Before the Building Practitioners Board

| | BPB Complaint No. C2-01877 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Licensed Building Practitioner: | Robert Russell (the Respondent) |
| Licence Number: | BP 110373 |
| Licence(s) Held: | Carpentry and Site AOP 2 |

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 | Tauranga |
| Hearing Type: | In Person |
| Hearing Date: | 30 January 2019 |
| Decision Date: | 4 March 2019 |

Board Members Present:

Chris Preston (Presiding) Richard Merrifield, LBP, Carpentry Site AOP 2 David Fabish, LBP, Carpentry Site AOP 2 Faye Pearson-Green, LBP Design 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 sections 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 | ļ |
| Negligence and/or Incompetence | 5 |
| Contrary to a Building Consent | 7 |
| Record of Work | 3 |
| Penalty, Costs and Publication |) |
| Penalty |) |
| Costs |) |
| Publication1 | L |
| Section 318 Order1 | L |
| Submissions on Penalty, Costs and Publication12 | 2 |
| Right of Appeal | 2 |

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);
 - (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 ownerbuilder) 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 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:

| [Omitted] | Complainant |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Robert Russell | Respondent |
| Richard Angell | Technical Assessor |
| [Omitted] | Witness for the Board |
| [Omitted] | Witness for the complainant |
| [Omitted] | Witness for the Respondent |
| [Omitted] | Witness for the Respondent |

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

[Omitted]

- [8] There were four main issues that formed the basis of the complaint.
- [9] The first allegation was that the plastering and painting was not completed to an acceptable standard. The Technical Assessor confirmed the painting was of a reasonable standard in all but a couple of places and that, given the size of the ceilings, the lighting and the use of a high sheen finish paint it would, in most cases only show minor imperfections. Evidence was also heard from the painter engaged to do the work that he did experience some difficulty with the work but in his view, he was able to provide an acceptable finish given the requirement of the Complainant to use a high sheen finish paint.
- [10] The second allegation was in respect of cobble stones which had been marked during the construction phase of the job due to inadequate protection and then further when they were cleaned. The Respondent accepted that he should have supervised more closely the protection used and the cleaning of the cobbles.
- [11] The third allegation was that a record of work was not provided by the Respondent on completion of the restricted building work. The Respondent stated he needed to obtain a practical completion certificate first. It was provided once the complaint had been laid and was given to the Technical Assessor.
- [12] The final and main allegation was in respect to the sill heights of the upstairs windows which the Complainant claimed should have been at a height above 760mm such that restrictor stays were not required so that the windows could open more fully than they can now as built.
- [13] The Designer gave evidence that once the new roof line and wall heights had been determined for upstairs it was made clear on the plans that the sill heights should be 1000mm.
- [14] The Respondent gave evidence that, in conjunction with the Complainant, he had agreed the as finished sill heights with the Complainant. This was done by having the Complainant sit on a chair upstairs and, by moving a piece of wood up and down, agreeing the desired view from the windows and then using this as the new sill heights.
- [15] The Respondent accepted that, at the time, he did not discuss the implications of the new lower sill heights with the Complainant (being the need for restrictor stays) nor did he relay this to the Designer or discuss with the Designer or the Council the need for a change to the consented plans.

Board's Conclusion and Reasoning

[16] The Board has decided that the Respondent has:

- (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);
- (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 ownerbuilder) 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.

[17] The reasons for the Board's decisions follow.

Negligence and/or Incompetence

[18] Negligence and incompetence are not the same. In *Beattie v Far North Council*⁶ 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.

- [19] 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*⁷ test of negligence which has been adopted by the New Zealand Courts⁸.
- [20] 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 Others⁹ it was stated as "an inability to do the job".
- [21] The New Zealand Courts have stated that assessment of negligence and/or incompetence in a disciplinary context is a two-stage test¹⁰. 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.
- [22] 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

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

⁷ Bolam v Friern Hospital Management Committee [1957] 1 WLR 582

⁸ Martin v Director of Proceedings [2010] NZAR 333 (HC), F v Medical Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal [2005] 3 NZLR 774 (CA)

⁹ Ali v Kumar and Others [2017] NZDC 23582 at [30]

¹⁰ Martin v Director of Proceedings [2010] NZAR 333 (HC), F v Medical Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal [2005] 3 NZLR 774 (CA)

assessment of what is appropriate conduct, bearing in mind the purpose of the Act¹¹. 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 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 practitioner¹².

[23] 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.
- [24] The Board also notes, as regards acceptable standards, that all building work must comply with the Building Code¹³ and be carried out in accordance with a building consent¹⁴. As such, when considering what is and is not an acceptable standard, the Building Code and any building consent issued must be considered.
- [25] Turning to seriousness in *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand*¹⁵ 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.

