end of the disciplinary scale. The Board's normal starting point for a failure to provide a record of work is a fine of \$1,500. In this instance there were mitigating factors including the contractual matters that arose. The Board has decided to reduce the fine based on that mitigation to \$1,000.

Costs

- [51] 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."
- [52] 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 case²².

²⁰ HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818, 13 August 2007 at p 27

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

²² *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.

[53] In *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand*²³ 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.

[54] Based on the above the Board's costs order is that the Respondent is to pay the sum of \$1,000 toward the costs of and incidental to the Board's inquiry. This is significantly less than 50% of actual costs.

Publication

[55] 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 Act²⁴. 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.

[56] 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.

[57] Within New Zealand there is a principle of open justice and open reporting which is enshrined in the Bill of Rights Act 1990²⁵. The Criminal Procedure Act 2011 sets out grounds for suppression within the criminal jurisdiction²⁶. Within the disciplinary hearing jurisdiction the courts have stated that the provisions in the Criminal Procedure Act do not apply but can be instructive²⁷. 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*²⁸.

[58] 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 interest²⁹. 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.

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

²³ [2001] NZAR 74

²⁴ Refer sections 298, 299 and 301 of the Act

²⁵ Section 14 of the Act

²⁶ Refer sections 200 and 202 of the Criminal Procedure Act

²⁷ *N v Professional Conduct Committee of Medical Council* [2014] NZAR 350

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ *Kewene v Professional Conduct Committee of the Dental Council* [2013] NZAR 1055

Section 318 Order

[60] 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 \$1,000.

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.

[61] 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


[62] The Board invites the Respondent to make written submissions on the matters of disciplinary penalty, costs and publication up until close of business on **6 September 2019**. 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.

[63] In calling for submissions on penalty, costs and mitigation the Board is not inviting the Respondent to offer new evidence or to express an opinion on the findings set out in this decision. If the Respondent disagrees with the Board's findings of fact and and/or its decision that the Respondent has committed a disciplinary offence the Respondent can appeal the Board's decision.

Right of Appeal

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

Signed and dated this 15th day of August 2019



Richard Merrifield
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.*