[26] Looking at each of the issues:

¹¹ Martin v Director of Proceedings [2010] NZAR 333 at p.33

¹² McKenzie v Medical Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal [2004] NZAR 47 at p.71

¹³ Section 17 of the Building Act 2004

¹⁴ Section 40(1) of the Building Act 2004

¹⁵ [2001] NZAR 74

- (a) in the case of the painting of the ceilings the Respondent did not do the work. He engaged a professional painter to undertake the job which was completed to an acceptable standard. The Board does not make a finding as regards negligence or incompetence in respect of this allegation;
- (b) in the case of the cobble stones the Board is of the view that, given that these had recently been laid, extra care should have been made to protect them from construction soiling and that once the issue had been raised an experienced person should have been employed to correct the issue or, at the least, there should have been stronger supervision of the employee who did the work (who did not have the experience). The Board did note that this has been subject to a Disputes Tribunal Hearing and the Respondent has been required to pay for the replacement of the cobble stones. The Board finds that the Respondent was negligent in that his conduct, in this respect, has fallen below an accepted standard of conduct; and
- (c) with regard to the window sill heights the Board also finds that the Respondent's conduct has fallen below an acceptable standard. A reasonable licensed building practitioner would consider and advise on the implications of changing the sill heights, especially when it had been made clear that being able to fully open the windows was important to the Complainant. In making this finding the Board did not consider that the process used to agree sill heights was negligent, rather it was the failure to consider and advise on the implications of the agreed heights. The Board also considers that the Respondent should have advised and discussed the proposed changes with the Designer before proceeding with them.
- [27] Given the above factors the Board, which includes persons with extensive experience and expertise in the building industry, considered the Respondent has departed from what the Board considers to be an accepted standard of conduct and that the conduct was sufficiently serious enough to warrant a disciplinary outcome.

Contrary to a Building Consent

[28] 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 an amendment to the consent before any further work can be 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. [29] In *Tan v Auckland Council*¹⁶ 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.

- [30] 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.
- [31] The Respondent went through a process with the Complainant to agree window sill heights. Those changes were not discussed with the Designer. No minor variations to the building consent were sought or granted prior to the work being undertaken. Likewise no amendments to the building consent were sought or granted. As a consequence the building work was carried out in a manner that was not in accord with the building consent and the elements of the disciplinary offence are made out.

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 work¹⁷.
- [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 C2-01170¹⁸ 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 ownerbuilder). Each and every licensed building practitioner who carries out restricted building work must provide a record of work.

¹⁶ [2015] NZHC 3299 [18 December 2015]

¹⁷ Restricted Building Work is defined by the Building (Definition of Restricted Building Work) Order 2011

¹⁸ *Licensed Building Practitioners Board Case Decision C2-01170* 15 December 2015

- [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 …". 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.
- [37] In the present case the Respondent's involvement in the building work including the restricted building work, came to an end in December 2017. A record of work was not provided until after the complaint was made and then to the Technical Assessor, not to the owner or the territorial authority as required by the Act. On this basis the record of work was not provided as per the requirements of section 88 and the disciplinary offence has been committed.
- [38] 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.
- [39] The Respondent submitted that a record of work was not provided as he was waiting for a practical completion certificate to issue.
- [40] 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. Withholding pending the issue of a practical completion certificate was not acceptable and it does not establish a "good reason".

Penalty, Costs and Publication

- [41] 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.
- [42] 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

[43] 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*¹⁹ 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.

- [44] The Board also notes that in *Lochhead v Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment*²⁰ 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.
- [45] The Board considered that the negligence and contrary to a consent matters were at the lower end of the scale. It also noted that other civil remedies have been sought. On this basis the Board's penalty decision in respect of the section 317(1)(b) and (d) matters is that the Respondent be censured. A censure is a formal expression of disapproval.
- [46] With regard to the record of work matter under section 317(1)(da)(ii) the Board's normal starting point for a failure to provide is a fine of \$1,500. There are no mitigating factors in this respect and as such the fine is set at \$1,500.

<u>Costs</u>

- [47] 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."
- [48] 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 case²¹.
- [49] In *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand*²² 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.

¹⁹ HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818, 13 August 2007 at p 27

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

²¹ 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.

²² [2001] NZAR 74

[50] 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.

Publication

[51] 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 Act²³. 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.

- [52] 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.
- [53] Within New Zealand there is a principle of open justice and open reporting which is enshrined in the Bill of Rights Act 1990²⁴. The Criminal Procedure Act 2011 sets out grounds for suppression within the criminal jurisdiction²⁵. Within the disciplinary hearing jurisdiction the courts have stated that the provisions in the Criminal Procedure Act do not apply but can be instructive²⁶. 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*²⁷.
- [54] 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 interest²⁸. 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.
- [55] Based on the above the Board will not order further publication.

Section 318 Order

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

Penalty: Pursuant to section 318(1)(d) of the Building Act 2004, the Respondent is censured in respect of the disciplinary offences under sections 317(1)(b) and (d) of the Act; and

²³ Refer sections 298, 299 and 301 of the Act

²⁴ Section 14 of the Act

²⁵ Refer sections 200 and 202 of the Criminal Procedure Act

²⁶ N v Professional Conduct Committee of Medical Council [2014] NZAR 350

²⁷ ibid

²⁸ Kewene v Professional Conduct Committee of the Dental Council [2013] NZAR 1055

Pursuant to section 318(1)(f) of the Building Act 2004, the Respondent is fined the sum of \$1,500 in respect of the disciplinary offence under sections 317(1)(da)(ii) of the Act

- 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.

[57] 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

- [58] The Board invites the Respondent to make written submissions on the matters of disciplinary penalty, costs and publication up until close of business on 26 March 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.
- [59] 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

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

Signed and dated this 4th day of March 2019

Chris Prestor

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."

[®] 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.